



# Rockjumper Birding Tours

Worldwide Birding Adventures

## Southern India

*10<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> November 2007*



*Nilgiri Laughingthrush by David Shackelford*

**Trip Report compiled by Tour Leader David Shackelford**

**Top 6 Birds of the Tour as voted by participants:**

1. Indian Pitta
  2. Malabar Trogon
  3. Orange-headed Thrush
  4. Sri Lanka Frogmouth
  5. White-bellied Treepie
  6. Black-and-rufous Flycatcher
- Honorable Mention: Malayan Night-Heron

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## Tour Summary

It is doubtful that there exists a more vibrant nation in terms of visible culture and often an overwhelming cacophony of sights and sounds as was evident upon our arrival in the contemporary metropolis of Bangalore in the deep south of India. We began by making our way southwards towards into the rural town of Kokkare Bellur where we located a resident colony of endangered Spot-billed Pelican along with the very localized Red-naped Ibis and endemic Jerdon's Bushlark. Local woman beautifully dressed in colorful saris spread layers of long grasses across the pathways for drying while the men whipped water buffalos towards market pulling wooden carts loaded with daily produce and supplies. By boat we accessed the famous bird sanctuary of Ranganathittu by visiting small islands in the Cauvery River thereby approaching remarkably close to impressive numbers of wary Great Thick-knee, nesting Asian Open-billed Stork, several elegant River Tern, Stork-billed Kingfisher, and massive Marsh Crocodile basking in the mid-day sun while overhead we spied our first Indian Spotted Eagle.

Continuing through the dry deciduous forests of Bandipur Nature Reserve by way of the impressive Mysore Palace, we arrived in Mudumalai where walking through the dry scrub we soon located several Yellow-wattled Lapwing, snazzy Indian Robin, and the rare but distinctive Malabar Lark. Diving into luxuriant bamboo and riparian forest we continued carefully working through available habitat, especially along the swift-flowing Saghut River where we located a magnificent Heart-spotted Woodpecker, mixed flock of both Velvet-fronted and Chestnut-bellied Nuthatches, brilliant Asian Fairy-Bluebird, Common and Large Wood-Shrikes, Indian Scimitar-Babbler, attractive Brahminy and Chestnut-tailed Starlings, Plum-headed and endemic Malabar Parakeets screeching by overhead, amazing views of Malabar Whistling-Thrush, an adult Rufous-bellied Eagle overhead along with Indian Swiftlet and Crested Treeswift, and the very localized endemic Grey-headed Bulbul.

During an evening jeep excursion we caught sight of rarities such as the endangered White-rumped Vulture, skulking Blue-faced Malkoha, the strikingly patterned but shy Grey Junglefowl that guardedly strutted through dense scrub, and outrageous views of Jerdon's Nightjar both calling overhead and perched in the spotlight. Mammals throughout this portion of the trip were equally impressive including large numbers of sleek spotted Chital also commonly called Indian Spotted Deer, troops of playful Bonnet Macaque and Hanuman Langur, an abundance of tiny Indian Striped Squirrel, cracking views of the fantastic Malabar Giant Squirrel, and close sunlit views of five Guar also known as the endangered jungle bison of India.

Forests thickly laden with vibrantly colored mosses and peculiar shaped lichen greeted us as we ascended into the steep Nilgiri Mountains of the south where a lively troop of dark Nilgiri Langur greeted us into the stunted forest. Through our focused explorations we were very successful finding such avian rarities such as the gorgeous endemic Black-and-rufous Flycatcher, lively White-bellied Shortwing near a mountain stream, and several unbelievably cooperative Nilgiri Laughingthrush. After exploring the exquisite forest patches of rhododendrons and magnolias literally draped with orchids we were treated to a candlelight dinner in the former retreat of the Maharaja sampling the unique flavors of India.

Continuing into the lower elevations of Thattekad, we scoured the forest encountering seldom seen birds such as brilliant views of several Malabar Trogon, beautiful Loten's Sunbird, migratory Black Baza, scope views of Asian Drongo-Cuckoo, Crimson-fronted Barbet, Malabar Grey Hornbill, Indian Scops-Owl on the day roost, the endemic White-bellied Blue-Flycatcher, and crippling scope views for everyone of the secretive Indian Pitta. Back at our resort in the mountain foothills we enjoyed delightful customary rural meals served at the edge of the Periyar River where Jungle Owlet and Brown Hawk-Owl called nearby our luxury tented camp and Grey-headed Fish-Eagle

hunted from the waterside. All these fine delicacies combined with traditional attentive and friendly hosts demonstrated to us the true meaning of Indian hospitality.

Travelling through hillsides covered with lush tea plantations and waterfalls cascading through every gorge, we ascended the slopes of the mountainous Eravikulam National Park where we were rewarded with an unbelievable sighting of the Nilgiri Tahr, an attractive species of sure-footed mountain goat. Birds were no less cooperative and in this area we also found the migratory Blue-capped Rock-Thrush, stunning but conspicuous Grey-breasted Laughingthrush, Blue Rock-Thrush, surprisingly attractive Nilgiri Pipit, the southern white-bellied form of White-bellied Shortwing that showed very well, Nilgiri Flycatcher, Brown-backed Needletail rocketing by overhead, and the rarely encountered Tytler's Leaf-Warbler.

We finished our tour inside the Tiger Reserve of Periyar enjoying an assortment of jeep safari, forest treks, and a boat cruise. The forest was alive with song and in short time we had collected a wide assortment of outstanding birds including the impressive endemic White-bellied Treepie, scope views of Jungle Owlet, two separate perched views of the shy Orange-headed Thrush, Western-crowned Warbler, several close encounters with skulky Rufous and Dark-fronted Babblers, Speckled Piculet, and fantastic views for everyone of the very rarely seen Malayan Night-Heron. We also encountered a fantastic selection of mammals throughout our time in this sizable reserve including both Ruddy and Stripe-necked Mongoose, further views of Sambar and Guar, and two forest dwelling Indian Elephants. With spirits high we bid farewell to this magnificent country and continued on to the islands nation of Sri Lanka...

