



Rockjumper Birding Tours

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Western India Desert Specials

12th – 28th February 2009



Trip Report compiled by Tour Leader Markus Lilje

Top 10 Birds as voted by participants:

1. Great Indian Bustard
2. Demoiselle Crane
3. Hypocolius
4. Indian Eagle-Owl
5. Sykes's Nightjar
6. Painted Sandgrouse
7. Crab-Plover
8. Indian Courser
9. White-naped Tit
10. Sirkeer Malkoha

Top 5 Mammals and reptiles as voted for by participants:

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Asiatic Lion | 4. Striped Hyaena |
| 2. Leopard | 5. Blackbuck |
| 3. Wolf | |

The two large Indian states of Rajasthan and Gujarat form a north-western block within this huge country. Due to the region being drier and more inhospitable than most in India, the population is relatively low, leaving more natural habitat and therefore a higher bird density. This region is known for harbouring very impressive numbers of a variety of birds, as well as some of the more difficult and now endangered species of the region. The combination of desert, semi-desert, lakes, dry thorn-scrub and woodland, means that, rather than targeting a huge variety of species, we concentrated on finding the birds that make this area unusual, and enjoyed amazing numbers of water-associated birds.



Trip Summary

Leaving the chaos of Delhi behind, we began with a flight to the Rajasthani city of Jodhpur. From here, we headed for Keechan, where we our first highlight of the trip; a sightings of a few hundred Demoiselle Cranes leaving for their roosts at sunset. Roadside birds included dry country species such as Variable Wheatear, Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, White-cheeked Bulbul and many Common Babblers. An unexpected cloudburst was a big surprise on the way to Jaisalmer, where we would spend the next three nights.

The Thar desert, near the Pakistan border, has the distinction of now holding the largest population of Great Indian Bustard, as well as many other desert specials. Over the next two days we spent much time walking in and around the Desert National Park, proclaimed for the protection of this species. After much searching, we managed to locate around half a dozen of these stately birds. Other highlights



in this area included the rare Macqueen's Bustard, White-browed Bush Chat, Trumpeter Finch, Cream-coloured Courser, 4 species of Wheatear, Asian Desert Warbler, Desert Whitethroat and hundreds of Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse. Raptors were also a big feature and

included 5 vulture species, Laggar Falcon, Long-legged Buzzard and Short-toed Snake Eagle.

Our next destination was the Little Rann of Kutch, well-known for having the largest remaining population of Asiatic Wild Ass, which proved relatively easy to find. Most of the water in the area had dried by the time of our visit – causing an incredible concentration of waterbirds at the remaining water bodies. A very common sight during these two days was having vast numbers of Demoiselle Cranes flying over and calling above our heads in a variety of formations. At a local lake we witnessed the astonishing sight of 15-20,000 of these birds congregating in the hot midday hours. Other waterbirds were also numerous and we had hundreds of pelicans (Great White and Dalmation), Greater and Lesser Flamingos, Eurasian Spoonbill, as well as huge numbers of ducks and shorebirds. Special highlights here were the scarce Sykes's Nightjar, Pallid Scops Owl, Indian Courser, Sirkeer Malkoha and Red-necked Falcon. On the way to Ahmedabad, another small bird sanctuary produced no less than 13 species of ducks and geese as well as all the other water-associated birds.



After an overnight train to Bhuj, we set out to find the highly sought-after Hypocolius, often treated as a monotypic family. This unusual-looking species favours the *Salvadora* bush and once in the suitable habitat we had good views of 20 or so birds as they flew from one thicket to the next. As an added bonus we found three Indian Eagle-Owl as the day drew to a close. The Great Rann of Kutch (now normally spelt Katchchh), in far western India, is also a great place to look for two other scarce Indian endemics, namely White-naped Tit and Marshall's Iora. We notched-up great sightings of these species and also added Painted Sandgrouse and Grey-necked and House Buntings. On the coast we encountered a number of shorebirds and terns and had great close views of another big target - the striking Crab-Plover. Jamnagar produced many more shorebirds that included both colour morphs of Western Reef Heron, Eurasian Oystercatcher, Terek and Broad-billed Sandpipers, Whimbrel and Greater Sand Plover.

Gir Forest in southern Gujarat supports the last surviving population of Asiatic Lion. Unfortunately, they are under serious threat because there is no room for expansion of their territories and their diet sometimes comprises the nearby domesticated animals. The very dry woodland here produced a number of species not yet seen on the tour and we were able to add three species of woodpecker, Indian Vulture, the stunning White-bellied Minivet, Jungle Bush Quail, Plum-headed Parakeet, Crested Treeswift, Rufous Treepie, Tickell's Blue Flycatcher and Yellow Bittern. The mammals did not disappoint and we finally had great Lion sightings – very different from what is normal in Africa, as well as Leopard and numerous Golden Jackal and Indian Grey Mongoose.



The final port of call on the tour was Velavadar National Park, near Bhavnagar. This park supports about 2000 of these now scarce antelope. We had numerous sightings of these gorgeous antelope and were also very fortunate to locate the other well known, but much shyer inhabitants of the park: both Wolf and the widespread but scarce Striped Hyena. Some birds that were added to the list here included Barred Buttonquail, Black Francolin and Short-eared Owl. After the drive to Ahmedabad, we then boarded our overnight train to Delhi, where the tour ended.

BIRD SPECIES LIST

Gill, F. and M. Wright. 2006. Birds of the World: Recommended English Names. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press (version 2.0). Available at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org/>

PHEASANTS, FOWL & ALLIES Phasianidae

- Black Francolin** *Francolinus francolinus*
Fleeting views of a few birds in flight in Velavadar National Park (VNP).
- Grey Francolin** *Francolinus pondicerianus*
One of the few species that was observed on every birding day – large numbers.
- Jungle Bush Quail** *Perdica asiatica*
Gir National Park (GNP) produced good sightings of these little birds on two separate days.
- Indian Peafowl** *Pavo cristatus*
A spectacular species that was seen exceptionally well, particularly in GNP.

