



LADAKH

November - December 2010

A Snow Leopard Quest



Map of the Indus Valley near Leh and the Rumbak section of Hemis National Park.

Numbered localities: 1 Leh, 2 Shey Marshes, 3 Thiksey Monastery, 4 Zingchen, 5 Campsite, 6 Husing Valley, 7 Rumbak Village, 8 Urutse, 9 Ganda La / Kandala and 10 Tarbung Valley (map by Jon Lehmborg)

Cover photo: Scenery in Tarbung Valley, 29th November 2010, ©Erling Krabbe
Front page design by Jon Lehmborg.

Trip report written by Ulrik Andersen, reviewed and improved by all participants.

Bird and mammal lists by Morten Heegaard and Erling Krabbe. Photographs as indicated.

Copenhagen, Denmark, January 2011.

Introduction

To mammal aficionados, the Snow Leopard (*Panthera uncia*) is among the most desirable creatures to experience in the wild.

Although we are primarily birders, Stig and I had shared that sentiment for years, often saying to each others: "We must do something about that cat soon!". But the chances of success had seemed slim enough that time and again, we had postponed the quest. We know quite a few people who had tried for it in vain in Central Asia. Nicknamed "the grey ghost", Snow Leopards are notoriously difficult to see, even in winter when they descend a bit from their high altitude summer haunts, following their prey.

The appearance of a trip report by Kokay Szabolcs (see <http://kokay.hu/ladakheng.htm>) in late 2009 instilled in us the hope that a Snow Leopard expedition would not necessarily be fruitless and gave us the impression that Ladakh might well be the most promising destination for it. Consequently, in early January 2010, we contacted our old friends at Wild World India (Vikram Singh and Gaurav Jain), asking them to investigate and come back to us with suggestions and recommendations for a Snow Leopard quest in the autumn of 2010.

And thus the plans for this successful trip were born....

Based on current knowledge, we believe it is fair to state that Hemis National Park in Ladakh is probably the best place in the World to see a Snow Leopard in the wild. Chances are good and the place is fairly easily accessible.

We warmly recommend the services of Wild World India (<http://wildworldindia.com/> - contact them at wwi@wildworldindia.com); they are friendly and reliable, offering excellent value for money, and the Snow Leopard quest came at a very reasonable price. Using a Delhi based travel agency may not be necessary, but we feel it is a very good idea, particularly if you want to combine your Snow Leopard quest with other activities like we did.

Since we knew that we were in for quite a challenging trip under rather primitive conditions at high altitude, we hand-picked the other trip participants in the hope that we could thus minimize the risk of skirmish. In the end, our all-Danish team consisted of Kate Andersen, Lene Hansen, Morten Heegaard, Erling Krabbe, Jon Lehmberg and Eric Schaumburg in addition to ourselves (Stig Jensen and Ulrik Andersen). We would like to thank everybody for contributing to a wonderful and completely trouble-free trip.

This trip report is mainly devoted to our Snow Leopard quest, but we include information about our pre- and post-quest trips to areas near Delhi (Sultanpur National Park, Basai Wetlands and Bhindawas Bird Sanctuary, as well as the Chambal River).

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The team resting at 4600 m; from left to right: Lene Hansen, Stig Jensen, Jigmet Dadul (sitting), Morten Heegaard, Dorjay, Ulrik Andersen, Kate Andersen, Jon Lehmberg, Gyaltsen, Eric Schaumburg and Erling Krabbe (behind the camera: Wangtak; not present: Urgain, our cook). ©Eric Schaumburg

Timing

We had hoped to go in October when the climate of Ladakh is still relatively mild. But the feedback from Vikram, based on his consultations with the Snow Leopard Conservancy (<http://www.snowleopardhimalayas.org/>), was unequivocal: For the best chances, go in winter between the second half of November and March.

We therefore decided to do our trip in late November to early December, i.e. before severe cold was expected to set in (late December to early February are brutally cold!).

The climate was very cooperative during our visit; there was very little snow on the ground (and only above 4500 m) and we had beautiful clear weather with very little wind every single day in Ladakh. It was cold, but not unbearably so; while in the field, temperatures at night were generally between -10 and -20°C while maximum daytime temperatures were generally slightly below zero, but it felt very nice in the sun (the power of the sun is impressive at an altitude of 4000 m!).

Logistics

We delegated all practical planning to Wild World India and their Leh-based partner Mountain Initiatives, a company owned by Vikram's friend Rinchen Wangchuk. Rinchen is also the founding director of the Snow Leopard Conservancy, India Trust, and a leading capacity on Snow Leopards. Sadly, for health reasons, he was unable to join us in the field. His employee, Stanzin Gurmet, was managing all our local arrangements. Gurmet also participated in the entire trip and proved to be a pleasant and helpful companion in the field.

The two main areas for Snow Leopards in Ladakh are the Hemis National Park and the (unprotected) Ulley area. The national park is probably best - and was our main destination. Ulley is a very reliable area to see Ladakh Urial (Himalayan Red Sheep) and Asiatic Ibex. Therefore, our trip went to Hemis NP first with the intention to visit Ulley afterwards if enough time was left after seeing a Snow Leopard in Hemis NP (the plan was to skip Ulley and keep trying for Snow Leopard in Hemis NP as long as possible if the cat proved elusive).

In Hemis NP, we stayed seven nights in a tented camp at 3800 m and one night in private homes in Rumbak Village at 4050 m. The tented camp was quite comfortable; we had a nice big dining tent with table and chairs, and our crew had even installed a gas heater there; with the tent closed and the heater on, our evenings there were very nice indeed!

We had all brought four-season sleeping bags with us from Denmark and never felt cold at night. In addition, it is imperative to bring lots of warm, layered clothing.

Crew

Undoubtedly, the most important factor determining your chances of success is the local crew. Without a skilled guide, your likelihood of seeing a Snow Leopard is close to zero. And without a good supporting team, the trip - which is quite tough under all circumstances - will feel **very** tough.

Our expedition leader and guide, Jigmet Dadul, is a Program Manager of the Snow Leopard Conservancy, India Trust. Not only is he an absolutely outstanding tracker and guide, he is also a very interesting person to discuss conservation matters with, given his experience with community-based conservation. In addition, he is a very pleasant person. If you can get Jigmet as your guide, you will be in the very best hands and it will maximize your chances of actually seeing "the grey ghost".

In addition to Jigmet, we were serviced by four other competent persons, among them a young man from Rumbak Village, Dorjay, who is incredibly sharp-eyed and already a top class Snow Leopard tracker, and a cook, Urgain, who managed to cook us very nice and tasty food thrice a day under quite difficult conditions. Gyaltsen and Wangtak were invaluable helpers, too: Among many duties, they carried warm lunch out to us in the field every day and supplied us with hot-water bottles for the sleeping bags every night!

Areas visited

Ladakh is also known as "Little Tibet", both because many Tibetan refugees live here and because the Ladakhi are ethnically and culturally closely related to them, although the languages are different. Leh lives from tourism; it is a popular destination in summer, both to Indians wishing to escape the oppressive heat of the plains and to Westerners coming for the trekking and the cultural experiences and sites.

Leh is the main city of Ladakh with small hotels everywhere; nearly all of them are closed in winter. There are several interesting temples and monasteries to visit although the most spectacular of them lie outside the city.

Thiksey Gompa, nicknamed "Little Potala", is probably the most famous and beautiful of the monasteries and we utilized our first afternoon to visit the site. Half of us were back next morning for the atmospheric morning prayers with chanting and music.

The Indus Valley is by far the most bird-rich area in winter. Shrubs, particularly Common Sea-Buckthorn, teem with White-winged Redstarts and Black-throated Thrushes with smaller numbers of other species. The Shey Marshes host a few waterbirds even in winter and we also found some Rosy Pipits there. The Indus River itself is good for Ibisbill although it may take a bit of effort to locate this spectacular but well camouflaged species. We also birded a barren stony plain and the adjacent rocky slopes about half way between Leh and Shey in the hope of Mongolian Finch, but that was the only expected Ladakh bird species which failed to materialize.

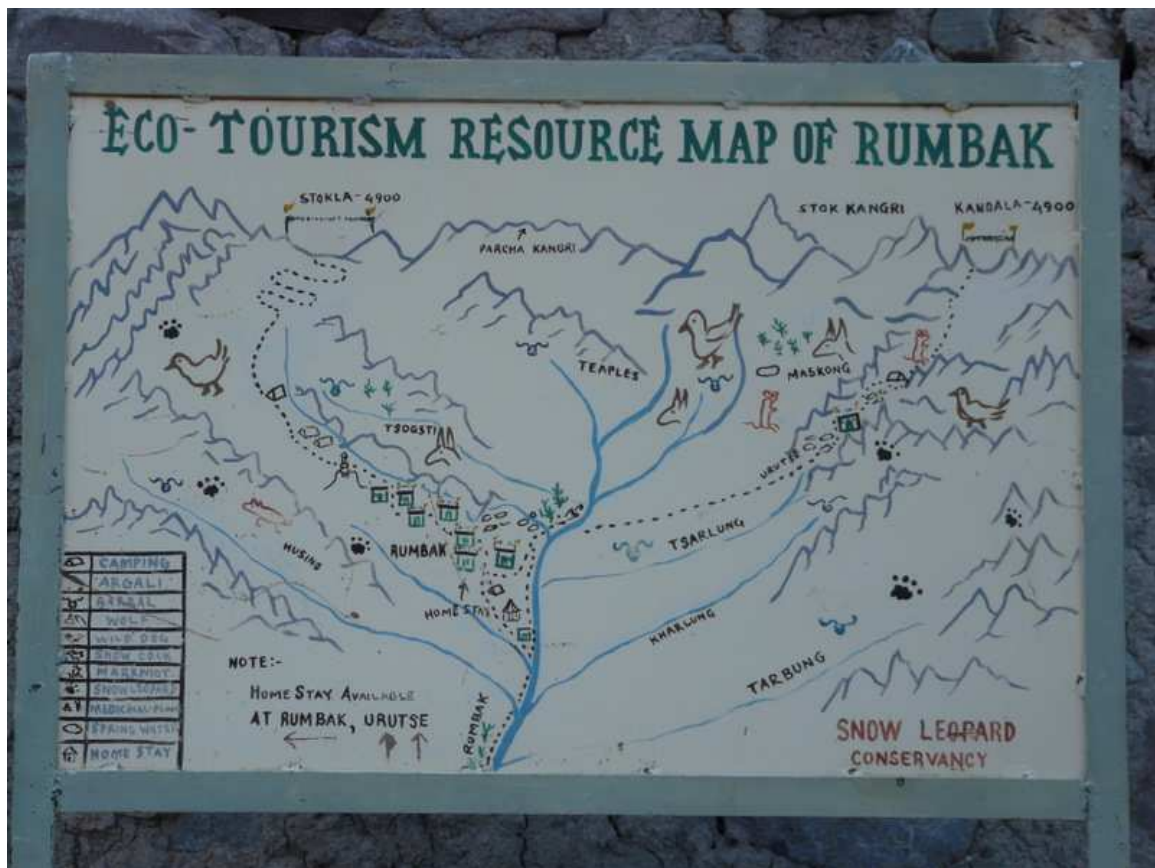
It should be mentioned that the Tibetan "big 4" (Snowcock, Sandgrouse, Partridge and Lark) are found only on the Tibetan Plateau a long drive east of Leh. Kiang (Tibetan Wild Ass) is also reliable there, but we did not have the time required for a visit.

