

# C. Murphy (1993) (part)

CYGNUS NEPAL 1992

## Brief outline of Itinerary

Day	Date	
1	6 November	flight delayed, o/n in London
2	7 November	flight from Heathrow to Delhi
3	8 November	am Delhi airport; pm Manora River, K'du
4	9 November	Phulchowki
5	10 November	am Gokarna Forest; pm flight to Biratnagar
6	11 November	Kosi Tappu
7	12 November	Kosi Tappu and Kosi Barrage
8	13 November	Kosi to Chitwan via Rapti River at Hetaura
9	14 November	Chitwan National Park - Jungle Lodge
10	15 November	" - Jungle Lodge - Gaida Lodge
11	16 November	" - Gaida Lodge to Gaida Camp (tented)
12	17 November	" - Churia Hills and
13	18 November	Gaida Lodge to Pokhara via Hazari Tal
14	19 November	Pokhara - Fishtail Forest and Phewa Tal
15	20 November	am Fishtail Forest; pm flight to Kathmandu
16	21 November	Kathmandu (Phulchowki/city tour)
17	22 November	am Kathmandu; pm flight to Delhi
18	23 November	flight from Delhi to Heathrow

Tour Members: Chris Murphy (leader) Cliff Waller (second leader), Niklaus Deuchler, Paddy Hazel, Nichola Hunt, Jurgen Klunder, Leo Mayes, David Mountain, Gareth Rees, Peter Roseveare, Susan Roseveare, David Street, Kate Street, Duncan Woodhead.

Friday 6 November LONDON

The group assembled at Heathrow, terminal 3, in plenty of time for the 6.30pm flight to Delhi. A combination of bird-strike(!) damage to the pilot's windscreen and bad weather at Paris airport, delayed departure until tomorrow. Night spent at the St James' Court Hotel in central London, courtesy of Air India who also allowed us each a three minute long-distance telephone call.

Saturday 7 November LONDON-DELHI

After a short delay while one, mis-informed Indian gentleman settled his £150 telephone bill we returned to Heathrow, finally getting away at 10.30am. After a two hour stop at Charles de Gaulle airport we flew on over Munich and the Alps, Turkey and the Middle East with an epic Indian film to entertain us, or not. While a re-arranged, onward flight to Kathmandu tomorrow morning was being confirmed by our ground agents in Delhi we transferred to the nearby Centaur Hotel.

Sunday 8 November DELHI-KATHMANDU (MANORA RIVER)

Before breakfast we watched a good variety of birds in front of the hotel including Black-winged Kite, Citrine Wagtail, Indian Robin and best of all, several Yellow-wattled Lapwings. Our late morning flight to Kathmandu provided good views of the Ganges and our first Himalayan panorama. Our Nepalese tour manager and keen birdwatcher, Bijay, was there to greet us as we sped through passport control and onto our waiting coach. On our way through the city we saw hundreds of roosting Fruit Bats, Cattle Egrets and Night Herons, oblivious to the hustle and bustle of scooter, taxi and rickshaw traffic below. After quickly checking in to the well-appointed Shangri-la Hotel, birdwatching in Nepal finally began in earnest. There was two hours of light left, enough time for us to walk north one mile along the Manora River, through fertile fields of rice, raddishes, cabbages and carrots. Almost immediately we picked up a flock 20 Grey-headed Lapwings, here at their only regular site in the country. They are elegant waders with long yellow legs and striking white wing-patches. There was much of interest with passage migrants, winter visitors and resident birds in the fields and hedges and along the Manora's muddy margins. Blyth's Reed Warblers, Rosy, Paddyfield and Richard's Pipits, skulking Oriental Skylarks, Siberian Stonechats, Common and Long-legged Buzzards, Citrine Wagtails in many plumages, Eurasian and White-breasted Kingfishers, Ring-necked Parakeets, Magpie Robins, Pied Bushchats and a Short-eared Owl evading the stoops of a Peregrine. Wild pig for dinner at an authentic Nepalese restaurant rounded off an eventful day.