DUCKS, GEESE, SWANS Anatidae

- Greylag Goose** *Anser anser*
This species was seen in very good numbers at the Little Rann of Kutch (LRK) and a few hundred at the Tholl Bird Sanctuary (TBS).
- Knob-billed Duck** *Sarkidiornis melanotos*
Biggest numbers at TBS, more later on the way to GNP.
Note: Clement's calls this species Comb Duck and lumps it with S. sylvicola of the new world
- Common Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna*
Our only sighting was a loose group of 26 birds on a river near LRK.
- Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea*
Seen regularly at wetland locations around LRK and at TBS.
- Gadwall** *Anas strepera*
A few of these birds were seen in LRK and in Jamnagar.
- Eurasian Widgeon** *Anas penelope*
A small number of these birds were seen at various waterbodies – largest numbers in TBS.
- Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos*
2 pairs were seen at TBS.
- Indian Spot-billed Duck** *Anas poecilorhyncha*
Great to see this lovely species in good numbers throughout west India, around 200 in Jamnagar.
- Northern Shoveler** *Anas clypeata*
A very common species at most waterbodies on the tour.
- Northern Pintail** *Anas acuta*
Good numbers at a number of sites – most at TBS and Khijadiya Bird Sanctuary (KBS).
- Garganey** *Anas querquedula*
Small numbers including breeding males were seen well on four different days.
- Eurasian Teal** *Anas crecca*
These birds were present at most larger waterbodies, including around 200 at TBS.
- Common Pochard** *Aythya farina*
This bird was seen around LRK, TBS and KBS.
- Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca*
A few birds were seen on Nava Talav near LRK and at KBS.
- Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula*
A number of these birds were seen at TBS and again in Jamnagar.

GREBES Podicipedidae

- Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis*
This species was seen everywhere other than in the Thar Desert area and GNP.

Red-necked Grebe*Podiceps grisegena*

Three of these rare out-of-range vagrants were recorded briefly on a lake near LRK.

Great Crested Grebe*Podiceps cristatus*

Around half a dozen of this widespread species were present on Nava Talav, LRK.

Black-necked Grebe*Podiceps nigricollis*

Two birds were seen in salt pans at Varinar near Jamnagar.

FLAMINGOS Phoenicopteridae**Greater Flamingo***Phoenicopterus roseus*

Hundreds of these elegant birds were seen around LRK, Jamnagar and near the town of Bhavnagar.

Lesser Flamingo*Phoeniconaias minor*

Good numbers were seen in the LRK.

STORKS Ciconiidae**Painted Stork***Mycteria leucocephala*

This bird proved to be quite common and widespread around water in west India.

Asian Openbill*Anastomus oscitans*

A few birds were seen near Ahmedabad and Jamnagar.

Black Stork*Ciconia nigra*

One bird was seen flying in GNP, another perched on a post in VNP.

Woolly-necked Stork*Ciconia episcopus*

Small numbers were seen in SRK and again en route between Jamnagar and GNP.

Black-necked Stork*Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*

An elegant species of Stork that was seen very well in KBS.

IBISES & SPOONBILLS Threskiornithidae**Black-headed Ibis***Threskiornis melanocephalus*

Common and widespread in moister areas.

Red-naped Ibis*Pseudibis papillosa*

This Indian endemic was pleasantly common and seen in good numbers on most days.

Glossy Ibis*Plegadis falcinellus*

Another widespread species that was seen at a good number of different sites.

Eurasian Spoonbill*Platalea leucorodia*

Again widespread and common, biggest numbers at LRK, TBS and near Jamnagar and in VNP.

HERONS, BITTERNES Ardeidae**Yellow Bittern***Ixobrychus sinensis*

A single bird was seen very well on a walk along a small river near GNP.

Black-crowned Night Heron*Nycticorax nycticorax*

A good number of birds was seen at our LRK accommodation, more in KBS.

Striated Heron*Butorides striatus*

This global species was seen at KBS and near GNP.

NOTE: Controversial to some authorities, Clements includes a full twenty-six subspecies under this species. The only split he recognizes is the Green Heron (B. virescens) of North and Central America.

Indian Pond Heron*Ardeola grayii*

A very common species that was encountered daily after we left the Thar Desert.

Eastern Cattle Egret*Bubulcus ibis*

Commonly recorded throughout west India, seen every day in Gujarat.

NOTE: Clement's lumps this and Western Cattle Egret B. ibis as Cattle Egret B. ibis. Eastern Cattle Egret occurs in South and East Asia and Australasia.

Grey Heron*Ardea cinerea*

Seen at most wetland localities throughout Gujarat.

Purple Heron*Ardea purpurea*

This sleek heron was seen in small numbers around LRK and near the city of Jamnagar.

Eastern Great Egret*Ardea modesta*

A common sight throughout west India, encountered at most wetlands.

NOTE: Clement's lumps this and Western Great Egret B.alba as Great Egret B.ibis. Eastern Cattle Egret occurs in South and East Asia and Australasia.

Yellow-billed Egret*Egretta intermedia*

Seen in smaller number along the edges of some of the shallower wetlands.

Little Egret*Egretta garzetta*

Another common and widespread egret during this tour.

NOTE: Clements lumps Little, Western Reef (E. gularis) and Madagascar's Dimorphic (E. dimorpha) Egret into a single species. This treatment is not widely accepted.

Western Reef Heron*Egretta gularis*

Both colour morphs of this mainly coastal bird were seen near Mandvi, Bhavnagar and Jamnagar.

PELICANS Pelecanidae**Great White Pelican***Pelecanus onocrotalus*

A total of somewhere around 1000 birds was seen, including the largest numbers at TBS and on the way to and in and around Jamnagar.