Rumbak Valley (and side valleys) in **Hemis National Park** was our main destination. It is believed to be the home of up to 7 Snow Leopards (probably something like 40 in the whole park). We were taken as far as Zingchen (see map on the inner cover page) by 4x4 vehicles and hiked the short distance to the camp site at Husing Nallah (#5 on the map). This was very conveniently located between the two most promising side valleys, Tarbung Valley going west just north of here and Husing Valley going east just south of here. Early in the morning, Jigmet and Dorjay would check these valleys for fresh signs of Snow Leopard and the program for the day depended on their findings.

There is a large population of Blue Sheep in the area which is why the Snow Leopard population is so (relatively) dense. In the farthest reaches, near Kandala (pass at 4900 m), there is a small population of Argali, the World's largest sheep. In winter, they tend to move to the far (western) side of the pass, unfortunately. If you want to try for Argali, you should spend at least one night in the home stay at Urutse which is situated at 4200 m (and much closer to the pass than our camp!). Wolf is seen regularly. Red Fox is fairly common, too. Ladakh Urial (or Red Sheep) and Asiatic Ibex are fairly common in the Zaskar Valley, but are rarely seen in the Rumbak Valley.

Smaller mammals seen were Large-eared/Royle's Pika, Woolly Hare and a couple of unidentified mice.

Unsurprisingly, the bird life is not particularly rich at this altitude in winter. Golden Eagle, Lammergeier and Himalayan Vulture were seen daily. Himalayan Snowcock were seen on three days. A Solitary Snipe was found along a stream. Hill Pigeons and small numbers of Snow Pigeons were mainly seen near Rumbak village. Among the passerines, Tibetan Snowfinch was the most numerous, though typically seen along ridges at large distances. Brown Dipper was fairly common. A nice find was a Black-throated Accentor in the camp.



Sketch map on sign near Rumbak in Hemis National Park - north is DOWN on this map
©Ulrik Andersen

Ulley is a small village consisting of a few houses, situated a couple of hours driving west of Leh towards Srinagar, at the end of a side way going north from the main road. The Snow Leopard Conservancy has done a good job of creating income for villagers from tourism and thus changing the attitude towards the *shan* (Snow Leopard). Apparently, there is a fair chance of seeing one here (Jigmet pointed out some very fresh pugmarks!). To us, this was mainly a sure locality for Urial and Ibex. The home stays here are not really geared towards receiving visitors in winter since (unlike home stays in Rumbak) they do not have fireplaces in the guest rooms. Winter sleeping bags are recommended.

Itinerary

We had reserved ten days for our Snow Leopard quest and consider this a good decision; you should not count on seeing it with less time at your disposal. We had our incredible encounter on day 7, which caused us to go to Ulley for the last two days:

Nov 21st	Early morning flight Delhi - Leh, afternoon excursion to Thiksey and birding the Indus Valley
Nov 22nd	Attending morning prayers at Thiksey and birding the Indus Valley
Nov 23rd	Morning transfer to Hemis National Park, hiking to the already prepared tented camp. Afternoon spent scanning the slopes near the camp.
Nov 24th	Day hike to the Husing Valley, late afternoon scanning the slopes near the camp.
Nov 25th	Day hike to the Rumbak area, late afternoon scanning the slopes near the camp.
Nov 26th	Day hike to the Tarbung Valley, late afternoon scanning the slopes near the camp.
Nov 27th	Morning scanning the slopes near camp; in the afternoon transfer to Rumbak village (home stay) and scanning the slopes there.
Nov 28th	Early morning scanning the slopes near the village; after breakfast a strenuous hike up to 4600 m east of Rumbak, in the late afternoon walked down to the tented camp again.
Nov 29th	Day hike to Tarbung Valley where we spent four hours with a Snow Leopard!
Nov 30th	Day hike to Kandala for most of us (the rest relaxed near the camp)
Dec 1st	Exited Hemis National Park and transferred to Ulley by road (some sightseeing along the way).
Dec 2nd	Early morning scanning the slopes near Ulley; after breakfast we did a nice walk in a beautiful valley below Ulley; later transferred to Leh.
Dec 3rd	Mid day flight Leh - Delhi, afternoon spent relaxing in Delhi.

Six of us did a day trip to Sultanpur National Park and Basai Wetlands on November 20th. After the Ladakh adventure, half of us did a day trip from Delhi to Bhindawas Bird Sanctuary on December 4th (with Jon revisiting Sultanpur and Basai on December 5th), while the other half went to Chambal River December 4th to December 6th (see appendix for our experiences in these areas).

Diary

November 21st 2010

After a spectacular flight, we arrived in Leh at 8.00 (on time). We were met by Gurmet from our local operator, Mountain Initiatives, and transferred to Hotel Omasila with beautiful views of the mountains.

Relaxing with tea on the large terrace with magnificent views, we enjoyed our first Ladakhi bird sightings (Golden Eagle and Robin Accentor).

After lunch, we were taken to the Thiksey Monastery, also known as "Little Potala". After a tour of the monastery, we birded the Shey marshes and the Indus River with the highlight being a nice Ibisbill. The most common bird was undoubtedly the pretty White-winged Redstart, wintering in large numbers in the valley. In the evening, we met with our Snow Leopard expedition leader, Jigmet Dadul.



White-winged Redstart

©Stig Jensen

November 22nd 2010

Half of us attended the morning prayers at the Thiksey Monastery while the rest birded the shrub along the Indus nearby. After that, we all searched through a dry stony plain and adjacent rocky slopes; very few birds were seen, the best were two Wallcreepers. Near the road, we found a Himalayan Buzzard. Finally, we tried our luck in the shrub along the Indus near Spituk, but the only new bird was a Common Snipe.

After lunch at the hotel, most of us opted for wandering around Leh, while three persons went birdwatching at the Shey Marshes, adding Black-winged Stilt, Barn Swallow and Long-tailed Shrike to the list.

November 23rd 2010

After breakfast, we were taken to the Zingchen entrance of Hemis National Park by 4x4 vehicles. From here we hiked to the already prepared tented camp by the Husing Nallah (nallah means river); along the way Jigmet pointed out Snow Leopard scent markings and pugmarks and we saw our first Blue Sheep, the main prey this time of year.

The camp was at 3800 m and had a separate toilet tent, a large dining tent, a kitchen tent and smaller tents for 1-2 persons.

There were quite a few accentors in the camp, including a Black-throated Accentor.

In the afternoon, we climbed a low ridge half a kilometre south of the camp from which many slopes could be scanned with telescopes; many Blue Sheep were seen.



Our camp at Husing Nallah; the tent to the far right is the heated dining tent.

©Ulrik Andersen

November 24th 2010

While Jigmet (followed by Eric) and Dorjay scouted the side valleys, the rest of us scanned the slopes from the camp. No fresh leopard tracks were found so it was decided to visit Husing Valley after breakfast since a Snow Leopard had been glimpsed there three days ago. During the day, many Blue Sheep and two Pikas were seen, but no fresh signs of the cat. Nice birds were a pair of White-browed Tit-warbler by the camp, Wallcreepers, Lammergeiers, Brown Dippers, Himalayan Griffons, Snow Pigeons, three Himalayan Snowcocks and many Tibetan Snowfinches. The late afternoon was spent scanning the slopes from the same ridge as yesterday.

November 25th 2010

Morning scouting revealed no fresh signs so after breakfast we hiked up to near Rumbak Village and scanned the slopes from there in vain. Hill Pigeons and Chukar Partridges were abundant around the village. The late afternoon was spent scanning slopes near the camp again.

November 26th 2010

Morning scouting revealed fresh tracks of Wolf in the Tarbung Valley which became the destination today. We hiked to where the valley turns south, climbed a low ridge and scanned from there. What a beautiful valley! As usual, lots of Blue Sheep were seen, but no Snow Leopard. Quite a few passerines were seen in the shrubs, including

two species of rosefinch. The late afternoon was once again spent scanning the slopes near the camp which resulted in excellent sightings of Himalayan Snowcock. Just before dark, two of us (Lene and Ulrik) got a very brief glimpse of a Snow Leopard in silhouette against the sky, disappearing behind a ridge (apparently heading for Tarbung Valley) before anybody else had a chance to get onto it. How incredibly frustrating to everybody! But tomorrow is another day....