### **Annotated List of Birds Recorded:**

E = Endemic, SE = Sub-continent endemic

#### **Grebes *Podicipedidae***

##### **Little Grebe (Dabchick)**

*Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Our only sightings were on the first two days of the tour with fifteen near Kokkare Bellur and three birds sighted the following day.

#### **Pelicans *Pelecanidae***

##### **Spot-billed Pelican**

*Pelecanus phillipensis*

Good numbers of roughly thirty-five birds were found in the town of Kokkare Bellur where they nest in trees around the village. We also found several at a small wetland the following day.

#### **Cormorants & Shags *Phalacrocoracidae***

##### **Indian Cormorant**

*Phalacrocorax fuscicollis*

Small numbers were found in scattered locations throughout the tour with our first sightings of four birds at a roadside wetland en route to Mudumalai.

##### **Great Cormorant**

*Phalacrocorax carbo*

Commonly encountered at most wetland localities throughout the country.

##### **Little Cormorant**

*Phalacrocorax niger*

Also seen in good numbers throughout the tour at most wetland sites with our first sightings of more than thirty birds at Ranganathittu.

#### **Anhinga & Darter *Anhingidae***

##### **(Oriental) Darter**

*Anhinga melanogaster*

We found this aquatic bird at several wetland sites with more than twenty birds our first two days of the tour.

**Hérons, Egrets & Bitterns *Ardeidae*****Grey Heron***Ardea cinerea*

Just a single bird was found along a roadside wetland on the second day of the tour.

**Purple Heron***Ardea purpurea*

Seven birds total were seen at the same roadside wetland as the previous species followed by another bird near Lake Periyar.

**Great (White) Egret***Ardea alba*

Seen at most wetland areas that were visited on the tour.

**Intermediate Egret***Ardea intermedia*

We found this species in similar habitats as the Great Egret on many occasions throughout the tour.

**Little Egret***Egretta garzetta*

Five birds were first seen at Ranganathittu with another ten birds sighted the following day.

**Western Reef-Heron***Egretta gularis*

An unexpected sighting, we scoped a single bird at length at a roadside wetland en route to the Mudumalai hills.

**Indian Pond Heron***Ardeola Greyii*

A very common species that was encountered almost daily.

**Cattle Egret***Bubulcus ibis*

Commonly recorded throughout Southern India.

**Black-crowned Night-Heron***Nycticorax nycticorax*

This globally-occurring species was found roosting in overhanging trees at Raganathittu as well as a few more birds seen the following day en route to Mudumalai.

**Malayan Night-Heron***Gorsachius melanolophus*

What a bird! We were very fortunate to locate a single secretive bird while exploring Periyar National Park. We originally just saw a glimpse but after some intensive searching we were all afforded better views of this seldom-observed species.

**Storks *Ciconidae*****Painted Stork***Mycteria leucocephala*

An elegant species that was found at a wetland en route to Mudumalai as well as a couple birds near Lake Periyar.

**Asian Openbill***Anastomus oscitans*

Three birds total were found at Ranganathittu where close up views were had from our boat.

**Woolly-necked Stork***Ciconia episcopus*

Two sighting of this widespread species first seen en route to Mudumalai while birding in a pastoral field.

**Ibises & Spoonbills *Threskiornithidae*****Black-headed Ibis***Threskiornis melanocephalus*

Dozens of birds were estimated en route from Bangalore to Mysore and the following day about twenty birds were seen along the roadside.

**Red-naped (Black) Ibis***Pseudibis papillosa*

Good sightings of nearly fifty birds were enjoyed en route from Bangalore to Mysore on our first day and another fourteen were sighted the following day.

**Swans, Geese & Ducks *Anatidae*****Lesser Whistling-Duck***Dendrocygna javanica*

We had views of six birds at a roadside wetland the first day of the tour followed by at least eighty birds at the Thattekad Bird Sanctuary.

**Eurasian Wigeon***Anas penelope*

Three birds were seen at a tank near the town of Kokkare Bellur.

**Common Pochard***Aythya ferina*

A single bird was seen diving in a water tank near the town of Kokkare Bellur.

**[Indian] Spot-billed Duck**

*Anas poecilorhyncha*

We found this species, sometimes split from Chinese Spot-billed Duck, both at the tank near the town of Kokkare Bellur as well as a roadside wetland the following day.

**Northern Pintail**

*Anas acuta*

A group of four birds were scoped at a tank near the town of Kokkare Bellur.

**Hawks, Kites, Eagles & Vultures *Accipitridae***

**Oriental Honey-Buzzard**

*Pernis ptilorhyncus*

A total of four birds were found on tour at various localities around the country with our first sighting inside the Thattekad Bird Sanctuary.

**Common Buzzard**

*Buteo buteo*

We found a single bird in the surroundings of Erikavelum NP.

**Black Baza**

*Aviceda leuphotes*

What a striking species! Four birds were first scoped at the Thattekad Bird Sanctuary followed by flight views of five more birds close to our hotel in the Periyar NP.

**Black Kite**

*Milvus [migrans] lineatus*

Recorded on most days at most sites throughout the tour.

**Brahminy Kite**

*Haliastur Indus*

Recorded in smaller numbers than the previous species but regular over much of the region.

**Indian Spotted Eagle**

*Aquila hastata*

We were fortunate to observe a single individual of this uncommon species soaring above us as we made our way towards the town of Kokkare Bellur.