Dalmatian Pelican*Pelecanus crispus*

A few of these large birds were present at many waterbodies, where they were always outnumbered by the above species.

CORMORANTS Phalacrocoracidae**Little Cormorant***Phalacrocorax niger*

Seen regularly at most waterbodies throughout the tour.

Indian Cormorant*Phalacrocorax fuscicollis*

Around 50 birds were seen at TBS, also later in Jamnagar.

Great Cormorant*Phalacrocorax carbo*

This very widespread bird was seen in LRK and also in and near Jamnagar.

NOTE: The white-breasted African subspecies of the widely distributed Great Cormorant P. carbo is split by the IOC as: P. lucidus.

ANHINGA & DARTER Anhingidae**Oriental Darter***Anhinga melanogaster*

Largest numbers were seen in KBS on the 2 days we visited it, also other waterbodies.

NOTE: The African form P. rufa is sometimes lumped with the Asian P. melanogaster and Australasian P. novaehollandiae and the enlarged species called Darter. Clements uses the latter treatment of lumping these forms.

CARACARAS, FALCONS Falconidae**Common Kestrel***Falco tinnunculus*

Small numbers were observed on many of the days in west India.

Red-necked Falcon*Falco chiquera*

A pair was seen quite well in very open country on the LRK.

Laggar Falcon*Falco jugger*

A single bird was seen on both days in and near the DNP.

Peregrine Falcon*Falco peregrinus*

A single bird was seen near the LRK, another later in the Bhuj area.

KITES, HAWKS, EAGLES Accipitridae**Western Osprey***Pandion haliaetus*

Two of these widespread birds were seen, one at Nava Talav, the other at KBS.

NOTE: Clement's lumps this species with the Eastern Osprey P. cristatus of Australasia.

- Crested (Oriental) Honey Buzzard** *Pernis ptilorhynchus*
Probably the most common raptor during the southern Gujarat portion around GNP.
- Black-winged (shouldered) Kite** *Elanus caeruleus*
This widespread small raptor was commonly seen during our travels.
NOTE: Clements has split the two species Black-shouldered Kite (Elanus caeruleus) of the Old World and White-tailed Kite (Elanus leucurus) of the New World. This split is not universally accepted.
- Black Kite** *Milvus migrans*
A reasonably common inhabitant of urban areas.
NOTE: This locally breeding form of the Black Kite M. migrans is considered by most authorities as a distinct species, M. parasitus. We also recorded the sometimes split Black-eared Kite M.m.lineatus.
- Brahminy Kite** *Haliastur indus*
A single juvenile bird was seen well twice at the KBS.
- Egyptian Vulture** *Neophron percnopterus*
Most birds that were seen during the tour were near the DNP in Rajasthan.
- White-rumped Vulture** *Gyps bengalensis*
The numbers of this once widespread species have plummeted to now leaving the bird critically endangered. We had a total of 5 only, on a single day in and near DNP.
- Indian Vulture** *Gyps indicus*
This is another species that has suffered a major decline in numbers throughout the region. We had 5 birds on the first full day in GNP.
- Griffon Vulture (Eurasian Griffon)** *Gyps fulvus*
Small numbers were encountered while in the DNP region on one of the days.
- Red-headed Vulture** *Sarcogyps calvus*
A single bird was seen near DNP, later 3 were seen very well in flight in GNP.
- Cinereous Vulture** *Aegypius monachus*
A huge Vulture, seen in DNP on two consecutive days.
- Short-toed Snake Eagle** *Circaetus gallicus*
One of the more common raptors around the DNP as well as in GNP and VNP later on the tour.
- Crested Serpent Eagle** *Spilornis cheela*
Two birds were seen quite well in the GNP, during our first full day there.
- Western Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus*
Quite a common raptor at most of the tour's wetland sites.
- Pallid Harrier** *Circus macrourus*
A few individuals were seen around LRK, largest numbers later in VNP.
- Montagu's Harrier** *Circus pygargus*
Two birds were seen on the road between Bhuj and Jamnagar.
- Shikra** *Accipiter badius*
The common Accipiter in India, encountered fairly regularly in woodland throughout the region.
- Eurasian Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus*
Two birds showed quite well on the first morning we spent in the LRK.
- White-eyed Buzzard** *Butastur teesa*
A few birds were seen during various parts of the tour, but GNP produces the highest numbers.
- Long-legged Buzzard** *Buteo rufinus*
Highest numbers were recorded around the start of the tour, near DNP.
- Indian Spotted Eagle** *Aquila hastata*
Relatively small numbers of these birds were seen around DNP and later in the LRK.
- Greater Spotted Eagle** *Aquila clanga*
A few of these birds, including the distinctive juveniles were seen around the LRK.
- Tawny Eagle** *Aquila rapax*
We had had a few of these birds in dry habitats around the DNP on both days we spent there.
- Steppe Eagle** *Aquila nipalensis*
Encountered in DNP and again near Bhuj and on the way to Jamnagar.
- Asian Imperial Eagle** *Aquila heliaca*

A single bird was observed soaring over our heads on two consecutive days in the LRK.

NOTE: Clements calls this species Imperial Eagle

Booted Eagle

Hieraaetus pennatus

Both dark and light colour morphs were seen on the tour, with sightings at DNP and GNP.

Crested Hawk-Eagle

Spizaetus cirrhatus

A single bird was seen on two consecutive days in the GNP, one showed its crest very well.

NOTE: Clements lumps this species with Changeable Hawk-Eagle *S. limnaeetus* which inhabits mountainous areas and higher altitudes.

BUSTARDS Otidae

Great Indian Bustard

Ardeotis nigriceps

After much seaching and scanning a single bird was seen and scoped well. Later we found a total of 4 further birds in the DNP – one of the birds' last strongholds. Voted the top bird of the tour!