Blue Sheep ram in the Tarbung Valley, prime Snow Leopard prey

©Erling Krabbe

November 27th 2010

Everybody - except Jigmet and Dorjay (scouting as usual) - went to the ridge south of the camp in the very early morning hoping that the Snow Leopard would show again. This was not to be, unfortunately, despite spending all morning there. Hot breakfast was brought to us in the field! Jigmet had found fresh tracks in Tarbung Valley, but firmly believed the cat had disappeared from there in the direction of Rumbak. Therefore, after our only lunch in the camp, we hiked to Rumbak (where we were to spend the night in a home stay, anyway) and scanned the slopes from there after having tea and cookies in a village home. No luck - but a few of us saw a gorgeous Saker Falcon chasing the pigeons in the village. We had dinner in the four homes we were spread across for the night. There were fire places in the guest rooms so we had the opportunity to fall asleep in warm rooms; however, next morning the rooms were ice cold since there is no insulation in the walls at all.



Rumbak Village

©Stig Jensen

November 28th 2010

The coldest morning of the trip (probably close to -20°C) was spent scanning the slopes from the village, particularly one where Jigmet had seen Snow Leopard many times in the past. After breakfast, we commenced the toughest hike of the trip, up the ridge east of the village to the summit at 4600 m. The views were fantastic from up there - and there were lots of rocky slopes and ridges to scan - but alas, still no luck.

Unbelievably, even up here, warm lunch was brought to us by our camp staff! In the late afternoon we descended the ridge and headed back to our tented camp at Husing Nallah, spending the last hour of daylight scanning the ridges from above the camp. A French nature photographer, Yann Muzika (with a local crew) had established a camp next to ours during the afternoon; he was to spend ten days photographing the wildlife of Hemis National Park - with Snow Leopard as his main target, of course. His guide was Smanla Tsering who works for the National Park as a ranger and is probably as skilled a tracker as Jigmet.



Morten scanning the ridges high above Rumbak.

©Ulrik Andersen

November 29th 2010

Before breakfast we were once again scanning the ridges from above the camp while Jigmet and Dorjay went scouting. They reported completely fresh signs of Snow Leopard in Tarbung Valley - where Yann and Smanla had already headed. After breakfast we hurried up Tarbung Valley and met Yann and Smanla who had flushed the Snow Leopard from the ridge we had been scanning from three days before! It had wandered further up the valley. We were all incredibly frustrated that we had come too late for a sighting - and at the same time hopeful that the cat had decided to stay in the valley and not disappeared in the direction of Rumbak once again. Now Jigmet and Dorjay joined forces with Smanla and his assistant, meaning the very best trackers in Ladakh were all working on relocating the beast for us. Half an hour later, Dorjay re-found it and most of us enjoyed excellent though brief views before it went behind a rock. We moved further up the valley, and Jigmet spotted it on a ridge - but again, it vanished quickly. The guides now felt confident they knew where it was hiding and positioned us all on the opposite side of the narrow valley. Soon the Snow Leopard reappeared and we all enjoyed incredible views over the next four hours at a distance of some 300 m and almost at eye level. With seven telescopes at our disposal, this was an experience beyond belief - probably the best wildlife experience ever for all of us (the Europeans, that is). Most of the time it behaved like an oversize domestic cat - dozing, yawning, rolling over, stretching, licking, strolling.... But a couple of times, it tried to stalk the Blue Sheep also present; unfortunately, they detected it before it got the chance to attack. It was still present - although not visible -



I am hungry...



There are some Blue Sheep over there....

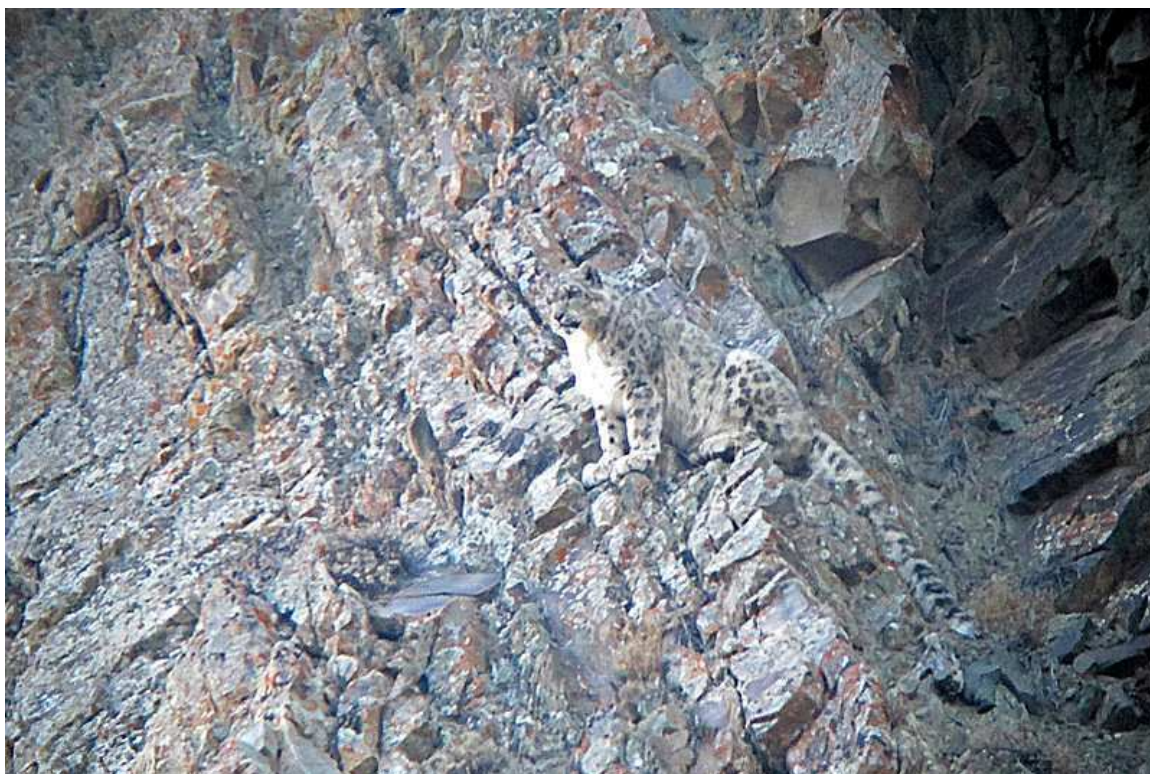


They haven't seen me, careful now....



Darn - they saw me!

The 4 Snow Leopard photos above: ©Erling Krabbe



Snow Leopard Sphinx

©Jon Lehmberg



Studying a Snow Leopard at leisure (Stig and Jon)

©Ulrik Andersen

when we had to begin our retreat to be certain of being back in camp before dark; imagine, we had to walk away from a Snow Leopard! In the evening, we celebrated in our heated dining tent; our cook had baked a Snow Leopard cake and Morten and Erling shared their whisky with the rest of us.



Celebrating with three top notch snow leopard trackers: Smanla Tsering (left of the pole), Dorjay and Jigmet (right of the pole).
©Lene Hansen

November 30th 2010

Three of us took the day off and either stayed near the camp (Kate and Lene) or revisited the Snow Leopard site (Erling) while the remaining five of us set out for the long and strenuous hike to the Kandala in the hope of seeing the Argali, the World's largest sheep.

However, starting from below 3800 m, the altitude gain is more than 1100 m and the walking distance is also quite long. Due to the natural exhaustion from the overwhelming experiences the day before, only Eric (and Jigmet and Gurmet) had sufficient stamina left to make it to the far side of the pass; they were rewarded with a good sighting of six Argali. Eric was quite exhausted when he and Jigmet arrived back in camp just before dark. The rest of us had to settle for Jigmet showing us an argali skull with horns, lying by the hamlet of Urutse. We had to admit defeat at an altitude of around 4600 m when we were still a couple of kilometres from the pass and worked our way slowly back to the camp. Early in the day, we had come across fresh tracks of both Wolf and Snow Leopard, but either failed to materialize.



Jigmet showing us the impressive horns of the Argali.

©Ulrik Andersen

December 1st 2010

After breakfast, we packed the camp and headed for the park exit. After some time - which we spent scanning for Ladakh Urial below the park (to no avail) - our vehicles arrived and we went westwards.

We stopped in several places along the way to admire petroglyphs and not least the spectacular confluence of the rivers Indus and Zaskar which seem to run alongside each other for quite some distance before their waters blend.

We had lunch in Nimmu (almost warm at 3300 m!) before continuing on a small side road to Ulley (back in the cold, 4050 m). Along the side road, several Ladakh Urial were seen, expertly spotted by Dorjay (from the back seat!). Our kitchen and dining tents were put up in Ulley and our chef prepared yet another nice meal for us. We spent the night in guest rooms in two local houses; since neither had fireplaces, this was quite cold.



The confluence of the Indus and Zaskar Rivers

©Ulrik Andersen

December 2nd 2010

In the early morning, we scanned the slopes and ridges from Ulley Village and were rewarded with seeing a few females and young Asiatic Ibex. After breakfast, we took a walk in the side valley just below Ulley, another beautiful place. There were fresh Snow Leopard pugmarks so we put quite an effort into scanning, but in vain. We did succeed in finding a nice old male Asiatic Ibex, majestically scanning the area from his perch on a ridge top. After the walk, we drove back to Leh with a last - excellent as always - field lunch prepared by our cook along the way. We spent a night in Leh before flying back to Delhi at midday on the 3rd.



Ladakh Urial near Ulley

©Erling Krabbe



Male Asiatic Ibex near Ulley

©Ulrik Andersen

Mammals recorded in Ladakh

Mammal taxonomy as in "Birds and Mammals of Ladakh" by Otto Pfister (Oxford University Press, 2004), except as described in taxonomic notes.

List compiled by Morten Heegaard.

Snow Leopard *Panthera uncia*

Several registrations of faeces, urine-markings and tracks during our stay in the area. A brief sighting of one walking high on a ridge against the sky at dusk by two observers (LH,UA) on 26th Nov.