**Grey-headed Fish Eagle**

*Icthyophaga ichthyaetus*

One bird was seen along the river at our accommodation in the Hornbill Camp.

**White-rumped Vulture**

*Gyps bengalensis*

A single bird was seen flying in the Mudumalai hills near Jungle Hut.

**Crested Serpent-Eagle**

*Spilornis cheela*

Individual birds were seen both perched and in flight in scattered locations throughout the tour.

**Western Marsh-Harrier**

*Circus aeruginosus*

Three birds total were found in open areas between Bangalore and Mysore on the first days drive and the next day flying along a roadside wetland.

**Pied Harrier**

*Circus melanoleucos*

A single adult male was found cruising high over the hillside along the Gavi Track.

**Crested Goshawk**

*Accipiter trivirgatus*

We found one bird in the Thattekad Bird Sanctuary followed by another individual near Eravikulam NP.

**Besra**

*Accipiter virgatus*

We first had great views of a displaying bird showing the white tufts along the vent in Mudumalai followed by scatter sightings thereafter during the tour.

**Black Eagle**

*Ictinaetus malayensis*

We first found two of these beautiful raptors in Eravikulam NP followed by a further close sighting along the Gavi Track.

**Rufous-bellied Eagle**

*Hieraaetus kienerii*

A single adult bird was well seen very well in flight near the Jungle Hut.

**Booted Eagle**

*Hieraratus pennatus*

One bird was seen in flight between Bangalore and Mysore on our first day of the tour.

**Changeable [Crested] Hawk-Eagle**

*Spizaetus cirrhatus*

We first found this attractive species along the river near the Jungle Hut in the Mudumalai area followed by two further sightings in Periyar NP.

**Falcons & Caracaras *Falconidae***

**Eurasian Kestrel***Falco tinnunculus*

Small numbers were observed around Eravikulam NP near Munnar and again along the Gavi Track.

**Pheasants & Partridges *Phasianidae*****Grey Francolin***Francolinus pondicerianus*

Seven birds in total were seen in the fallow lands near the Jungle Hut.

**Red Spurfowl (E)***Galloperdix spadicea*

A rather secretive species, we found two birds that shooed very well for scope views in the Mudumalai area.

**Grey Junglefowl (E)***Gallus sonneratii*

This species was fairly common and we had great views on many occasions throughout the tour.

**Indian Peafowl (SE)***Pavo cristatus*

A truly magnificent species that was recorded during the first portion of the tour with great views especially in the Mudumalai hills.

**Rails, Gallinules & Coots *Rallidae*****White-breasted Waterhen***Amaurornis phoenicurus*

This species was seen in suitable habitat throughout the tour in small numbers with our first sighting at Ranganathittu.

**Purple [Grey-headed] Swamphen***Porphyrio [porphyrio] poliocephalus*

A single bird was found in a marshy area the first day of our tour followed by ten birds seen the following day at a roadside wetland.

**Common Moorhen***Gallinula chloropus*

A few birds were seen in wetlands on the first two days of the tour.

**Eurasian Coot***Fulica atra*

Large numbers were found at a tank near the town of Kokkare Bellur as well as a few birds the following day.

**Thick-knees *Burhinidae*****Great Thick-knee***Escacus recurvirostris*

Six of these striking birds were found at Ranganathittu bird sanctuary.

**Plovers & Lapwings *Charadriidae*****Yellow-wattled Lapwing (SE)***Vanellus malabaricus*

Nine birds were seen at close range in an open field in the Mudumalai area.

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

A very common species that was encountered almost daily during our tour.

**Little Ringed Plover***Charadrius dubius*

Two birds were found on the waters edge en route to Mudumalai.

**Jacanas *Jacanidae*****Pheasant-tailed Jacana***Hydrophasianus chirurgus*

Four birds coming into breeding plumage we seen at length in a wetland en route to Kokkare Bellur.

**Sandpipers & Allies *Scolopacidae*****Pintail Snipe***Gallinago stenura*

About a dozen birds were seen and scoped in the rank grass in Periyar NP.

**Common Greenshank***Tringa nebularia*

Two birds were found in a roadside wetland en route to Mudumalai.

**Green Sandpiper***Tringa ochropus*

We had scattered sightings of this migrant wader throughout the tour in small numbers with our first sighting near Ranganathittu.

**Wood Sandpiper***Tringa glareola*

A number of birds were seen at roadside ponds and marshy areas en route to Mudumalai.

**Common Sandpiper***Actitis hypoleucos*

A couple birds were seen at roadside wetlands as well as Lake Periyar.

**Terns *Sternidae*****River Tern***Sterna aurantia*

While on the boat at Ranganathittu we were fortunate to have six individuals fly very close to us as well as perch nearby on the river rocks.

**Whiskered Tern***Chlidonias hybridus*

We had three sightings of this species during the tour with our first views at a pond near Ranganathittu.

**Doves & Pigeons *Columbidae*****Rock Pigeon***Columba livia*

Common at urban centres on the tour.

**Nilgiri Wood Pigeon (E)***Columba elphinstonii*

A scarce Western Ghats endemic that was seen only briefly flying through a small patch of remaining native forest near Eravikulam NP.

**Eurasian Collared Dove***Streptopelia decaocto*

Four birds were seen during the tour en route to Mudumalai.

**Spotted Dove***Streptopelia chinensis*

Very common at every locality visited on the tour.

**Laughing (Palm) Dove***Streptopelia senegalensis*

Commonly encountered at many localities throughout Southern India.

**Pompadour Green Pigeon***Treron pompadora*

First seen well in the Mudumalai area with five birds scoped and then again sighted on several more occasions throughout the tour.

**Yellow-footed Pigeon***Treron phoenicoptera*

We had great views of no less than forty birds while taking a jeep drive through the hills of Mudumalai.