Macqueen's Bustard

Chlamydotis macqueenii

After finding this scarce bird's tracks, we managed to flush 3 individuals, but were unable to find them again during some searching in the DNP.

RAILS, CRAKES, COOTS Rallidae

White-breasted Waterhen

Amaurornis phoenicurus

Small numbers were seen near reeds at LRK, KBS and near Jamnagar.

Purple Swamphen

Porphyrio porphyrio

Good numbers were seen at the Nava Talav Lake at LRK and at KBS.

Common Moorhen

Gallinula chloropus

A widespread species that was encountered at many waterbodies during the tour.

Eurasian Coot

Fulica atra

A species that was, like the last species, seen on many wetlands throughout the tour.

Cranes Gruidae

Demoiselle Crane

Anthropoides virgo

Another one of the absolute highlights of the trip; first seen at a well-known location – Keechan, north of Jodhpur. The incredible numbers that we were able to observe around the LRK were breath-taking and we had thousands calling as they flew over our heads, to their feeding grounds, and later back to a lake where around 15-20000 birds spent the hot hours of the day.

Sarus Crane

Grus antigone

A single bird was seen at the same lake as the masses of the above species, a pair was seen from the vehicle near Ahmedabad.

Common Crane

Grus grus

We had the first birds in mixed flocks with the Demoiselle Cranes around LRK. They were reasonably common on many days of the tour and we recorded over 500 birds near the KBS, at dusk.

BUTTONQUAILS Turnicidae

Barred Buttonquail

Turnix suscitator

Two birds were flushed by one of the participants, while we walked in the grasslands of VNP.

STONE-CURLEWS, THICK-KNEES Burhinidae

Indian Stone-curlew

Burhinus indicus

An dry-country species that was encountered first near the Great Rann of Kutch and then a number of times in GNP and VNP.

Note: Clements lumps this species with Eurasian Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*.

Great Stone-curlew

Escacus recurvirostris

This impressive bird was seen on three consecutive days around Jamnagar.

OYSTERCATCHERS Haematopidae**Eurasian Oystercatcher***Haematopus ostralegus*

A total of about 4 birds were seen near Keoladeo NP, in Bharatpur on the last morning.

CRAB-PLOVER Dromadidae**Crab-Plover***Dromas ardeola*

A group of around 15 birds was seen on the beach at Varinar, near Jamnagar.

STILTS, AVOCETS Recurvirostridae**Black-winged Stilt***Himantopus himantopus*

A very common species that was encountered at almost every wetland throughout the tour.

Pied Avocet*Recurvirostra avosetta*

This species was seen in good numbers on 5 days of the tour.

PLOVERS Charadriidae**Yellow-wattled Lapwing (SE)***Vanellus malabaricus*

Small numbers of this stunning lapwing were seen, first in LRK later in GNP.

Red-wattled Lapwing*Vanellus indicus*

A very common species that was encountered almost daily on tour.

White-tailed Lapwing*Vanellus leucurus*

3 birds were seen along the shore of the Nava Talav Lake at the LRK.

Grey (Black-bellied) Plover*Pluvialis squatarola*

Highest numbers of this species were seen along the coast near Mandvi.

Little Ringed Plover*Charadrius dubius*

Quite a number of these little birds were seen in the LRK area, single birds at other scattered sites.

Kentish Plover*Charadrius alexandrinus*

Abundant species along a river shoreline near the LRK.

NOTE: the IOC accepts Snowy Plover C. nivosus as a distinct species. Clements Lumps both under Snowy Plover C. alexandrinus

Lesser Sand Plover*Charadrius mongolus*

Birds were seen at the LRK and again near Mandvi and at Varinar.

Greater Sand Plover*Charadrius leschenaultii*

Around a dozen birds were seen very well, some in partial breeding plumage at Varinar.

SANDPIPERS, SNIPES Scolopacidae**Common Snipe***Gallinago gallinago*

Small numbers were found around the LRK and again later in shallow water in VNP.

Black-tailed Godwit*Limosa limosa*

Very good numbers of these waders were seen at a number of different wetlands sites throughout, largest numbers were seen at the TBS, where many came in to roost around dusk.

Bar-tailed Godwit*Limosa lapponica*

A single bird was seen along the coast at Mandvi.

Eurasian Curlew*Numenius arquata*

This very impressive shorebird was seen in good numbers, mainly at LRK and Varinar.

Spotted Redshank*Tringa erythropus*

Small numbers were recorded at a number of different wetland sites.

Common Redshank*Tringa tetanus*

Recorded widely and in larger numbers than the above species.

Marsh Sandpiper*Tringa stagnatilis*

Small numbers were present at most of the good inland shorebird sites.

Common Greenshank*Tringa nebularia*

Largest numbers were recorded around the LRK, but it was present at most wetlands.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

A widespread and quite common freshwater species in Gujarat.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Smaller numbers than the above species, but in similar areas.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*

Our Mandvi site had around a dozen of these different-looking waders, more at Varinar.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Another regularly encountered species at water bodies throughout mainly the first week of the tour.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

A few were found at Okhla Island and on the last day.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

A few birds were seen around the LRK sites and near Jamnagar

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

Small numbers were seen along the beach at Mandvi.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

Good numbers recorded at LRK, Varinar and VNP.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

Single birds were encountered and seen very well near the LRK and in VNP.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

Small numbers were seen at Narara Island Varinar.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

More common than the above species in Varinar, and was also recorded at the LRK.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*

These relatively scarce birds were seen very well on a single day at Varinar.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

Good numbers were recorded at various freshwater wetlands on the tour.

COURSERS, PRATINCOLES Glareolidae

Cream-colored Courser *Cursorius cursor*

7 birds were located in the DNP, later we enjoyed very good views at the LRK.

Indian Courser *Cursorius coromandelicus*

A single bird was seen at very close quarters in agricultural fields near LRK.