A very prolonged (over 4 hours), completely fantastic and unbelievable observation by the whole group of a "younger", but fully grown male (maybe 5 years old or so) in Tarbung Valley on 29th Nov. As noted in the diary, we were fortunate enough to observe a wide variety of behaviours and actions. A professional film crew would have been able to capture a lot of "BBC class" footage! How lucky can you get?!

Taxonomic note: Recent research has demonstrated that the Snow Leopard is a *Panthera*. Earlier, it was placed in its own genus, and until recently the scientific name was *Uncia uncia* (the name used by Pfister).



Snow Leopard focusing on potential prey

©Erling Krabbe

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*

One heard from the tent during the night between 25th and 26th Nov, barking, and probably the same individual was spotlighted close to the camp just before bedtime on 26th Nov (MH). One seen by the road to Spituk 1st Dec (KA).

Bharal (Blue Sheep) *Pseudois nayaur*

The main prey of the Snow Leopard was common in the Rumbak Valley with daily observations of 25-75 animals.

(Asiatic) Ibex *Capra (ibex) sibirica*

Only seen in Ulley where a male and 3 female/young were found on the 2/12.

Taxonomic note: Today the ibex is normally split into six species of which Siberian/Asiatic (*C. sibirica*) is the one occurring in Ladakh.

Tibetan Argali *Ovis ammon hodgsoni*

Six animals were seen beyond Kandala on 30th Nov (ES).



Left: Tibetan Argali ©Eric Schaumburg
Right: Presumed Large-eared Pika
©Erling Krabbe

Ladakh Urial (Red Sheep) *Ovis vignei vignei*

One female with 3 young and - separately from those - 3 males were seen south of Ulley on 1st Dec, and 2 were scoped from Ulley on 2nd Dec.

Woolly Hare *Lepus oiostolus*

A single animal passed by our observation post at the start of Husing Valley on 27th Nov, and 7 were noted in the upper (highest) part of Rumbak Valley on 30th.

Large-eared/Royle's Pika *Ochotona macrotis/roylei*

Two animals seen in Husing Valley on 24th Nov at 3900 m. Most likely to be Large-eared, but both species occur in Hemis NP, and they are difficult to separate.

Birds recorded in Ladakh



Ladakhi birds: Chukar (top), Golden Eagle (bottom left) and Lammergeier (bottom right). Golden Eagle is ©Erling Krabbe, the others ©Stig Jensen.

Taxonomy as in "Birds of South Asia. The Ripley Guide" (Pamela C Rasmussen & John C Anderton, 2005). List compiled by Morten Heegaard.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

One observation of two birds flying over the Indus River near Thiksey on the 22nd Nov (MH).

Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus*

A flock of 30 geese, most likely this species, was seen flying south in Tarbung Valley (EK)

Common Teal *Anas crecca*

Two seen in shallow water of the Indus River near Thiksey on 21st Nov.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Single birds were recorded in two very different habitats, one in the Indus Valley on 22nd and one in Rumbak Valley on 25th Nov.

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

One observation of a single bird in Rumbak Valley on 25th Nov.

Upland Buzzard *Buteo hemilasius*

One bird noted in Rumbak Valley (near the village) on 25th Nov.

Himalayan Buzzard *Buteo burmanicus*

A single bird was registered sitting on the same rock in a rocky area near Thiksey on both 21st and 22nd Nov.

Note: A recent split from Common Buzzard, not recognized by (e.g.) Clements. The IOC does recognize this split - but calls it *B. refectus*. The earliest valid name for "Himalayan Buzzard" is indeed *burmanicus*, used by Hume in 1875, and therefore should take precedence. This is also the name (correctly) used by Rasmussen & Anderton, the current authority on Indian birds. Despite looking almost exactly like *B. buteo*, DNA-wise it is apparently closer to *B. hemilasius*! The species is not mentioned in Pfister's book at all - so our sighting may be rather unusual.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

Common in the Rumbak Valley where up to five birds were noted every day. A single bird was seen at several occasions in Leh and a single bird was seen in Ulley on 2nd Dec.

Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus*

Common. Daily observations all over the Rumbak area with up to 5 birds per day.

Himalayan Griffon *Gyps himalayensis*

Most numerous the first day in the Rumbak Valley with seven birds seen on the way between Zingchen and our campsite on 23rd, 3 birds settling for communal roosting in the Husing Valley on 24th and 5 near Rumbak Village on 25th Nov. After that not seen until 30th Nov when two adult birds were seen over the upper Rumbak Valley.

Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug*

One bird chasing pigeons in Rumbak Village on 27th Nov and another soaring above our lunch stop between Ulley and Leh on 2nd Dec.

Chukar *Alectoris chukar*

Abundant. Encountered nearly every day in all areas from the river bed of the Indus to the higher mountain valleys up to about 4400 m. Small and large groups were encountered – highest daily total was 55 around Zingchen.

Himalayan Snowcock *Tetraogallus himalayensis*

3 in Husing Valley 24th Nov, 8 + 1 at the junction of Rumbak Valley and Husing Valley 26th Nov, 2 more seen the same day by our guides in Tarbung Valley, 12 on 30th Nov at Kandala (ES).

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

One observation of a single bird in the Shey Fish Ponds on 21st Nov.

Common Coot *Fulica atra*

Wintering in the Shey Marshes – five birds were noted on 20th and 21st Nov.

Solitary Snipe *Gallinago solitaria*

A single bird was flushed from a nearly frozen stream in Rumbak Valley on 28th Nov.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

One bird was seen in a side stream of the Indus near Spituk 22nd Nov. An unidentified snipe flushed in the Shey Marshes the day before probably also belonged to this species.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

A single bird noted in the Shey Marshes on the 22nd Nov.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Six birds noted in the Shey Marshes and the Indus Valley on 21st and 22nd Nov.

Ibisbill *Ibidorhyncha struthersii*

A single bird was seen very well in a rocky part of the Indus River between Shey and Spituk on 21st Nov.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

One bird was seen in the Shey Marshes on 22nd Nov.

Feral Pigeon *Columba livia*

Even in these remote parts of the Himalayas you can't avoid this pest! It was numerous in Leh and the Indus Valley, but also encountered in small numbers in Rumbak Village. However, we also saw some that we believe were genuine wild Rock Pigeons, including a flock of 50 in the stone desert west of Thiksey on 22nd Nov.

Hill Pigeon *Columba rupestris*

Most observations were done around Rumbak Village where up to 60 birds were seen on 25th Nov. Single flocks also noted in Tarbung Valley (25 birds seen on 29th), above our campsite (5 on 30th), and finally two birds were seen in Ulley on 2nd Dec (EK).

Snow Pigeon *Columba leuconota*

Uncommon. Five birds were seen in Husing Valley on 24th and 6 in Rumbak Valley on 27th Nov.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Two late migrants were observed over the Shey Marshes on 22nd Nov.

Rosy Pipit *Anthus roseatus*

Only found in the Shey Marshes with 10 on 21st and 3 on 22nd November.

Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta*

Only seen in the Shey Marshes with 3 and 5-6 birds on 21st and 22nd Nov, respectively.



Hill Pigeons flying near Rumbak Village

©Erling Krabbe



Accentors of Hemis NP: Robin Accentor (top, ©Ulrik Andersen and Erling Krabbe), Brown Accentor (lower left, ©Erling Krabbe) and Black-throated Accentor (lower right, ©Jon Lehmberg).

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Only found in the Shey Marshes with 6-7 birds on 21st and 9 on 22nd Nov.

Winter Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Uncommon. A few birds in the Indus Valley on 21st and 22nd and single birds in Husing Valley on 24th and 25th and in Rumbak Valley on 26th Nov. Also one in Ulley on 1st and 2nd Dec.

Robin Accentor *Prunella rubeculoides*

8 were seen in Leh and the Indus Valley on 21st Nov. Fairly common in the valleys of Hemis NP with up to 8 birds noted daily. In Rumbak Village itself we saw up to 18 birds on 28th Nov while 8 birds were recorded in Ulley on 2nd Dec and 6 in Leh on 3rd Dec.

Brown Accentor *Prunella fulvescens*

Single birds were seen in the Indus Valley on 21st-22nd Nov while up to 25 birds were noted in the Rumbak Valley area. Also five birds in Ulley on 2nd Dec and another five in Leh on 3rd Dec.

Black-throated Accentor *Prunella atrogularis*

One ♂ was seen on several dates from 23rd Nov in riverine vegetation near our campsite.

Blue Whistling Thrush *Myophonus caeruleus*

One bird seen on several dates along the stream next to Hotel Omasila in Leh and one seen in the Indus Valley on 21st Nov. Two birds were noted in Tarbung Valley on 26th and one bird on 29th Nov.

Black-throated Thrush *Turdus atrogularis*

Common winter visitor in the Indus Valley – app. 20 birds seen on 21st and 30+ on 22nd Nov. Also one in Leh on 21st Nov and nine on 3rd Dec.

Note: Often considered conspecific with Red-throated Thrush, *T. ruficollis* (but split by both Rasmussen & Anderton and the latest IOC checklist). If lumped, the combined species is called Dark-throated Thrush.

Dusky Thrush *Turdus naumanni eunomus*

A single bird in the Indus Valley on 21st Nov, a hybrid *naumanni/eunomus* there on 22nd Nov and two in Leh on 3rd Dec.

Note: The hybrid is quite remarkable given that there are apparently no records of the nominate race from India (the superspecies is now often split into Dusky Thrush and Naumann's Thrush).

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

A single bird was found in the Shey Marshes on 21st Nov (EK,UA).

White-winged Redstart *Phoenicurus erythrogaster*

Abundant winter visitor to the Indus Valley. More than 100 were observed on every visit in the area and smaller numbers were present in the side valleys of the Indus – six birds noted around Zingchen and 5 between Ulley and the main road.

White-browed Tit-Warbler *Leptopoecile sophiae*

One pair in the vegetation along the stream by our camp at Husing Nallah. Four birds were seen here on the 27th Nov.