**Orange-breasted Pigeon***Treron bicincta*

A single bird outside of its normal range was seen very well in a fruiting tree in the Mudumalai hills.

**Mountain Imperial Pigeon***Ducula badia*

We found this species daily in Periyar NP and along the Gavi track with up to ten birds each day.

**Parrots & Allies *Psittacidae*****Rose-ringed Parakeet***Psittacula krameri*

A total of forty birds were seen during the first two days of the tour with our first views en route to Ranganathittu.

**Plum-headed Parakeet (SE)***Psittacula cyanocephala*

We found this attractive species at several localities with up to eighty birds seen in a single day birding in the Mudumalai hills.

**Malabar Parakeet (E)***Psittacula columboides*

A fairly common endemic of the Ghats that we found almost every day of the tour with a high of twenty birds in a single day while birding along the Gavi Track.

**Vernal Hanging Parrot***Loriculus vernalis*

The high screech of this species was heard virtually every day of the tour with excellent scope views on several occasions.

**Cuckoos *Cuculidae***

**Pied Cuckoo***Clamator jacobinus*

A single bird was located in a mixed flock in dense woodland en route to Ooty.

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

This species was heard calling from a distance in Periyar NP.

**Asian [Fork-tailed] Drongo-Cuckoo***Surniculus lugubris*

We had great scope views of one cooperative bird in the Thattekad Bird Sanctuary.

**Asian Koel***Eudynamys scolopacea*

This widespread Asian and Australian species was found at Ranganathittu, Mysore, and near the Mudumalai hills.

**Blue-faced Malkoha (SE)***Phaenicophaeus viridirostris*

Fairly secretive but found twice during the tour with close looks from our jeep in the Mudumalai Hills.

**Greater Coucal***Centropus sinensis*

Encountered many times throughout the region at most sites but as usual more often heard than seen.

**Typical Owls *Strigidae*****Indian Scops Owl***Otus bakkamoena*

A single bird was seen very well perched on the day roost while birding in the Thattekad Bird Sanctuary.

**Oriental Scops Owl***Otus lettia*

We managed little more than brief flight views of this species after chasing its calls near our hotel in Periyar NP.

**Jungle Owlet***Glaucidium radiatum*

We first heard this species calling from forested areas and eventually managed outrageous scope views of three individuals in Periyar NP.

**Spotted Owlet***Athene brama*

One bird was seen at very close range near the Jungle Hut in the Mudumalai area.

**Frogmouths *Podargidae*****Ceylon Frogmouth (SE)***Batrachostomus moniliger*

We managed incredible close spot lit views of this bizarre-looking bird near Thattekad after searching it out from its screechy calls given at dusk.

**Nightjars *Caprimulgidae*****Jerdon's Nightjar (SE)***Caprimulgus atripennis*

Five of these nocturnal birds total were observed hawking insects at twilight in the Mudumalai hills.

**Swifts *Apodidae*****Indian Swiftlet***Aerodramus unicolor*

We found large numbers of this species in Thattekad Bird Sanctuary as well as Periyar NP with up to 150 daily in these areas.

**White-rumped Needletail***Zoonavena sylvatica*

We found this quick-flying species on several occasions during the second half of the tour with our best views of five birds along the Gavi Track.

**Brown-backed Needletail***Hirundapus giganteus*

A large swift species that we saw very well in Periyar NP and along the Gavi Track.

**Asian Palm Swift***Cypsiurus balasiensis*

A single bird was seen flying on the outskirts of Thattekad Bird Sanctuary.

**Little Swift***Apus affinis*

About fifteen birds were first seen along the roadway near Bandipur Tiger Reserve followed by twenty birds in Periyar NP.

**Crested Treeswifts *Hemiprocnidae*****Crested Treeswift***Hemiprocne coronata*

Outrageous views of this spectacular bird in the Mudamalai hills on several occasions.

**Trogons *Trogonidae*****Malabar Trogon (SE)***Harpactes fasciatus*

A total of six sightings of this beautiful species first found in Thattekad Bird Sanctuary and later associated with bird parties in Periyar NP.

**Kingfishers *Alcedinidae*****Common Kingfisher***Alcedo atthis*

We had sightings of this widespread species in small numbers throughout the tour at watercourses.

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

A single bird was found in the riverine vegetation at Ranganathittu followed by another bird along the river near Thattekad.

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

The regions most common Kingfisher, we recorded this species almost every day.

**Pied Kingfisher***Ceryle rudis*

This, the world's most widespread kingfisher, was seen at Ranganathittu and at Lake Periyar.

**Bee-eaters *Meropidae*****Green Bee-eater***Merops orientalis*

Fairly common on several days during the tour and first seen along the roadside in Kokkare Bellur.

**Blue-tailed Bee-eater***Merops phillipinus*

A single bird was seen perched at length in Thattekad Bird Sanctuary.

**Chestnut-headed Bee-eater***Merops leschinaulti*

This beautiful species was first seen well in the forest surroundings on the way towards Ooty.

**Rollers *Coraciidae*****Indian Roller***Coracias benghalensis*

Birds were seen between Bangalore and Mysore and between Ooty and Top Slip.

**Dollarbird***Eurystomus orientalis*

We enjoyed prolonged scope views of a single bird at the natural history museum in Thattekad Bird Sanctuary.

**Hornbills *Bucerotidae*****Malabar Grey Hornbill (E)***Tockus griseus*

Regularly encountered at most other sites during the tour and especially common in the Thattekad Bird Sanctuary.

**Indian Grey Hornbill (SE)***Tockus birostris*

Two birds were found at Mysore near our accommodation.

**Barbets *Capitonidae*****Brown-headed Barbet***Megalaima zeylanica*

This species was heard when we made the journey to Bodi Ghat for the Yellow-throated Bulbul.