Monday 9 November KATHMANDU (PHULCHOWKI)

After an early breakfast the group set off in three new jeeps for the 18km drive to the shimmering green slopes of Phulchowki, a 9,000 ft mountain in the south-eastern corner of Kathmandu Valley, situated immediately above the primitive village of Godavari. Phulchowki supports some of the best subtropical broadleaved forests remaining in Nepal and is a magical place for birdwatchers and botanists alike. Today we would concentrate on the upper reaches leaving the even richer lower half and fish ponds above the old village of Godavari for another day. Making our way towards the summit the distant Himalayas set against a blue sky came into view - the type of spectacle that was to

become a familiar backdrop to much of our birding over the next two weeks. Overhead, migrant Steppe Eagles shared a thermal with resident Black and Mountain Hawk Eagles while high above them wheeled hundreds of Little Swifts. About mid-morning we encountered the first bird-wave, a mixed species flock that can contain hundreds of birds of 30 or more species, each seeking food in its own special way from ground-level right up to the canopy; they are one of the most enjoyable features of birdwatching in the Himalayas; running into one for the first time can leave you dazed for hours. Crossing our path all too quickly were White-tailed Nuthatches, Fire-breasted Flowerpeckers and countless Pallas's Leaf and Orange-barred Warblers, also several Blyth's Crowned Warblers and a solitary Yellow-browed Warbler. More bird waves, as well as single birds and single species flocks were met with throughout the morning. Well represented were laughing thrushes, flycatcher-warblers and the tit-like fulvettas and yuhinas. True titmice included the delightful Black-throated Tit and the warbler-like Yellow-browed Tit. Most abundant were the inquisitive Black-capped Sibilias - medium-sized, orangy birds - which seemed to occupy every niche in the forest. Just below the summit we found several parties of Nepal Rosefinches, shy birds well worth the effort it took to obtain clear views. Even shyer were the thrushes, Chestnut-headed Tesias (typically more often heard than seen) and Kalij Pheasants which were only heard. While training telescopes on Grey-winged and White-collared Blackbirds we found a pair of Great Himalayan Barbets deep within the canopy of a fruiting tree. Here, among a mixed party of bulbuls and other fruit-eating birds Duncan found a Black-crested Bulbul, well above its normal maximum altitude. Dropping down in stages we came across Brown Bullfinches, Maroon Orioles, Hoary Barwings, Brown-fronted Woodpecker, and a Crested Goshawk while only Jurgen and Niklaus were fortunate enough to spot a flock of Black-throated Parrotbills moving quickly through the bamboo. We celebrated our second day in Nepal with a Chinese banquet at our own hotel.

Tuesday 10 November KATHMANDU (GOKARNA) - KOSI TAPPU

This morning we split into two groups, one making a leisurely acquaintance with Kathmandu, the other taking taxis to Gokarna Safari Park, a short drive away across the Bagmati river. Immediately on entering the park we were greeted by a huge wave of birds, moving rapidly through the treetops. Most numerous were the minivets, Scarlet and Long-tailed - the males a brilliant red the females bright yellow - also Grey-hooded and Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrikes and two new nuthatches, Chestnut-bellied and Velvet-fronted. Once this wave had passed we waited on the forest-edge picking up the first of several migrant raptors that had probably roosted here overnight. A Crested Honey Buzzard allowed us particularly fine scope-views. After a bit of a lull we took some tracks leading into the forest, now warmed by the mid-morning sun. From every direction came the sound of tapping as one woodpecker after another came under our gaze. Most