White-winged Redstart

©Stig Jensen



Brown Dipper

©Erling Krabbe

Great Tit *Parus major*

Quite common in all visited areas with up to 12 birds daily.

Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria*

Uncommon in suitable habitat. Two birds found in a rocky area west of the Thiksey Monastery on 22nd, two birds in Husing Valley on 24th and 27th, and one in Tarbung Valley on 29th Nov. Also one near Zingchen on 1st and two birds in Ulley on 2nd Dec.

Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach*

One bird seen in the Shey Marshes on 22nd Nov.

Black-billed Magpie *Pica pica*

Abundant throughout. Most numerous in Leh and the Indus Valley where up to 20 birds were noted daily. In the Rumbak Valley the highest count was 12 in Rumbak Village on 27th Nov. Also at least 10 birds counted in Ulley on 2nd Dec.

Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*

Yellow-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax graculus*

Choughs were seen daily in large numbers, but often too far away for identification.

Red-billed Choughs were noted as follows: 12-14 around our camp on 23rd, 50+ in Husing Valley on 24th, 7-8 over the Kharlung Ridge on 28th and 4 in Rumbak Valley + 2 in Tarbung Valley on 30th Nov.

Yellow-billed Chough was identified as follows: 75 above Leh on 21st, 75 in Husing Valley on 24th, 5 in Rumbak Valley on 25th and 50 on 27th, 6-8 over the Kharlung Rindge on 28th and 90, 50 and 35 in Tarbung Valley on 26th, 29th and 30th Nov, respectively. In addition up to 100 unidentified choughs were noted daily.

Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix*

One bird seen in Leh on 21st Nov.

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*

Only found in the Indus Valley. We noted 7-8 and 2 birds on 21st and 22nd November and at least 75 on the way from Leh to Ulley on the 1st Dec.

Common Raven *Corvus corax*

A single bird was seen above the camp on 29th Nov (ES). We had expected to see more!

Brown Dipper *Cinclus pallasii*

Fairly common along the icy streams in the Rumbak Valley and side valleys – up to 5 birds observed daily.

Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia*

A single observation of one bird in fields near Rumbak Village on 28th November.

Fire-fronted Serin *Serinus pusillus*

Four birds were seen in the Indus River Valley on 22nd Nov while it was recorded nearly daily with up to over 30 birds in the Rumbak Valley area. We found more than 60 in the Ulley area on 2nd Dec, and Jon found 18 in Leh in the morning of 3rd Dec.

European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

Three birds were found in Leh on 3rd Dec (JL).

Twite *Carduelis flavirostris*

Three birds were flying by in the Indus Valley on 22nd Nov (JL, MH).

Plain Mountain Finch *Leucosticte nemoricola*

Two birds on 25th in Rumbak Valley (ES) and a single bird in Tarbung Valley on 29th Nov. Ten birds around the camp on 23rd Nov may have been this species as well.

Brandt's Mountain Finch *Leucosticte brandti*

Five birds in Tarbung Valley on 26th, one in Rumbak valley on 27th and 3 on Kharlung Ridge on 28th Nov.

Streaked Rosefinch *Carpodacus rubicilloides*

One seen near Zingchen on 23rd (UA), and 1♂ + 2♀♀ and 1♂ + 1♀ in Tarbung Valley on 26th and 30th November, respectively.

Great Rosefinch *Carpodacus rubicilla*

One bird was seen flying by in Tarbung Valley on 26th and 1♂ + 2♀ were seen on 27th and 28th Nov in Rumbak Village.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Small flocks noted in Leh and the Indus Valley.

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*

One female was seen in the Shey Marshes on 21st Nov (ES, MH).

Tibetan Snowfinch *Montifringilla adamsi*

A single bird flew over the hotel in Leh on 21st Nov. Numerous in Hemis NP with up to 75 birds counted nearly daily, mostly high on the slopes.

Appendix: Delhi day trips and Chambal River extension

Both before and after the Ladakh adventure, some of us undertook day trips from Delhi, mostly for birdwatching.

Six of us (i.e. all except Lene and Stig) had a full Day in Delhi on December 19th. On this day, we visited two areas: Sultanpur National Park and Basai Wetlands. Both were outstanding localities this year due to plentiful monsoon rains. Therefore, Jon decided to revisit both localities on his last day in India, December 5th.

Sultanpur National Park is an ideal place to go if one is a birder and has half a day to kill. It is well known and often visited by both Delhi and visiting birders. It is less than an hour's drive from the hotels near the airport. The bulk of the reserve is a wetland which in wet years (like 2010) is a large shallow lake teeming with waterbirds. Large numbers of Painted Stork and Indian Cormorant and smaller numbers of other cormorants as well as herons and egrets were nesting at the time of our visits. There is also a pair of Black-necked Stork and a pair of Sarus Crane. Lots of ducks spend the winter here. Not least, near the "causeway" to the observation point in the lake, the tall grasses are home to Sind Sparrow, most easily found when nesting in spring. The fields south of the park are reliable for Indian Courser from January to July or so. The most conspicuous mammal here - apart from the ubiquitous Five-striped Palm-Squirrels - is the Nilgai which is quite common.

Basai Wetlands. Not as well known as Sultanpur, this is a low-lying flooded area near the village of the same name. It is not far from Sultanpur and closer to Delhi. It only has water in wet years - but when it does, the birding is outstanding with thousands of waterbirds to be seen.

Bhindawas Bird Sanctuary is considerably farther from Delhi, something like a three-hour drive west of the city. Birdwise it resembles Sultanpur, but it covers a larger area and is more remote so it has more potential for the rare or unexpected. Blackbuck, undoubtedly one of the most beautiful antelopes of the World, can be seen quite easily en route from Delhi. Visited by Jon, Eric and Stig on December 4th.

The Chambal River National Sanctuary is certainly a very important locality, holding three endangered species (Indian Skimmer, Gharial and Ganges River Dolphin) in one of the few remaining unpolluted and clear rivers of Northern India.

Half the group (Erling, Morten, Kate and Ulrik) did a three-day extension trip to the Chambal River area from 4th to 6th December. There is only one decent place to stay nearby, the Chambal Safari Lodge, about a five-hour drive from Delhi if you are lucky enough to avoid congestion on the way (our return drive to New Delhi Airport on the 6th took more like seven hours).

The Chambal Safari Lodge is a nice and friendly hotel just outside the village of Bah. The lodge is situated in a good grove of trees, a true oasis in a heavily cultivated area. Beware that the lodge is NOT situated near the river; it is about a 40-minute drive to get there.

The food is very good, the staff is friendly, and they even have a good bird guide, Dalweer Singh. Try to get him as your guide here - but be warned that he will usually be allocated to visiting groups from the professional birding companies; e.g., at the time of our visit, he was guiding a Birdingbreaks group.

The rooms are good, but very cold in winter since there are no heaters or fireplaces available at all.

To birders, this is almost a must-go area due to the presence of Indian Skimmer from late November to June (they leave the area when the monsoons set in in earnest). To mammal enthusiasts, the main attraction is probably the World's only completely blind cetacean, the Ganges River Dolphin, which can be seen here all year round.

Our itinerary for 4th to 6th December was as follows:

4th: AM drive from Delhi to the lodge; lunch there and afternoon boat trip downstream

5th: Morning boat trip upstream, lunch at the lodge, afternoon birding around the lodge

6th: Morning excursion by car to an agricultural area (called "Chambal fields" in the lists) frequented by Blackbuck, lunch at the lodge, afternoon/evening drive to New Delhi Airport (from where we flew out at 3 AM on the 7th)

The main attraction here is definitely the boat trips. On our afternoon trip downstream, we managed to get excellent views of Ganges River Dolphins, including views of the peculiar long, almost Gharial-like snout. On our morning trip upstream, we saw eleven much desired Indian Skimmers. On both trips, we saw plenty of Gharials and Muggers (Marsh Crocodiles) and many commoner species of birds, e.g. Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, Black-bellied Tern, Pallas's Gull, Indian Horned Owl and Bonelli's Eagle. Mammals spotted along the shore included Sambar and Nilgai.

Birding around the lodge is quite good and we saw (among others) Brown Hawk-Owl, Indian and Greater Spotted Eagle, Wryneck and Brooks' Leaf-Warbler. Lodge mammals were Nilgai, Common Palm Civet, Golden Jackal, Indian Flying-Fox and Indian Hare.

On the next pages follow the lists of recorded Birds and Mammals & Reptiles, respectively, for Sultanpur, Basai, Bhindawas and Chambal. The lists were compiled by Erling based on the field notes of Morten (complemented by Jon for 4th and 5th December). Bird taxonomy follows Rasmussen & Anderton (op.cit.) while species order is "classical" (Wetmore/Voous). Dates are provided in short notation (dd/mm).