**White-cheeked Barbet (E)***Megalaima viridis*

One of the most common endemics of Southern India, we found them every day at all localities.

**Crimson-fronted Barbet (SE)***Megalaima rubricapilla*

A good looking bird that we first heard near Ranganathittu and later saw in good numbers in Periyar NP.

**Coppersmith Barbet***Megalaima haemacephala*

A single bird was scoped en route to the Mudumalai hills.

### Woodpeckers & Allies *Picidae*

#### Speckled Piculet

*Picumnus innominatus*

A single bird was seen by some of us in the forest of Periyar NP.

#### Brown-capped Woodpecker (SE)

*Dendrocopos nanus*

This woodland species was encountered at several sights towards the beginning of the tour with our best views of a pair in the Mudumalai hills.

#### Yellow-crowned Woodpecker

*Dendrocopos mahrattensis*

We found a single bird foraging in the dry woodland of Periyar NP.

#### White-bellied Woodpecker

*Dryocopus javensis*

Unfortunately this species was only heard while birding in the Thattekad forest.

#### Lesser Yellownape

*Picus chlorolophus*

A single bird was observed at the edge of Periyar NP in a small mixed species flock.

#### Black-rumped Flameback

*Dinopium benghalense*

This species was fairly common and seen at a number of different sites on the tour.

#### Greater Flameback

*Chrysocolaptes lucidus*

Fairly common in Southern India where its characteristic calls is obvious. The species was most common at Thattekad where we found several attractive birds.

#### Heart-spotted Woodpecker

*Hemicircus canente*

A brilliant species to watch, we found a single bird that was scoped and watched at length near our accommodation in the Mudumalai hills.

### Pittas *Pittidae*

#### Indian Pitta

*Pitta brachyura*

A real stunner that we were fortunate to watch for a long time in a thicket in Thattekad including multiple scope views of a calling bird for everyone!

### Larks *Alaudidae*

#### Jerdon's Bushlark (SE)

*Mirafra [assimica] affinis*

This species was seen on the lakeshore near Kokkare Bellur.

#### Ashy-crowned Sparrowlark (SE)

*Eremopterix grisea*

About eight birds were found in the open, dry ground as we neared the Mudumalai hills.

#### Malabar Lark (E)

*Galerida malabarica*

Six birds total showed very well in the dry fields in the Mudumalai area.

### Swallows *Hirundinidae*

#### Dusky Crag Martin

*Hirundo concolor*

Four birds were seen well soaring over the open hillside along the Gavi Track.

#### Barn Swallow

*Hirundo rustica*

This species was encountered in solid numbers at most sites throughout the tour.

#### Hill Swallow (SE)

*Hirundo domicola*

Good numbers of up to twenty-five birds were found on consecutive days while driving the hills around Munnar and in the Eravikulam NP.

#### Wire-tailed Swallow

*Hirundo smithii*

A single bird was found perched on a telephone wire in the Mudumalai area.

#### Red-rumped Swallow

*Hirundo daurica*

A common species that was encountered nearly every day during the first half of the tour.

### Wagtails & Pipits *Motacillidae*

#### White Wagtail

*Motacilla alba*

A single bird was seen at a small wetland site after having left Mysore.

**White-browed Wagtail (SE)***Motacilla madaraspatensis*

First seen along the shoreline Ranganathittu and in good numbers throughout the tour thereafter.

**Grey Wagtail***Motacilla cinerea*

A common species that was seen in small numbers at all localities on tour.

**Oriental (Paddyfield) Pipit***Anthus rufulus*

Three birds were found as we approached the Mudumalai area in a dry open field.

**Nilgiri Pipit (E)***Anthus nilghiriensis*

The site for the species is the Eravikulam NP where we had a total of four birds in the morning observed at length.

**Cuckoo-shrikes *Campephagidae*****Small Minivet***Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*

This stunning species was found to be fairly common at many sights on the tour.

**Scarlet Minivet***Pericrocotus flammeus*

We encountered these attractive birds frequently at many sights on tour with peak numbers seen in the Mudumalai surroundings.

**Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike***Hemipus picatus*

Strangely, only a single bird was found while birding in the Thattekad Bird Sanctuary.

**Bulbuls *Pycnonotidae*****Grey-headed Bulbul (E)***Pycnonotus priocephalus*

A special effort was made for this species in the Mudumalai hills where everyone was eventually afforded great views of about five vocal birds total. We also heard this species later along the Gavi track.

**Black-crested Bulbul***Pycnonotus melaniterus*

This species was seen only in the Thattekad Bird Sanctuary where two birds were feeding on a wild berries.

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

Very common and seen daily at all localities.

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

An extremely common bird that was seen in all habitats and on every day of the tour.

**Yellow-throated Bulbul (E)***Hemixos xantholaemus*

We put in a few yards for this special bird and came up with great scope views of seven birds total in an area known as the Bodi Ghat.

**White-browed Bulbul (SE)***Hypsipetes luteolus*

This often skulky species was seen a number of times and heard even more frequently on our way towards Ooty.

**Yellow-browed Bulbul (SE)***Iole indica*

This attractive species was sighted on multiple occasions throughout the tour with no less than ten birds during one day birding in the Thattekad Bird Sanctuary.

**Black Bulbul***Hypsipetes leucocephalus*

We had brilliant views of this flocking bulbul species near Ooty and especially in the forests near Eravikulam NP.

**Leafbirds *Chloropseidae*****Blue-winged Leafbird***Chloropsis cochinchinensis*

This good looker was found in woodland at the edge of Periyar NP.

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

Fairly common in the Thattekad Bird Sanctuary where we encountered three birds total.

**Ioras *Aegithinidae*****Common Iora***Aegithina tiphia*

A common species that is easily picked up on their calls; we found this bird on several days of the tour with four individuals on one day birding in the Thattekad Bird Sanctuary.