numerous were Fulvous-breasted and Grey-headed, followed by Lesser Yellow-naped and tiny Speckled Piculets with a single Grey-crowned Pygmy Woodpecker. The pick of the flycatcher were two beautiful, orange and blue Rufous-bellied Niltavas. Numerous Olive-backed Pipits, a few White's Thrushes and a party of Kalij Pheasants all kept much to the forest floor where, disguised as fallen leaves, Autumn Leaf Butterflies took wing at our feet. A Woodcock was watched going to ground among the leaf-litter and a careful approach allowed a rare opportunity to observe this attractive bird at times 45 magnification. At 2.30 we took the one-hour flight from Kathmandu to the small, industrial town of Biratnagar in south-east Nepal. From here our jeeps (sent on ahead) ferried us in comfort through the flat Tarai farmland to our tented camp at Kosi Tappu. This Wildlife Reserve on the banks of the mighty Kosi River supports a population of wild Water Buffalo and an abundance of waterbirds. En route we stopped briefly to admire a wonderful sunset and to watch a pair of Indian Foxes "ferreting" about in cutover rice-paddies. Arriving shortly after dusk we tried in vain to make out the numerous silhouettes stalking the campsite pools as the cooks prepared dinner.

Wednesday 11 November KOSI TAPPU

The river here and the adjoining marshes form by far the largest wetland in Nepal. When water levels are low mudflats and sandbanks appear in the river, which is contained by high bunds to the east and west. These provide an excellent vantage from which to scan both the river and the borrow pits alongside, which contain reedbeds and water for most of the year.

Before breakfast we began putting names to some of the shapes of the previous evening: Bronze-winged and Pheasant-tailed Jacanas, Little Cormorant, Darter, Intermediate Egret, Cotton Teal and White-breasted Waterhen, to name a few. Crossing the single track rail we climbed up the east bund, slowly walking south for half a mile, investigating two bushy tracks that led to the water's edge, before retracing our steps back to camp for lunch. After a couple of hour's rest we returned to the bund, now walking north a short distance to a point just beyond the newly-built watch tower. An amazing variety of wetland birds and raptors was encountered during the day including Black, Black-necked and Lesser Adjutant Storks, Pallas's Fish, Booted and Short-toed Eagles (plus several distant Spotted/Lesser Spotted Eagles), Marsh, Hen and Pied Harriers, Osprey, Red-necked Falcons, Swamp Francolins, Blue Peafowl, Ruddy-breasted Crakes, Common Crane, Little Pratincoles, Black-tailed Godwit, Brown-headed and Lesser Black-backed Gulls, Black-bellied Terns and Stork-billed Kingfisher. Notable birds in the bushes and reeds included an Eagle Owl - well below its usual altitudinal range, this bird flew down from its roost in a small tree, landed on the river bank then walked into the reed-bed! - Yellow-footed Green Pigeon, a pair of Black-rumped Flamebacks, Wrynecks, Hoopoes galore (especially along the railway line), Bluethroats, Greenish,

Dusky, Smoky and Tickell's Warblers, Striated Babblers, Chestnut Munias, thousands of Yellow-breasted Buntings and single Crested and Chestnut-eared Buntings. No wonder the log took so long to call, we had seen 133 species on our short walks along the embankment. A super day, more than could be said of the Star Beer or the very loud "pop music" blasting out all night from the otherwise biblical village - and still going strong as tea was being served next morning. Bijay later informed us that this was just the first night of a week-long Hindu festival! Big demand for ear plugs.

Thursday 12 November KOSI TAPPU & KOSI BARRAGE

As usual most of the group were up in time to spend an hour on the embankment before breakfast. Daylight from 6.30am to 5.30pm with maximum bird activity during the first few hours after dawn (and briefly again at dusk) meant as much could be seen in an hour before breakfast as in the entire afternoon. At Kosi, only the indefatigable David and Gareth kept going through the hottest part of the day when the rest of us opted for a siesta.