BIRDS

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

20/11 Sultanpur 40 and 5/12 12, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 4 and Bhindawas 14, 5/12 Basai 19

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

20/11 Sultanpur 2 and 5/12 5, 5/12 Chambal River 9, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 4 and Bhindawas 16

Little Cormorant *Phalacrocorax niger*

20/11 Sultanpur 350 and 5/12 140 (many breeding). 4/12 Chambal River 40 and 5/12 30, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 35 and Bhindawas 150, 5/12 Basai 3

Indian Cormorant *Phalacrocorax fuscicollis*

20/11 Sultanpur 200 and 5/12 250 (many breeding). 5/12 Chambal River 1, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 60 and Bhindawas 400

Darter *Anhinga melanogaster*

20/11 Sultanpur 5 (2 ad. + 3 pulli in nest) and 5/12 13 and Bhindawas 19

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

20/11 Sultanpur 1 imm. and 5/12 4 adults 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 2 adults and Bhindawas 45

Indian Pond Heron *Ardeola grayii*

20/11 Sultanpur 80 and 5/12 8, 20/11 Basai 10 and 5/12 16, Delhi – Chambal common, 4/12 Chambal River 10 and 5/12 6, Delhi – Bhindawas 8 and Bhindawas 11

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Common throughout, highest number 20/11 Sultanpur 400

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

20/11 Sultanpur 100 and 5/12 12, 4/12 Chambal River 6 and 5/12 8, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 6 and Bhindawas 35, 5/12 2

Intermediate Egret *Mesophoyx intermedium*

20/11 Sultanpur 50 and 5/12 35, 20/11 Basai 15 and 5/12 13 and Bhindawas 70

Great Egret *Casmerodius albus*

20/11 Sultanpur 40 and 5/12 11, 4/12 Delhi – Chambal 30 and 4/12 Chambal River 1, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 7 and Bhindawas 50, 5/12 Basai 5

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

20/11 Sultanpur 100 and 5/12 30, 20/11 Basai 6 and 5/12 6, 5/12 Chambal River 6, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 2 and Bhindawas 25

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

20/11 Sultanpur 25 (nesting) and 5/12 6, 20/11 Basai 2 and 5/12 8, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 5, Bhindawas 35

Painted Stork *Mycteria leucocephala*

20/11 Sultanpur 800 and 5/12 180 (nesting), 20/11 Basai 10 and 5/12 4, 4/12 Delhi – Chambal 15, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 9 and Bhindawas 20

Asian Openbill *Anastomus oscitans*

20/11 Sultanpur 4 and 5/12 1

Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus*

20/11 Basai 2, 4/12 Delhi – Chambal 2, 4/12 Chambal River 4 and 5/12 7 and Bhindawas 2

Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorrhynchus asiaticus*

20/11 Sultanpur 1 ♀ in the same area as the Sarus Cranes

Black-headed ibis *Threskiornis melanocephalus*

20/11 Sultanpur 50 and 5/12 60, 20/11 Basai 75 and 5/12 3, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 11 and Bhindawas 60

Black Ibis *Pseudibis papillosa*

20/11 Sultanpur 2, 4/12 Chambal River 22 and 5/12 12, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 22, 5/12 Basai 24

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

20/11 Sultanpur 3 and 20/11 Basai 3

Lesser Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna javanica*

4/12 Chambal River 85 and 5/12 1 and Bhindawas 30

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

20/11 Basai 9 and Bhindawas 17, 5/12 Sultanpur 19

Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus*

20/11 Basai 6 and 5/12 193, 4/12 Chambal River 165 and 5/12 100 and Bhindawas 11

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*

4/12 Chambal River 160 and 5/12 50

Comb Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos*

20/11 Basai 20 and 5/12 8 and Bhindawas 35

Cotton Pygmy-goose *Nettapus coromendelianus*

5/12 Chambal River 1 ♀ hiding in floating vegetation.

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*

20/11 Sultanpur 40 and 5/12 28, 4/12 Chambal River 1 and Bhindawas 34, 5/12 Basai 4

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

20/11 Sultanpur 60 and 5/12 350, 20/11 Basai 20 and 5/12 120, 4/12 Bhindawas 110

Spot-billed Duck *Anas poecilorhynca*

20/11 Sultanpur 10 and 5/12 6, 20/11 Basai 15 and 5/12 17 and Bhindawas 140

Common Teal *Anas crecca*

20/11 Sultanpur 4000 and 5/12 8000, 20/11 Basai 200 and 5/12 550, 4/12 Chambal River 2 and Bhindawas 1400

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*

20/11 Sultanpur 400 and 5/12 650 and Bhindawas 600, 5/12 Basai 300

Garganey *Anas querquedula*

5/12 Basai 3 ♀♀.

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

20/11 Sultanpur 600 and 5/12 1800, 20/11 Basai 60 and 5/12 350 and Bhindawas 90

Red-crested Pochard *Rhodonessa rufina*

4/12 Chambal River 1 ♀ and Bhindawas 1 ♀.

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

4/12 Bhindawas 14

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*

4/12 Bhindawas 12

Common Merganser *Mergus merganser*

4/12 Chambal River 4 (3 ♂♂, 1 ♀)

Oriental Honey-buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*

20/11 Sultanpur 1, 5/12 Chambal S. Lodge 1 and 6/12 2, 6/12 Chambal fields 1 and Bhindawas 1

Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus*

20/11 Sultanpur 1 and 5/12 1, 20/11 Basai 1, 4/12 Delhi – Chambal 1, 4/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 1 and 5/12 3, 6/12 Chambal fields 4, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 11

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*

Abundant in Delhi, common elsewhere.

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*

4/12 Delhi – Chambal 1, 4/12 Chambal River 5 and 5/12 One adult on the nest, quite close to the Eagle-Owl nest! 6/12 Chambal fields 1

Short-toed Snake Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*

20/11 Sultanpur 2, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 3

Crested Serpent Eagle *Spilornis cheela*

4/12 Chambal River 1 adult and Bhindawas 1 adult

Eurasian Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

20/11 Sultanpur 2, 20/11 Basai 2 and 5/12 4 ♀/imm. 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 1f. 4/12 Bhindawas 4 ♀/imm.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

5/12 Chambal River 1 imm. bathing at the river bank

Shikra *Accipiter badius*

20/11 Sultanpur 2 and 5/12 4, 4/12 Chambal River 2,

5/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 1 imm., 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 4 and Bhindawas 2

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus*

5/12 Sultanpur 1, 5/12 Basai 1

Greater Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga*

20/11 Sultanpur 2 and 5/12 1 adult. 6/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 1 and Bhindawas 1 imm.

Indian Spotted Eagle *Aquila hastata*

5/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 2 and Bhindawas 1 adult, 5/12 Sultanpur 1-2 adults

Eastern Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca*

5/12 Sultanpur 1 imm.

Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus*

20/11 Sultanpur 4 dark phase, and 5/12 4

Bonelli's Eagle *Hieraaetus fasciatus*

20/11 Sultanpur 1 imm. and 5/12 2 imm., 5/12 Chambal River 2 adults on the river bank and Bhindawas 2 imm.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

4/12 Chambal River 3 and 5/12 1

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

6/12 Chambal fields 2, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 1 ♀+2, 5/12 Basai 1 ♂

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

20/11 Basai 1 adult sitting on a pylon

Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus*

20/11 Sultanpur 8 and 5/12 3, 4/12 Delhi – Chambal 1, 5/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 7, 5/12 Chambal River 1 and 6/12 Chambal fields 10, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 20

Grey Francolin *Francolinus pondicerianus*

20/11 Sultanpur 14 and 5/12 h+2, commonly heard along Chambal River, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas h+1 and Bhindawas h+5, 5/12 Basai h+5.

Black Francolin *Francolinus francolinus*

20/11 Sultanpur 2 heard (seen ES) in dry farmland, 20/11 Basai 1 (ES). 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 1 ♂.

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 5, 5/12 Basai 1

White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus*

20/11 Sultanpur 5 and 5/12 8, 20/11 Basai 4 and 5/12 2, 6/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 1, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 8, 4/12 Bhindawas 4

Brown Crake *Amaurornis akool*

4/12 Chambal River 1 along the riverside

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

20/11 Sultanpur 25 and 5/12 30, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 25 and Bhindawas 110, 5/12 Basai 20

Purple Swampphen *Porphyrio porphyrio*

20/11 Sultanpur 2, 20/11 Basai 10 and 5/12 6 and Bhindawas 340

Common Coot *Fulica atra*

20/11 Sultanpur 10 and 5/12 200 and Bhindawas 700, 5/12 Basai 80

Sarus Crane *Grus antigone*

20/11 and 5/12 Sultanpur 4 (pair with 2 juv.), 4/12 Delhi – Chambal 2, 5/12 Basai 2 adults + 1 imm.
Note: Considered vulnerable

Pheasant-tailed Jacana *Hydrophasianus chirurgus*

20/11 Basai 2 in non-breeding plumage and 5/12 5

Greater Painted-Snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*

20/11 Sultanpur 1 ♂ at small pond in dry farmland

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

20/11 Sultanpur 50 and 5/12 30, 20/11 Basai 2000 and 5/12 1100, 4/12 Chambal River 3 and 5/12 10, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 35 and Bhindawas 35

Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

20/11 Basai 20 and 5/12 32

Great Thick-knee *Esacus recurvirostris*

4/12 Chambal River 12 and 5/12 12

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

5/12 Chambal River 1

Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

4/12 Chambal River 4

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

5/12 Chambal River 4

Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*

4/12 Chambal River 1

River Lapwing *Vanellus duvaucelii*

4/12 Chambal River 40 and 5/12 40

Yellow-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus malabaricus*

20/11 Sultanpur 16 at a pond in dry farmland, 6/12 Chambal fields 2

Red-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus*

20/11 Sultanpur 50 and 5/12 25, 20/11 Basai 50 and 5/12 30, 4/12 Chambal River 6 and 5/12 18, 5/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 6, 6/12 Chambal fields 20, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 30 and Bhindawas 20,

White-tailed Lapwing *Vanellus leucurus*

4/12 Bhindawas 3, 5/12 Sultanpur 11, 5/12 Basai 9,

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

20/11 Sultanpur 2 early birds migrating high over Sultanpur

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

20/11 Basai 500 and 5/12 250, 4/12 Chambal River 7

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

20/11 Basai 250 and 5/12 200, 4/12 Chambal River 2 and 5/12 1

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

5/12 Basai 3,

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

20/11 Sultanpur 30 and 5/12 2, 20/11 Basai 400 and 5/12 800

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

20/11 Basai 3 and 5/12 23 and Bhindawas 2, 5/12 Sultanpur 3

Pintail Snipe *Gallinago stenura*

4/12 Bhindawas 1, 5/12 Sultanpur 1,

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

5/12 Basai 7,

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*

20/11 Basai 1, and 5/12 1

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

20/11 Sultanpur 3, 4/12 Chambal River 10 and 5/12 4, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 7

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

20/11 Sultanpur 6, 20/11 Basai 2 and 5/12 11, 5/12 Chambal River 1 and 6/12 Chambal fields 1, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 13 and Bhindawas 9

Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*

5/12 Sultanpur 1, 5/12 Basai 3

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

20/11 Sultanpur 1 heard and 5/12 11, 20/11 Basai 1 and 5/12 3, 4/12 Chambal River 10

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*

20/11 Basai 10, 4/12 Chambal River 1

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

20/11 Sultanpur 4, 20/11 Basai 10 and 5/12 8

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*

20/11 Sultanpur 1 and 5/12 4, 4/12 Chambal River 5 and 5/12 10 and Bhindawas 1, 5/12 Basai 8

Pallas' Gull *Larus ichthyaetus*

4/12 and 5/12 Chambal River 3 birds in winter plumage, the only gulls during the entire trip.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus*

20/11 Sultanpur 1

River Tern *Sterna aurantia*

4/12 Chambal River 15 and 5/12 4,

Black-bellied Tern *Sterna acuticauda*

4/12 Chambal River 8 and 5/12 3.