Small Pratincole *Glareola lactea*

Best views were of around 20 birds, some at very close quarters at Nava Talav, LRK.

GULLS, TERNS, SKIMMERS Laridae

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

Around 5 birds were seen on the coast at Narara Island, Varinar, and in Jamnagar itself.

Note: Within this very confusing area of taxonomy we recorded two sub-species of Lesser Black-backed Gull Larus fuscus. The one that was seen on the coast at Narara Island was L.f. heuglini, which Clement's calls Heuglin's Gull L. heuglini. The species we recorded at a lake in Jamnagar was L.f. barabensis, which Clement's calls Steppe Gull L. barabensis. This area of taxonomy is under intense scrutiny and we hope for more clarity in the near future.

Great Black-headed (Pallas's) Gull *Larus ichthyaetus*

The first bird was recorded at the LRK, more were then seen at Mandvi and around Jamnagar.

Brown-headed Gull *Larus brunnicephalus*

Mandvi and the coast near Jamnagar, at Varinar produced numerous good sightings.

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*

This widespread species was seen at LRK and along the Varinar beach.

Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei*

Varinar beach produced the highest numbers, also recorded at LRK and Mandvi.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*

Seen in good numbers around LRK, Mandvi and Jamnagar.

NOTE: Clements

- Caspian Tern** *Hydroprogne caspia*
Around a dozen of this widespread species were seen around the Varinar beach.
- Lesser Crested Tern** *Thalasseus bengalensis*
A few birds were seen at both Mandvi and Varinar beaches.
- River Tern** *Sterna aurantia*
The largest numbers of this very elegant bird were seen at the TS and again at a lake in GNP.
- Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo*
Large numbers of this bird were seen at Narara Island, Varinar, a few at Mandvi
- Little Tern** *Sternula albifrons*
Good numbers of this tiny tern were seen at Mandvi and on both days at KBS.
- Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybrida*
A very small number of these birds was present at a small lake in VNP.

SANDGROUSE Pteroclididae

- Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse** *Pterocles exustus*
A very common bird in west India, where it was recorded on every day until we reached GNP.
- Painted Sandgrouse** *Pterocles indicus*
First recorded west of Bhuj at our White-naped Tit site, great views in GNP.

PIGEONS, DOVES Columbidae

- Common Pigeon** *Columba livia*
Common at every locality throughout the entire tour.
- Eurasian Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*
This species was seen in very good numbers at most sites.
- Red Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia tranquebarica*
A few birds were seen at scattered sites, good views at TBS.
- Spotted Dove** *Streptopelia chinensis*
Quite common during the last portion of the trip – around GNP and VNP.
- Laughing Dove** *Streptopelia senegalensis*
Commonly encountered at most localities throughout western India.
- Yellow-footed Green-Pigeon** *Treron phoenicoptera*
A relatively easily seen bird in GNP, where we had good views.

COCKATOOS, PARROTS Psittacidae

- Rose-ringed Parakeet** *Psittacula krameri*
Encountered daily throughout the tour, often in good numbers.
- Plum-headed Parakeet** *Psittacula cyanocephala*
A number of these stunningly marked birds were seen well in GNP.

CUCKOOS Cuculidae

- Greater Coucal** *Centropus sinensis*
Encountered many times throughout the region at most sites in Gujarat.
- Sirkeer Malkoha** *Taccocua leschenaultii*
This often difficult bird was seen extremely well at the LRK, two further quick sightings later.
NOTE: Clements places this species in the genus Phaenicophaeus
- Asian Koel** *Eudynamys scolopacea*
This species was seen first in LRK, biggest numbers in Jamnagar and GNP.

BARN OWLS Tytonidae

- Western Barn Owl** *Tyto alba*
A sad sight as we had an injured bird on the road as we were leaving Bhuj early one morning.

NOTE: Clements lumps this with the Eastern Barn Owl *T. javanica* of South East Asia and Australasia.

OWLS Strigidae

Pallid Scops Owl

Otus brucei

This bird winters in West India, where we had two roosting birds in the garden of our accommodation at LRK.

Indian (Rock) Eagle Owl

Bubo bengalensis

3 birds were seen on a single afternoon/evening near Fulay in the Great Rann of Kutch area.

Spotted Owlet

Athene brama

This owl was recorded at various locations on the tour and was seen on 7 separate days.

Short-eared Owl

Asio flammeus

Disappointingly, we had one fleeting view of a bird in flight at LRK. Another close but obscured bird was not seen by everyone in VNP.

NIGHTJARS Caprimulgidae

Sykes's Nightjar

Caprimulgus mahrattensis

A single bird was seen exceptionally well after much searching in the LRK.

Indian Nightjar

Caprimulgus asiticus

A single bird was seen well on our return to Bhuj one evening.

TREESWIFTS Hemiprocnidae

Crested Treeswift

Hemiproctne coronata

Encountered quite regularly in small flocks or singly in GNP.

SWIFTS Apodidae

Little Swift

Apus affinis

We recorded this bird on a good number of days, often around bridges under which they nest.

ROLLERS Coraciidae

Indian Roller

Coracias benghalensis

This flashy species was seen on most days during our tour.

KINGFISHERS Alcedinidae

White-throated Kingfisher

Halcyon smyrnensis

The region's most common Kingfisher, recorded everywhere except around Jaisalmer.

Common Kingfisher

Alcedo atthis

A stunning and quite common species that was seen at good waterbodies throughout the region.

Pied Kingfisher

Ceryle rudis

The world's most widespread kingfisher, seen regularly during the tour at larger waterbodies.

BEE-EATERS Meropidae

Green Bee-eater

Merops orientalis

A delightful and abundant species in western India.

HOOPOES Upupidae

Eurasian Hoopoe

Upupa epops

A striking species that was encountered at numerous localities on the tour.

NOTE: Clements lumps this species with African Hoopoe *U. africana*.