### Thrushes & Allies *Turdidae*

#### Blue-capped Rock-Thrush

*Monticola cinclorhynchus*

A gorgeous male was seen exceptionally well by all in a small forest patch near Eravikulam NP.

#### Blue Rock Thrush

*Monticola solitarius*

Brilliant views were had of two birds that were found in the Eravikulam NP and surroundings.

#### Malabar Whistling-Thrush (E)

*Myophonus horsfieldii*

Often shy and secretive, we found two cooperative birds in the Mudumalai area with further satisfying views in the Eravikulam NP surroundings and in Periyar NP.

#### Orange-headed Thrush

*Zoothera citrina*

Great views were obtained of this stunning species, first seen in Thattekad Bird Sanctuary and two birds seen by everyone skulking in the vine tangles of Periyar NP.

#### Eurasian [Indian] Blackbird

*Turdus merula*

A few individuals were found in the Ooty surroundings foraging in the undergrowth.

#### White-bellied Shortwing (E)

*Brachypteryx albiventris*

A skulker that is associated with streams in high altitude forests where we found two separate birds in the small stunted forests near Eravikulam NP.

#### [Nilgiri Blue Robin] (E)

*Brachypteryx major*

Often split from the above species due to plumage variation and geographical separation, Cairnhill forest near Ooty yielded close views of this retiring endemic on two occasions.

### Cisticolas & Allies *Cisticolidae*

#### Ashy Prinia (SE)

*Prinia socialis*

Three birds were seen well our first day en route from Bangalore and Mysore.

#### Plain Prinia

*Prinia inornata*

Several birds were found on two consecutive days birding in the Eravikulam NP surroundings.

### Old World Warblers *Sylviidae*

#### Blyth's Reed Warbler

*Acrocephalus dumetorum*

A common migratory species that was recorded from most localities, especially at the beginning of the tour where it was recorded daily.

#### Common Tailorbird

*Orthotomus sutorius*

Often heard and seen between Bangalore and Mysore and in the Mudumalai hills.

#### Tickell's Leaf-Warbler

*Phylloscopus affinis*

A very distinctive *phylloscopus* that was seen on a number of occasions in in the Mudumalai hills and around Eravikulam NP.

#### Tytler's Leaf-Warbler

*Phylloscopus tytleri*

A very scarce species that winters in southern India, we were fortunate to find a single individual that showed well in the scrub of Eravikulam NP.

#### Greenish Warbler

*Phylloscopus trochiloides*

A very common species and sighted every day on tour.

#### Large-billed Leaf-Warbler

*Phylloscopus magnirostris*

This species was first sighted in the in the Mudumalai hills and heard again on several other occasions giving a very distinctive double-note call.

#### Western Crowned Leaf-Warbler

*Seicercus [burkii] whistleri*

Surprisingly attractive, we enjoyed great views of a single bird that was seen feeding in a mixed flock along the Gavi Track.

#### Lesser Whitethroat

*Sylvia curruca*

This species was noted in sparse, scrubby vegetation in the Mudumalai hills.

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**Old World Flycatchers *Muscicapidae***
**Asian Brown Flycatcher***Muscicapa dauurica*

This species was fairly common in forested areas throughout the Mudumalai hills.

**Rusty-tailed Flycatcher***Muscicapa ruficauda*

We found our first of this very localized migrant in the Thattekad Bird Sanctuary followed by superb views of another two birds in Periyar NP.

**Brown-breasted Flycatcher***Muscicapa muttui*

A scarce species that was found in the Thattekad Bird Sanctuary with three individuals total.

**Black-and-Rufous Flycatcher (E)***Ficedula nigrorufa*

A truly stunning bird that was encountered near our accommodation at the edge of a small shola near Ooty along with another two birds later in the Eravikulam NP surroundings.

**Verditer Flycatcher***Eumyias thalassina*

Singles were seen perched high in woodland at near the Jungle Hut and the Eravikulam NP surroundings.

**Nilgiri Flycatcher (E)***Eumyias albicaudata*

Four of these localized endemics were found total in the stunted woodland surrounding Eravikulam NP.

**White-bellied Blue Flycatcher (E)***Cyornis pallipes*

Another very localized species, we first had two attractive males in Thattekad Bird Sanctuary followed by one other bird scoped in Periyar NP.

**Blue-throated Flycatcher***Cyornis rubeculoides*

A pair was located in the Thattekad Bird Sanctuary and seen very well perched right above our heads! Later it was heard again in Periyar NP, this species can be tough if not vocalizing.

**Tickell's Blue Flycatcher***Cyornis tickelliae*

Several birds were first found near our accommodation at the Jungle Hut followed by a small number of subsequent sightings.

**Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher***Culicicapa ceylonensis*

This widespread Asian species was found first in small numbers in the forest of Mudumalai followed by scattered sightings in Thattekad, Ooty, and Periyar NP.

**Indian Blue Robin***Luscinia brunnea*

A commonly heard species that we obtained outrageous views of in the thick forest undergrowth near Jungle Hut in the Mudumalai hills as well as later in the highlands.

**Oriental Magpie-Robin***Copsychus saularis*

A common species that was seen at most localities on the tour.

**White-rumped Shama***Copsychus malabaricus*

A single bird was found in forest near our accommodation at the Jungle Hut.

**Indian Robin (SE)***Saxicoloides fulicata*

This bird was easily found between Bangalore and Mysore and in the Mudumalai hills with up to ten vocal birds daily.

**Pied Bushchat***Saxicola caprata*

Common and conspicuous, we found this bird at most localities and nearly everyday on tour.