Indian Skimmer *Rynchops albigollis*

5/12 Chambal River 11. The birds were eventually found upstream on a sand bank after 2 hours of sailing, just when we were about to give up and return. The birds were roosting and preening during the whole observation, no skimming was seen, but some social display was noted. The birds allowed close approach by boat, and superb views were possible without disturbing the flock.

Note: Classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife / IUCN

Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles exustus*

5/12 Chambal River 60 birds coming to drink at the river in the morning

Feral Pigeon *Colomba livia*

20/11 Sultanpur 40, 4-6/12 common

Red Collared Dove *Streptopelia tranquebarica*

6/12 Chambal fields 1 (MH). 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 2, 5/12 Sultanpur 1

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Common throughout

Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis*

20/11 Sultanpur 8 and 5/12 7, 5/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 1 and 6/12 Chambal fields 5, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 10 and Bhindawas 3, 5/12 Basai 2

Yellow-footed Green Pigeon *Treron phoenicoptera*

5/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 50

Plum-headed Parakeet *Psittacula cyanocephala*

5/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 14, Delhi – Bhindawas 2

Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria*

4/12 Bhindawas 2

Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*

20/11 Sultanpur 10 and 5/12 16, 4/12 Delhi – Chambal common, Chambal Safari Lodge more than 100, 4/12 Chambal River 6 and 5/12 common along the river, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 18 and Bhindawas 26, 5/12 Basai 6

Common Hawk Cuckoo *Hierococcyx varius*

20/11 Sultanpur 1 juv. in open woodland and 5/12 3 and Bhindawas 1

Greater Coucal *Centropus sinensis*

20/11 Sultanpur 4 and 5/12 6, 5/12 Chambal Safari

Lodge 2 and 6/12 2, 6/12 Chambal fields 1, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 13 and Bhindawas 15

Asian Koel *Eudynamys scolopacea*

5/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 1 ♂ in the garden

Collared Scops Owl *Otus bakkamoena*

20/11 Sultanpur 2 together at roost near the restaurant

Indian Eagle-Owl *Bubo bengalensis*

4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 1 roosting in bushes along a channel near Bhindawas Bird Sanctuary, 5/12 Chambal River: a pair at a nest in a hollow in the river bank, a site used by a pair of Brown Fish-Owl until recently when they were kicked out by this pair of Indian Eagle-Owls!

Note: A fairly recent split from Eurasian Eagle-Owl, *B. bubo*.

Brown Hawk-Owl *Ninox scutulata*

5/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 1 at day roost in a large acacia tree in the garden

Spotted Owlet *Athene brahma*

20/11 Sultanpur 2 at day roost near the restaurant, 4/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 1 heard and seen and 5/12 2-3 calling

Little swift *Apus affinis*

20/11 Sultanpur 17 and 5/12 20

White-throated Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis*

20/11 Sultanpur 10 and 5/12 5, 4/12 Delhi – Chambal 10, 4/12 Chambal River 5 and 5/12 2, 5/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 1, 6/12 Chambal fields 4, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 14 and Bhindawas 6, 5/12 Basai 3

Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis*

4/12 Chambal River 10 and 5/12 6 and Bhindawas 1,

Green Bee-eater *Merops orientalis*

4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 2 and Bhindawas 2

Indian Roller *Coracias bengalensis*

20/11 Sultanpur 1 in dry farmland outside Sultanpur, and 5/12 1, 4/12 Delhi – Chambal 10 and 6/12 Chambal fields 3, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 5 and Bhindawas 1

Common Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

20/11 Sultanpur 25 and 5/12 5, 5/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 6 and 6/12 Chambal fields 6, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 6 and Bhindawas 7, 5/12 Basai 2

Indian Grey Hornbill *Oxyceros birostris*

20/11 Sultanpur 2, 4/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 2, 5/12 4 and 6/12 14

Brown-headed Barbet *Megalaima zeylanica*

4/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 2, 5/12 6 and 6/12 10

Coppersmith Barbet *Megalaima haemacephala*
20/11 Sultanpur 1 and 5/12 5, 4/12 Chambal Safari
Lodge 3 and 5/12 2

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*
5/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 1, 5/12 Basai 1

Black-rumped Flameback *Dinopium benghalense*
20/11 Sultanpur 6, 4/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 2 and
5/12 1, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 1 and Bhindawas 2,

Ashy-crowned Sparrow Lark *Eremopterix grisea*
20/11 Sultanpur 2 in dry farmland outside Sultanpur.
6/12 Chambal fields 10

Greater Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*
4/12 Chambal River 35 in a flock at the river bank

Sand Lark *Calandrella raytal*
6/12 Chambal fields 2 (MH)

Hume's Short-toed Lark *Calandrella acutirostris*
Chambal River 5/12 3-4 at the sand bank near the boat
boarding place. Extended, close views enabled us to
identify them from the very similar, pale north-western
race of Greater Short-toed Lark. Especially we noted
the yellowish bill with dark (grey) tip and culmen.
Probably subspecies *C. a. tibetana*, showing less
distinct facial pattern, especially eyebrow, than Greater
Short-toed Lark. According to Rasmussen & Anderton,
Indian races of Greater Short-toed Lark have pinkish
bills.

Crested lark *Galerida cristata*
Basai 4 on both visits

(Grey-throated) Plain Martin *Riparia (paludicola)*
chinensis
20/11 Sultanpur 45 and 5/12 30, 4/12 Chambal River
50 and 5/12 40, 6/12 Chambal fields 30, 4/12 Delhi –
Bhindawas 10 and Bhindawas 12, 5/12 Basai 45
Note: IOC splits *chinensis* which is indeed very different
from African *paludicola*; Clements does not yet accept this
split.

Pale Sand Martin *Riparia diluta*
5/12 Basai 16

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*
20/11 Sultanpur 10 and 5/12 10, 5/12 Chambal River 3
and 6/12 Chambal fields 2, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 25
and Bhindawas 15, 5/12 Basai 600

Wire-tailed Swallow *Hirundo smithii*
20/11 Sultanpur 20 and 5/12 20, 4/12 Delhi –
Bhindawas 6, 5/12 Basai 15

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*
20/11 Sultanpur 20 and 5/12 4, 5/12 Basai 14

Streak-throated Swallow *Hirundo fluvicola*
20/11 Sultanpur 1, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 7, 5/12
Basai 9

Paddyfield Pipit *Anthus rufulus*
20/11 Sultanpur 1, 5/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 1

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*
6/12 Chambal fields 3

Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis*
4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 7,

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*
20/11 Sultanpur 15 and 5/12 2, 5/12 Chambal Safari
Lodge 3 and Bhindawas 2

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*
20/11 Sultanpur 3 and 5/12 3, 5/12 Basai 18,

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*
20/11 Basai 3 and 5/12 130, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 7
and Bhindawas 40

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*
20/11 Sultanpur 10 and 5/12 6, 4/12 Chambal River 6
and 5/12 18, 5/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 5, 6/12
Chambal fields 2, 5/12 Basai 8,

White-browed Wagtail *Motacilla maderaspatensis*
4/12 Chambal River 20 and 5/12 7, 6/12 Chambal
fields 2 and Bhindawas 2,

Long-tailed Minivet *Pericrocotus ethologus*
20/11 Sultanpur 25 and 5/12 11, 4/12 Chambal Safari
Lodge 4 and 5/12 Chambal River 3

Common Woodshrike *Tephrodornis pondicerianus*
20/11 Sultanpur 1 and 5/12 3, 5/12 Chambal Safari
Lodge 1 and Bhindawas 2

Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer*
20/11 Sultanpur 6 and 5/12 20, 4/12 Chambal River 2
and 5/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 4, 4/12 Delhi –
Bhindawas 18, 4/12 Bhindawas 10

White-eared Bulbul *Pycnonotus leucotis*
4/12 Chambal River 5 and Bhindawas 6

White-browed Fantail *Rhipidura aureola*
4/12 Bhindawas 2

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*
20/11 Sultanpur 12 and 5/12 15, 20/11 Basai 1 and
5/12 6 and Bhindawas 8

Oriental Magpie Robin *Copsychus saularis*
20/11 Sultanpur 2 and 5/12 1♂ and Bhindawas 2♀♀.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*
20/11 Sultanpur 6 and 5/12 8, 5/12 Chambal Safari
Lodge 2 ♂♂. 5/12 Chambal River 2 and 6/12 Chambal

fields 1, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 1 ♀ and Bhindawas 1 ♂ + 2 ♀♀.

Brown Rock Chat *Cercomela fusca*

20/11 Sultanpur 6 and 6/12 Chambal fields 1

Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*

20/11 Sultanpur 5 and 5/12 2, 5/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 3, 5/12 Chambal River 1 and 6/12 Chambal fields 10 and Bhindawas 1 ♂, 5/12 Basai 2

Pied Bushchat *Saxicola caprata*

20/11 Sultanpur 4 and 5/12 3 ♂♂, 20/11 Basai 1, 5/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 1 and 6/12 Chambal fields 4 and Bhindawas 3 ♂♂ + 1 ♀. 5/12 Basai 1 ♂.