BARBETS Capitonidae

Coppersmith Barbet

Megalaima haemacephala

A woodland species that was quite regular around Jamnagar and in GNP.

WOODPECKERS Picidae

Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker (SE) *Dendrocopos nanus*

This species was our first woodpecker, seen on a few occasions in GNP.

NOTE: Clements lumps this species with Sunda Pygmy Woodpecker *D. moluccensis* as Brown-capped Woodpecker *D. moluccensis*.

Yellow-crowned Woodpecker *Dendrocopos mahrattensis*

A few birds were seen, with much patience we finally managed some good views.

Lesser Goldenback (Black-rumped Flameback) *Dinopium benghalense*

The largest of our woodpecker species, often given away by its call in GNP.

UNCERTAIN Incertidae sedis

Common Woodshrike *Tephrodornis pondicerianus*

Very good numbers were found in woodlands of GNP

IORAS Aegithinidae

Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia*

Seen well in and around the GNP, where they were quite common.

Marshall's Iora *Aegithina nigrolutea*

Around 3 birds were seen at the site we visited for the White-naped Tit.

CUCKOOSHRIKES Campephagidae

Small Minivet *Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*

This stunning species was found to be fairly common west of Bhuj and in GNP.

White-bellied Minivet *Pericrocotus erythropygius*

We finally found a single male that showed very well after much searching in the GNP.

SHRIKES Laniidae

Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*

A single bird was seen in a reedbed of KBS, near Jamnagar.

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*

A common bird of drier open scrub, where we recorded big numbers on around half the tour days.

Bay-backed Shrike *Lanius vittatus*

Surprisingly good numbers of this stunning bird were seen on many days of the tour.

Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach*

A species that was seen in small numbers, mainly during the latter part of the tour.

Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis*

A common shrike in west India, particularly in drier habitats during the first week of the tour

DRONGOS Dicruridae

Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocercus*

The dominant drongo on the tour, seen often in large number on most days.

White-bellied Drongo (SE) *Dicrurus caerulescens*

A single bird was seen by some in GNP.

FANTAILS Rhipiduridae

White-browed Fantail *Terpsiphone paradisi*

A quite common denizen of thicker patches of bush in GNP.

MONARCHS Monarchidae

Asian Paradise Flycatcher*Hypothymis azurea*

Small numbers of this stunning bird were seen in GNP and a white morph male bird in VNP.

CROWS, JAYS Corvidae**Rufous Treepie***Dendrocitta vagabunda*

A beautiful species that was quite common in woodland of GNP.

House Crow*Corvus splendens*

An often abundant species, especially around towns. Recorded everywhere except GNP and VNP.

Indian Jungle Crow*Corvus culminatus*

An abundant species around GNP, where it replaced the previous species.

NOTE: Clements lumps this species as well as Eastern Jungle Crow C. levaillantii of East India and Large-billed Crow C. macrorhynchos, widespread in Eurasia, all under Large-billed Crow C. macrorhynchos

Northern Raven*Corvus corax*

Good numbers were found around the village of Sam, on the outskirts of DNP.

HYPOCOLIUS Hypocoliidae**Hypocolius***Hypocolius ampelinus*

This very sought-after species was seen well in its preferred *Salvadora* habitat, where we had a total of around 20 individuals. It is often treated as a monotypic family.

TITS, CHICKADEES Paridae**Great Tit***Parus major*

A fairly common species that was regularly encountered in the GNP.

White-naped Tit*Parus nuchalis*

Another highly sought-after and low-density species that is confined to western and southern India. We had good views of 2 birds in *Acacia* woodland west of Bhuj.

SWALLOWS, MARTINS Hirundinidae**Barn Swallow***Hirundo rustica*

This species was encountered in good numbers on a number of days on the tour.

NOTE: This cosmopolitan species is found throughout the world and generally regarded as a single species. Some authorities agree that the Old World H. rustica should be split from the New World H. r. erythrogaster. Also, there is an isolated population in the Egyptian delta (H. r. savignii) that some authorities regard as a separate species, the Egyptian Swallow.

Wire-tailed Swallow*Hirundo smithii*

Small numbers of this swallow were seen well at most of the wetland sites of the tour.

NOTE: This species complex is likely to be split based on the African nominate form that would become African Wire-tailed Swallow and the Asian Wire-tailed Swallow that would be H. filifera. Clements does not as yet recognise this split.

Dusky Crag Martin*Hirundo concolor*

Many days produced a small number of these very dark birds, often near water and bridges.

Red-rumped Swallow*Hirundo daurica*

Another fairly common bird that was quite often seen at different locations during the tour.

LARKS Alaudidae**Indian Bush Lark***Mirafra erythroptera*

A total of 4 birds were seen during the two days we had near the Great Rann of Kutch.

Bimaculated Lark*Melanocorypha bimaculata*

A pair of these birds was seen well in DNP.

Rufous-tailed Lark*Ammomanes phoenicura*

This bird proved to be quite common, particularly around VNP.

Desert Lark*Calandrella brachydactyla*

About 5 birds were seen, some at very close quarters near DNP and Jaisalmer

- Greater Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella raytal*
This bird often moves around in huge flocks, which were observed on more than half our days.
- Crested Lark** *Galerida cristata*
Another species that was quite easily seen at a number of drier locations throughout.
- Sykes's (Tawny) Lark** *Galerida deva*
An Indian endemic, seen on 3 days, with highest numbers in open fields, just outside KBS.
- Oriental Skylark** *Alauda gulgula*
3 birds were seen on our day around Jamnagar.
- Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark** *Eremopterix nigriceps*
Seen in good numbers on the two days we had in the DNP.
- Ashy-crowned Sparrow-Lark** *Eremopterix griseus*
A very common species, recorded daily in Gujarat, often in large numbers.