**Fantails *Rhipiduridae*****Spot-breasted Fantail (E)***Rhipidura albigularis*

Birds were found in thick riverine vegetation during the first day birding on the tour and again near the Jungle Hut.

**White-browed Fantail***Rhipidura aureola*

At least seven birds were seen in open woodland in the Mudumalai hills.

**Monarch Flycatchers *Monarchidae*****Black-naped Monarch***Hypothymis azurea*

An attractive and widespread Asian species that was regularly encountered at most sites on tour.

**Asian Paradise-Flycatcher***Terpsiphone paradisi*

This gorgeous species was seen throughout the tour with our first views of a beautiful male white-phase displaying above us in the forest edge of Ranganathittu.

**Babblers *Timaliidae*****Wynaad Laughingthrush (E)***Garrulax deliserti*

Always tricky and tough to see, this skulker was only glimpsed and heard calling dense within the riverine thicket along the Gavi Track.

**Rufous-breasted Laughingthrush (E)***Garrulax cachinnans*

A very localised species of high altitude forests. We found the perfect location near Ooty where we had simply outrageous views of no less than eight beautiful individuals over a period of two days.

**Grey-breasted Laughingthrush (E)***Garrulax jerdoni*

Another species that has a very small range, we found it to be fairly common in the forested gullies in Eravikulam NP.

**Puff-throated Babbler***Pellorneum ruficeps*

A bird that spends most of the time on the forest floor, we found a single bird in forest near the Jungle Hut.

**Indian Scimitar-Babbler (SE)***Pomatorhinus horsfieldii*

Fairly common and easily located by its distinctive, far carrying calls, we heard this boldly patterned species at every site visited and obtained excellent views in the Mudumalai hills.

**Tawny-bellied Babbler (SE)***Dumetia hyperythra*

Four birds were seen well skulking through the roadside undergrowth as we departed out of the Mudumalai hills.

**Dark-fronted Babbler (SE)***Rhopocichla atriceps*

Fairly common at Periyar NP in small groups in forest, we located nine individuals total which were seen very well.

**Rufous Babbler (E)***Turdoides subrufus*

A shy and often difficult bird, we eventually called four cooperative bird into view in the Periyar NP and the following day we located no less than a dozen birds on the Gavi Track.

**Jungle Babbler (SE)***Turdoides striatus*

A very common species that was encountered many days of the tour in large numbers.

**Yellow-billed Babbler (SE)***Turdoides affinis*

This near-endemic species was seen in the Mudumalai hills with up to twenty-five birds daily.

**Brown-cheeked Fulvetta***Acippe poioicephala*

These sombre birds with a lively song were regularly encountered in mixed feeding flocks in forest near the Jungle Hut and Periyar NP.

**Tits *Paridae*****Great Tit***Parus major*

This species is often associated with mixed feeding flocks and was seen throughout the tour.

**Black-lored Tit (SE)***Parus xanthogenys*

This good looking species was seen only once in a mixed flock in the Mudumalai hills.

**Nuthatches *Sittidae*****Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch***Sitta castanea*

Singles were found in the Mudumalai hills foraging on the thicker tree branches.

**Velvet-fronted Nuthatch***Sitta frontalis*

A fairly common species associated with feeding flocks where we found it creeping up branches at most sites visited.

**Sunbirds & Spiderhunters *Nectariniidae*****Purple Sunbird***Nectarina asiatica*

Numerous and gaudy throughout the tour.

**Long-billed Sunbird (SE)** *Cinnyris lotenius*

This fairly localised species was scoped once singing in the Mudumalai hills and again in the Eravikulam NP.

**Purple-rumped Sunbird** *Nectarinia zeylonica*

Common and conspicuous, we found this species at every locality.

**Crimson-backed Sunbird (E)** *Nectarinia minima*

This endemic sunbird was common only in Thattekad forest near Top Slip where we found six birds followed by excellent views again along the Gavi Track.

**Little Spiderhunter** *Arachnothera longirostra*

Two birds were found zipping through the forest in Thattekad Bird Sanctuary.

#### Flowerpeckers *Dicaeidae*

**Thick-billed Flowerpecker** *Dicaeum agile*

A single bird was found in the Thattekad Bird Sanctuary.

**Pale-billed Flowerpecker** *Dicaeum erythrorhynchus*

Several birds were seen well in the Mudumalai hills feeding on mistletoe.

**Plain Flowerpecker** *Dicaeum concolor*

Fairly numerous in all woodland sites throughout the tour with great views of ten birds first in the Mudumalai hills.

#### White-eyes *Zosteropidae*

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

A common species that was regularly sighted at most localities on tour.

#### Old World Orioles *Oriolidae*

**Eurasian Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus*

This species was recorded at our Hornbill camp as well as Thattekad Bird Sanctuary and Periyar.

**Black-naped Oriole** *Oriolus chinensis*

A single bird was found in woodland at Ranganathittu where we scoped it at length.

**Black-hooded Oriole** *Oriolus xanthornus*

These attractive orioles were recorded in small numbers throughout the tour in woodland habitat.

#### Fairy Bluebirds *Irenidae*

**Asian Fairy Bluebird** *Irena puella*

This stunning bird was first seen in woodland in the Mudumalai hills followed by scattered sightings thereafter.

#### Shrikes *Laniidae*

**Brown Shrike** *Lanius cristatus*

Fairly common at most localities on tour preferring open areas in woodland. We also recorded the distinctive subspecies *philipinensis*.

**Bay-backed Shrike** *Lanius vittatus*

This handsome species was found in the Mudumalai hills with a total of nine individuals.

**Long-tailed Shrike** *Lanius schach*

Regularly recorded at many localities on the tour.

#### Helmetshrikes and Allies *Prionopidae*

**Large [Malabar] Woodshrike** *Tephrodornis gularis*

One bird was found in the Mudumalai hills followed by several more sightings in the forest of Periyar NP.