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*

4/12 Chambal River 1 and 5/12 1

Variable Wheatear *Oenanthe picata*

5/12 Chambal River 1 along the riverside

Indian Robin *Saxicoloides fulicata*

20/11 Sultanpur 6 and 5/12 7, 5/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 2, 5/12 Chambal River 3 and 6/12 Chambal fields 2 and Bhindawas 3 ♂♂ + 2 ♀♀.

Blue Rock-Thrush *Monticola solitarius*

5/12 Chambal River 1 ♀ at the river bank

Black-throated Thrush *Turdus atrogularis*

20/11 Sultanpur 3, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 1
Note: Split from *ruficollis* by the IOC (but not Clements)

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*

20/11 Basai 2 and 5/12 3, 5/12 Sultanpur 8

Ashy Prinia *Prinia socialis*

20/11 Sultanpur 2 and 5/12 18, 5/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 1, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 12 and Bhindawas 9, 5/12 Basai 4

Plain Prinia *Prinia inornata*

20/11 Sultanpur 10 and 5/12 10, 5/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 5, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 5

Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius*

6/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 2, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 1 and Bhindawas 3, 5/12 Sultanpur 2

Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon*

20/11 Basai 1 in a reedbed, seen by some, heard by most and Bhindawas 2

Clamorous Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus*

4/12 Bhindawas 1, 5/12 Sultanpur 1, 5/12 Basai 1

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*

20/11 Sultanpur 10 and 5/12 14, 5/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 3 and Chambal River 1, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 7 and Bhindawas 6, 5/12 Basai 2

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*

20/11 Sultanpur 1 and 5/12 4, 4/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 1 and 5/12 5, 5/12 Chambal River 1, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 2 and Bhindawas 1

Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei*

20/11 Sultanpur 1 and 5/12 13, 5/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 1, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 10 and Bhindawas 6

Brook's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus subviridis*

4/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 3 heard and 5/12 4 seen, in acacia trees in the garden, 5/12 Sultanpur 1

Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

20/11 Sultanpur 8 and 5/12 25, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 4 and Bhindawas 8, 5/12 Basai 2

Red-throated Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*

20/11 Sultanpur 2 (1 red ♂) and 5/12 13, 4/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 1, 5/12 1 and 6/12 2, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 8 and Bhindawas 6

Taiga Flycatcher *Ficedula albicilla*

6/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 1 ♂
Note: A fairly recent split from *F. parva*

Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher *Culicicapa ceylonensis*

4/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 1 and 6/12 2

Yellow-eyed Babbler *Chrysomma sinense*

4/12 Bhindawas 3

Large Grey Babbler *Turdoides malcolmi*

20/11 Sultanpur 30 and 5/12 35, 4/12 Chambal River 4, 5/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 6 and 6/12 Chambal fields common, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 45 and Bhindawas 18

Jungle Babbler *Turdoides striatus*

20/11 Sultanpur 8 and 5/12 9, 4/12 and 5/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 30, 5/12 Chambal River 40, 6/12 Chambal fields common, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 18 and Bhindawas 13

Purple Sunbird *Nectarinia asiatica*

20/11 Sultanpur 1 and 5/12 2, 4/12 Chambal River 2, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 3 and Bhindawas 4

Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus*

20/11 Sultanpur 6, 4/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 6 and 5/12 8

Indian Golden Oriole *Oriolus kundoo*

20/11 Sultanpur 1
Note: This recent split from Eurasian Golden Oriole (*O. oriolus*) is accepted by the IOC, but not Clements

Rufous-tailed Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*

20/11 Sultanpur 3 and 5/12 1, 20/11 Basai 3 and 5/12 4, 6/12 Chambal fields 1, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 5 and Bhindawas 2

Bay-backed Shrike *Lanius vittatus*

20/11 Sultanpur 1 and 5/12 1, 6/12 Chambal fields 1

Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach*

20/11 Sultanpur 10 and 5/12 7, 20/11 Basai 3 and 5/12 2, 5/12 Chambal River 1 and 6/12 Chambal fields 1, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 1 and Bhindawas 1

Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis*

6/12 Chambal fields 3, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 2,

Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocercus*

20/11 Sultanpur 40 and 5/12 16, 4/12 Delhi – Chambal common, 4/12 Chambal River 3, 5/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 3 and 6/12 Chambal fields 30, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 40 and Bhindawas 20, 5/12 Basai 7

Rufous Treepie *Dendrocitta vagabunda*

20/11 Sultanpur 12 and 5/12 4, 4/12 Chambal River 1 and 5/12 1, 6/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 2, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 8 and Bhindawas 7

House Crow *Corvus splendens*

Common and widespread throughout

Indian Jungle Crow *Corvus (macrorhynchos) culminatus*

4/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 4, 4/12 Chambal River 4, 6/12 Chambal fields 5, 5/12 Sultanpur 2

Note: Large-billed Crow (*C. macrorhynchos*) has been split in 3 species by the IOC; this split is not accepted by Clements. Rasmussen & Anderton state that Large-billed Crow definitely consists of a number of species based on different vocalizations; exact species limits await further study.

Brahminy Starling *Sturnus pagodarum*

5/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 5 and 6/12 1

Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

20/11 Basai 30 and 5/12 75 and Bhindawas 7

Asian Pied Starling *Sturnus contra*

20/11 Sultanpur 6 and 5/12 4, 20/11 Basai 50 and 5/12 180, 5/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 14 and 6/12 Chambal fields 50, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 35 and Bhindawas 35

Bank Mynah *Acridotheres ginginianus*

Common, highest count 5/12 Basai 250

Common Mynah *Acridotheres tristis*

Common throughout

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

20/11 Sultanpur 6, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 25 and Bhindawas 30,

Sind Sparrow *Passer pyrrhonotus*

20/11 Sultanpur 2 (♂ (EK) and ♀) in tall grass at the small bank leading to the viewpoint in the wetland.

A main target species during the first excursion to Sultanpur.

4/12 Bhindawas 3 ♂♂ + 2 ♀♀ feeding in a small patch of reeds in the ditch bordering the western side of the sanctuary.

The Sind Sparrow is a fairly recent colonizer of a number of localities near Delhi, including the above. It is easiest to find when nesting in spring and summer.

Yellow-throated Sparrow *Petronia xanthocollis*

5/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 23

Baya Weaver *Ploceus philippinus*

20/11 Sultanpur 1 at reedbeds. 5/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 8 and 6/12 Chambal fields 200, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 4 and Bhindawas 5

Black-breasted Weaver *Ploceus benghalensis*

20/11 Basai 2 in reedbeds and 5/12 45, 5/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 3

Red Avadavat *Amandava amandava*

20/11 Sultanpur 2 ♂♂ in breeding plumage at reedbeds.. and 5/12 1 ♂ + 3

Indian Silverbill *Lonchura malabarica*

20/11 Sultanpur 6 and 5/12 2, 5/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 12, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 2

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrurus*

5/12 Sultanpur 1 ♀/imm.

Red-headed Bunting *Emberiza bruniceps*

20/11 Basai 3

MAMMALS and REPTILES

Indian Flying Fox *Pteropus giganteus*

4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 1 hanging from a wire in farmland, 5/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 100 at their day roost in a large tree at the edge of the garden.

Rhesus Macaque *Macaca mulatta*

20/11 Sultanpur 12 and 5/12 5, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 13, 5/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 1

Golden Jackal *Canis aureus*

5/12 and 6/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 3 near the cottages, where they were seen in the morning hours. Rather shy.

Common Palm Civet *Paradoxurus hermaphroditus*

4/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 2 (1 adult + 1 juv.) and 5/12 1 adult, seen after dark. Fed and shown to us by the staff, and apparently a nightly and very popular show for new visitors. The family of civet cats lived in a big hollow tree in the park / garden.

Small Indian Mongoose *Herpestes auropunctatus*

4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 1

Indian Grey Mongoose *Herpestes edwardsii*

4/12 Bhindawas 1

Jungle Cat *Felis chaus*

4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 1 juv.

Sambar *Cervus unicolor*

5/12 Chambal River 4 (3 ♂♂ and 1 ♀)

Nilgai *Boselaphus tragocamelus*

20/11 Sultanpur 8 and 5/12 15, 4/12 Chambal River 3, 5/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 2, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 12 and Bhindawas 15

Blackbuck Antelope *cervicapra*

4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 12 ♂♂ + 5 ♀♀ + 1 imm. and 1 ♂ (two locations), 6/12 Chambal fields 40, mixed ♀♀, young ♂♂ and a single dominant ♂. Seen in open large fields at quite close range. Not shy.

Indian Hare *Lepus nigricollis*

5/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 2

Five-striped Palm Squirrel *Funambulus pennanti*

20/11 Sultanpur 3 and 5/12 6, 4/12 Delhi – Bhindawas 6 and Bhindawas 13, 4-6/12 Chambal Safari Lodge 20+

Ganges River Dolphin *Platanista gangetica*

4/12 Chambal River 5-6 downstream usually just briefly breaking the surface, but with patience several were seen leaping out the water, showing the long, pointed snout.

5/12 Chambal River 1-2 around the boat, far upstream.

Note: Listed as Endangered by the IUCN

Mugger (Marsh Crocodile) *Crocodylus palustris*

4/12 Chambal River 4, including some huge individuals. 5/12 Chambal River 12

Gharial *Gavialis gangeticus*

4/12 Chambal River 20 and 5/12 30 – including some very large adults. The Chambal River is one of the main strongholds for this species.

Note: Listed as Critically Endangered by the IUCN

Flap Shell Turtle *Lissemys punctata*

4-5/12 Chambal River up to 30 per day

Crowned River Turtle *Hardella thurjii*

4-5/12 Chambal River about 10 per day

Pictures on back cover:

Indian Skimmer and Woolly-necked Stork ©Erling Krabbe

Shikra ©Ulrik Andersen

Sind Sparrow ©Stig Jensen

(Skimmer, Stork and Shikra from Chambal, Sind Sparrow from Bhindawas)