CISTICOLAS & ALLIES Cisticolidae

- Zitting Cisticola** *Cisticola juncidis*
Numerous birds were seen in the tall grasslands of VNP.
- Rufous-fronted Prinia** *Prinia buchanani*
Most of these dry-country birds were seen on the second day we had west of Bhuj.
- Grey-breasted Prinia** *Prinia hodgsonii*
First birds were seen at KBS, later more were sighted in GNP.
- Graceful Prinia** *Prinia gracilis*
A pair of these small birds was seen in DNP, another later, near the Great Rann of Kutch.
- Jungle Prinia** *Prinia sylvatica*
After much searching a few birds were seen well around the KBS.
- Ashy Prinia** *Prinia socialis*
A good-looking little species that was recorded in or near moister grass and reeds.
- Plain Prinia** *Prinia inornata*
A common species, most birds were seen around Jamnagar, also DNP and VNP.

UNCERTAIN Incertidae sedis

- Common Tailorbird** *Orthotomus sutorius*
A common species in moister parts of the tour: around Jamnagar and common around GNP.

BULBULS Pycnonotidae

- White-eared Bulbul** *Pycnonotus leucotis*
This bird proved to be fairly common to abundant on the tour, but was not seen in GNP.
- Red-vented Bulbul** *Pycnonotus cafer*
An extremely common bird that was seen on nearly every day of the tour.

OLD WORLD WARBLERS Sylviidae

- Indian Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus brunnescens*
This large species was only well in small numbers at various wetlands.
NOTE: Clements lumps this species with Clamorous Reed Warbler A. stentoreus
- Paddyfield Warbler** *Acrocephalus agricola*
A few birds were seen by everyone after some effort, mainly in KBS.
- Blyth's Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus dumetorum*
Small numbers again – mainly in KBS, also near LRK.
- Common Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita*
A common species around LRK, TBS as well as at the KBS.
- Plain Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus neglectus*
We encountered 3 birds on our first visit to the DNP.

- Sulphur-bellied Warbler** *Phylloscopus griseolus*
A good bird to see in west India, great views for some participants in GNP.
- Hume's Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus humei*
During this tour only a single bird was seen in GNP.
- Greenish Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochiloides*
Only a few birds seen – at LRK and TBS.
- Lesser Whitethroat** *Sylvia curruca*
This species was quite common before we reached GNP, highest numbers in TBS and in the *Salvadora* scrubland near Bhuj.
- Desert Whitethroat** *Sylvia minula*
Around 5 birds were seen well in DNP.
- Eastern Orphean Warbler** *Sylvia crassirostris*
This large warbler was seen well by all near the Great Rann of Kutch and other scattered sites.
- Asian Desert Warbler** *Sylvia nana*
This interesting species seen well on a few occasions in DNP.

BABLERS, PARROTBILLS Timaliidae

- Tawny-bellied Babbler** *Dumetia hyperythra*
A group of 5 birds was seen well by some in woodland in GNP.
- Yellow-eyed Babbler** *Chrysomma sinense*
A small group of these birds was seen quite well in scrub around the edge of the lake, TBS.
- Common Babbler** *Turdoides caudatus*
This bird was indeed common or even abundant, seen throughout except in GNP.
- Large Grey Babbler** *Turdoides malcolmi*
Highest numbers were recorded in and around Jamnagar and GNP, other on the way to LRK.
- Jungle Babbler** *Turdoides striatus*
Common species in the moister woodlands of GNP.

WHITE-EYES Zosteropidae

- Oriental White-eye** *Zosterops palpebrosus*
A common species during the latter half of the tour.

STARLINGS Sturnidae

- Bank Myna** *Acridotheres ginginianus*
A species that was encountered daily in good numbers, not recorded in DNP and GNP.
- Common Myna** *Acridotheres tristis*
Common throughout and seen in good numbers on almost every day.
- Brahminy Starling** *Temenuchus pagodarum*
A good looker that was seen in a variety of locations, including good numbers in GNP.
NOTE: Clements places this in the Temunuchus genus
- Rosy Starling** *Sturnus roseus*
Seen on 8 days of the tour, sometimes in very good numbers, a few already in good plumage.
NOTE: Clements places this in the Pastor genus

CHATS, OLD WORLD FLYCATCHERS Muscicapidae

- Bluethroat** *Luscinia svecica*
A few great looking individuals were seen around LRK, others at KBS.
- Oriental Magpie-Robin** *Copsychus saularis*
A common species in denser woodland of GNP, a few individuals prior to that.
- Indian Robin** *Saxicoloides fulicata*
Most common during the latter half of the trip, but recorded almost daily.
- Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros*

We found them to be fairly common in and around GNP, others around the Bhuj region.

White-browed Bush Chat *Saxicola macrorynchus*

A highly sought-after species, very range-restricted, seen well in non-breeding plumage, DNP.

Siberianian Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus*

A species that was most common in VNP and recorded on most days in Gujarat.

Pied Bush Chat *Saxicola caprata*

This species was seen well in DNP and along the roadside in Rajasthan.

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*

A few birds were seen very well around DNP and again in LRK.

Red-tailed Wheatear *Oenanthe chrysopygia*

A single bird was seen in broken, rocky habitat near the DNP.

NOTE: Clements lumps this species with Kurdistan Wheatear as Red-tailed Wheatear O. xanthopygma

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*

Very good numbers were seen in most drier areas of the tour, big numbers in DNP and LRK.

Variable Wheatear *Oenanthe picata*

Great views of this species were enjoyed by all, mostly in DNP, where we also recorded a handful of the out-of-range *capistrata* subspecies.

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*

This species was located on a number of occasions in the woodland of GNP.

Tickell's Blue Flycatcher *Cyornis tickelliae*

As the above species, we recorded a few in the denser areas of GNP.

FLOWERPECKERS Dicaeidae

Thick-billed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum agile*

A single bird was seen by some in GNP.