**Common Woodshrike** *Tephrodornis pondicerianus*

Recorded in small numbers at several sites with our first views of three separate birds in the open woodlands surrounding the Mudumalai area.

### Drongos *Dicruridae*

**Black Drongo** *Dicrurus macrocercus*

Regularly seen in more open woodland than the species to follow.

**Ashy Drongo** *Dicrurus leucophaeus*

Very common in forested areas where it was seen daily.

**White-bellied Drongo (SE)** *Dicrurus caerulescens*

Good numbers were seen from the Mudumalai hills, Ooty, and Thattekad Bird Sanctuary.

**Bronzed Drongo** *Dicrurus aeneus*

A bird of forest that was seen at all sites on the tour.

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

A spectacular and common sighting at all localities, especially common at the Thattekad Bird Sanctuary where we saw no less than twenty individuals in a single day.

### Woodswallows *Artamidae*

**Ashy Woodswallow** *Artamus fuscus*

A group of twenty-five birds were found in the Thattekad Bird Sanctuary followed by another large group in Periyar NP.

### Crows, Jays & Magpies *Corvidae*

**Rufous Treepie** *Dendrocitta vagabunda*

Two noisy birds were first observed in the Mudumalai hills followed by scattered sightings thereafter during the tour.

**White-bellied Treepie (E)** *Dendrocitta leucogastra*

First only heard, we found this beautiful the Western Ghats forest denizen in healthy numbers in Periyar National Park with up to fifteen individuals daily.

**House Crow** *Corvus splendens*

Very common throughout the region.

**Large-billed Crow** *Corvus macrorhynchus*

An abundant species that was seen on every day of the tour.

### Starlings *Sturnidae*

**Southern Hill Myna (SE)** *Gracula indica*

Regular numbers were first recorded in Thattekad Bird Sanctuary followed by further views daily in Periyar NP and along the Gavi track.

**Jungle Myna** *Acridotheres fuscus*

Large numbers were recorded daily throughout the tour.

**Common (Indian) Myna** *Acridotheres tristis*

Common in and around urban centres throughout the country.

**Chestnut-tailed [Malabar] Starling** *Sturnia malabarica*

We enjoyed scattered sightings of this species with our first views of a single bird in the Mudumalai hills and later further sightings in Thattekad and Periyar NP.

**Brahminy Starling** *Temenuchus pagodrum*

An attractive species that we encountered in fallow fields and scattered woodland of the Mudumalai hills.

### Old World Sparrows *Passeridae*

**House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*

Widespread and common in urban areas throughout India.

**Chestnut-shouldered Petronia** *Petronia xanthocollis*

This species is associated with drier habitats in open woodland and was encountered in large numbers in the Mudumalai hills with up to eighty birds in a single afternoon.

#### Waxbills & Allies *Estrildidae*

##### Scaly-breasted Munia

*Lonchura punctulata*

Several birds were seen near Kokkare Bellur and in the Mudumalai hills.

##### Black-headed [Tri-colored] Munia

*Lonchura Malacca*

This species was located near the town of Kokkare Bellur in an area of rank grass.

### Annotated List of Mammals Recorded:

#### Fruit Bats *Pteropodidae*

##### Indian Flying Fox

*Pteropus giganteus*

A roost of least two-and-a-half thousand animals strong was found while at the Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary.

#### Cheek-Pouch Monkeys *Cercopithecidae*

##### Bonnet Macaque

*Macaca radiata*

Very common at all localities and along the roads while travelling.

##### Hanuman Langur

*Semnopithecus entellus*

This agile species was found commonly in the Mudumalai hills.

##### Nilgiri Langur

*Semnopithecus johnii*

Common in the highland forests of the Western Ghats and especially numerous in Periyar NP where we found up to twenty of these dark-colored primates daily.

#### Squirrels *Sciuridae*

##### Indian Palm Squirrel

*Funambulus palmarum*

Common and regularly encountered at most localities.

##### Dusky Striped Squirrel

*Funambulus sublineatus*

Three of these dark squirrels were found in Thattekad Bird Sanctuary.

##### Indian [Malabar] Giant Squirrel

*Ratufa indica*

This beautiful species was found in the Mudumalai hills and at Periyar NP.

#### Hares & Rabbits *Leporidae*

##### Indian (Black-naped) Hare

*Lepus nigricollis*

Three animals were found in total with our first in the scattered woodland of Periyar NP.

#### Mongoose *Herpestidae*

##### Ruddy Mongoose

*Herpestes* \*

Two animals were seen along the roadside in Periyar NP.

##### Stripe-necked Mongoose

*Herpestes* \*

We were very fortunate to have extended views of a single animal that showed for several minutes along the Gavi Track.

#### Elephants *Elephantidae*

##### Indian Elephant

*Elephas maximus*

Two of these impressive beasts were seen in Periyar NP in the area along the Gavi track.

#### Pigs *Suidae*

##### Wild Boar

*Sus scrofa*

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This species was commonly sighted at Periyar NP.

**Deer *Cervidae***

**Spotted Deer (Chital)**

*Cervus axis*

Fair numbers of this attractively spotted deer were seen in the Mudumalai hills.

**Sambar**

*Cervus unicolor*

We saw this large species at close range in the Mudumalai hills and again in large numbers surrounding Lake Periyar.

**Bovids *Bovidae***

**Gaur (Indian Bison)**

*Bos gaurus*

This huge beast was first found in Periyar NP where we had a memorable encounter with five animals followed by excellent views of no less than seventy seen from boat on Lake Periyar and along the Gavi track.

**Nilgiri Tahr**

*Hemitragus hylacrius*

This localized and endangered species was seen at extremely close range in the Eravikulam NP where we counted twenty-six animals total.

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