SUNBIRDS Nectariniidae

Purple Sunbird *Cinnyris asiatica*

This species was very common and seen daily, often in good numbers, in Gujarat.

OLD WORLD SPARROWS, SNOWFINCHES Passeridae

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Widespread and fairly common, although not recorded everywhere.

Yellow-throated Sparrow *Gymnoris xanthocollis*

An abundant bird in GNP, smaller number in one or two other sites.

NOTE: Clements calls this bird Chestnut-shouldered Petronia Petronia xanthocollis

WEAVERS, WIDOWBIRDS Ploceidae

Baya Weaver *Ploceus philippinus*

A total of about 20 birds were seen in non-breeding plumage in LRK.

WAXBILLS, MUNIAS & ALLIES Estrildidae

Indian Silverbill *Lonchura malabarica*

Small groups were encountered quite commonly on most parts of the tour.

NOTE: Clement's calls this bird White-throated Munia Euodice malabarica

WAGTAILS, PIPITS Motacillidae

Western Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

Big numbers were encountered on all days we had around the LRK.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*

Only small numbers were recorded – best sightings in LRK and KBS.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

A fairly common species along water edges in GNP.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Small numbers were seen on 9 days of the tour, in scattered locations.

White-browed Wagtail *Motacilla madaraspatensis*

3 birds were seen during a walk along a little river near the GNP.

Paddyfield Pipit *Anthus rufulus*

Only 2 birds were recorded at Nava Talav, LRK.

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*

A more common species than the above one in the drier western India region.

Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis*

10 birds were recorded during the two sessions in VNP, the first was seen west of Bhuj.

FINCHES Fringillidae

Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus*

A single, stunningly coloured bird came to water in the DNP, where we enjoyed great views.

BUNTINGS, NEW WORLD SPARROWS & ALLIES Emberizidae

Grey-necked (-hooded) Bunting *Emberiza buchanani*

This species was seen well after much patience, where it came to drink west of Bhuj.

Striolated Bunting *Emberiza striolata*

Around 3 birds were seen at the same location as the above species.

NOTE: Clements lumps this species with House Bunting E. sahari as House Bunting E. striolata.

MAMMAL SPECIES LIST

Fruit Bats Pteropodidae

Indian Flying Fox *Pteropus giganteus*

A small number of these very large bats were seen flying in the evening, GNP.

Cheek-Pouch Monkeys Cercopithecidae

Hanuman Langur *Semnopithecus entellus*

Commonly recorded in GNP, also seen en route, to and from LRK.

Hares & Rabbits Leporidae

Indian Hare *Lepus nigricollis*

A number of these speedy mammals were seen in DNP and again at LRK.

Squirrels Sciuridae

Northern Palm Squirrel *Funambulus pennantii*

Common and regularly encountered in most west Indian areas.

House Rats Muroidea

Brown Rat *Rattus norvegicus*

A few individuals seen at the Ahmedabad train station.

Indian Desert Gerbil *Meriones hurrianae*

A lovely little rodent that caught our attention on a few occasions in the DNP.

Mongoose Herpestidae

Small Indian Mongoose *Herpestes javanicus*

2 single animals were seen by some near Jaisalmer.

Indian Grey Mongoose *Herpestes edwardsi*

A few of these larger animals were seen very well in GNP.

Hyaenas Hyaenidae

Striped Hyaena

Hyaena hyaena

A very tricky mammal to see, and the only Hyaena that occurs outside Africa. We had a pair in the open, tall grassland of VNP.

Cats Felidae

(Asiatic) Lion

Panthera leo persica

After having a few very fleeting views of these cats, we were very lucky to enjoy 5 animals, interacting only metres from us. We had a total of 11 animals over the drives we had in GNP, the only location where they still occur in Asia.

Leopard

Panthera pardus

A single animal was observed crossing the road after we followed up on various alarm calls in the area. As above, we saw this in GNP, on our first early morning.

Dogs & Allies Canidae

Golden Jackal

Canis aureus

A total of around 8 were seen, with numbers being split between the Great Rann and GNP areas.

Indian Fox

Vulpes bengalensis

2 single animals were seen in DNP, both unfortunately very distant.

Red (Desert) Fox

Vulpes vulpes

2 were seen in DNP, another was seen later on the edge of the LRK.

Wolf

Canis lupus

1 and 4 animals were seen on consecutive days, in VNP, where there still is a reasonably healthy population. We were very fortunate to find these animals during our very short stay in the area.

Pigs Suidae

Wild Boar

Sus scrofa

Good views were had of these animals in GNP and VNP, after we had some in LRK and KBS.

Deer Cervidae

Spotted Deer (Cheetal)

Cervus axis

Abundantly common in the GNP, where they form a very large part of the lion's diet.

Sambar

Cervus unicolor

Much smaller numbers of this huge, very dark deer were noted in GNP.

Bovids Bovidae

Nilgai

Bosephalus tragocamelus

This massive species of antelope was seen on most days in Gujarat, also common outside reserves.

Indian Gazelle (Chinkara)

Gazella dorcas

Large numbers were seen along the roads in Rajasthan and in LRK.

Blackbuck

Antilope cervicapra

A few hundred of these spectacular antelope were seen very well in VNP, which was declared for their protection. This is their last good stronghold, with a population of around 2000 in VNP.

Horses Equidae

Asiatic Wild Ass

Equus hemionus

This species is split into two very widely separated populations – the one we observed is the endangered western population. Good views were had around the LRK.

REPTILE SPECIES LIST

Marsh Crocodile

Crocodylus palustris

A few large animals were seen at a large lake in GNP.

Land Monitor

Varanus bengalensis

A single one of these large lizards was seen in GNP.

Photo credits: all photos taken on the above tour by Markus Lilje: Great Indian Bustard, Demoiselle Crane, Sykes's Nightjar, Crab-Plover, Painted Sandgrouse, Asiatic Lion and Blackbuck

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