This morning's early walk provided more good views of the Eagle Owl, the curious Swamp Francolins (only recently discovered at Kosi the reserve is now of major importance for this extremely local species) several stunning, male Siberian Rubythroats, enormous Cinereous (European Black) Vultures, dashing Red-necked Falcons, and single Great Black-headed Gull, Black-faced and Chestnut-eared Buntings. After breakfast we headed south through the rice-paddies putting up flocks of Ashy-crowned Finch Larks from the dusty track before joining the East-West highway, worse than the track but in the process of being repaired, mostly by women and children. Driving past countless Kingfishers and Little Green Bee-eaters we soon found ourselves overlooking a large reed-swamp with lovely Fringed Lilies and areas of open water on which small numbers of Cotton Teal, Spotbill, Garganey, Red-crested Pochard and Ferruginous Ducks could be seen. Along the east bank of the Kosi Barrage there was a distinctly palearctic flavour to the line-up, star of which was an adult White-tailed Eagle, at first sitting on a sandbar, then flying around. Other highlights: three patrolling Caspian Terns, 40 sleeping Spoonbills, 150 Ruddy Shelduck, lots of Lapwing to remind us of home and an Avocet - a rare passage migrant in Nepal.

While Bijay paid a man for a goat one of the jeeps hit, we took a walk around Kosi village, stumbling on a little bar, well stocked with cold beers and assorted Nepalese whiskies one of which boasted "Glasgow, London and Kathmandu" on its label. It was now too hot to continue birding so we returned to camp for lunch and a few hours relaxation - briefly interrupted by the appearance overhead of a superb, male Pied Harrier.

Again the Eagle Owl showed well on our evening stroll, first sat in its roost tree, later hunting in front of a large setting sun as a herd of 50 Water Buffalo emerged from the forest on the far side to wallow in the river.

Friday 13 November KOSI TAPPU - CHITWAN (via Ibisbills)

Before our final open air breakfast a short walk along the embankment turned up more surprises: among the hordes of Yellow-breasted Buntings six Black-headed Buntings, a Nepalese rarity. Somewhat more impressive were two Imperial Eagles, one a majestic adult with head golden-yellow. Cliff spotted a White Stork, a vagrant, as we boarded the jeeps for the long drive to Chitwan. Having to stop for a puncture repair near the barrage provided another opportunity to check out the reedswamp; this morning its population of ducks included three Baer's Pochards. Despite this fortuitous delay we made good time, making occasional short stops for drinks, and to watch gatherings of vultures and a Lesser Adjutant devour a snake. At last we came to some forest which offered shade for our picnic and reason to stretch our legs before driving on to Hetaura, a large town on the Rapti River. We stopped a few kilometres west at a regular site for seeing the rare Ibisbill, a stout wader that breeds beside high altitude glaciers. Anxious not be locked out of the National Park we had precious little time to try to find these curious birds that blend in so brilliantly with their stony habitat. Trying hard to keep our balance, we stepped briskly along a narrow, raised path that zig-zagged across paddyfields to the boulder-strewn banks of the Rapti. We stared long and hard at those stones, finding Little Green Heron, River Lapwing, Plumbeous Redstart and handsome White-browed Wagtails before our persistence finally paid off with Cliff's discovery of three distant, precious Ibisbills. At a village on the outskirts of Chitwan we transferred to reserve landrovers for the final leg of the journey through two rivers, beyond which we entered the park at an army checkpoint and were warmly welcomed the manager of Chitwan Jungle Lodge. So remote is this place it is a wonder how they manage to make their guests so comfortable. Lit only by candles and parafin lamps after dark the Lodge is kept scrupulously clean, the good food is plentiful and the showers hot. Just what we needed!

Saturday 14 November CHITWAN JUNGLE LODGE

We met for tea at dawn before walking slowly and quietly through the trees to a small river where in the first good light of the day we watched in awe as an enormous Indian Rhinoceros crossed slowly to the opposite bank before disappearing into tall grass. It was an impossible act for the birds to follow though we did have four species of kingfishers on the river including our first Stork-billed and some skulking Red-capped Babblers. After breakfast some of the party chose elephant rides the remainder going through the jungle on foot. After lunch it was elephant rides for us all. Although no Leopards, Tigers or Black Bears were encountered it was very thrilling to follow their tracks, to see where they had been stalking, eating or sleeping. Just being in their habitat was a great experience. From the elephants some of the group saw two more rhinos, others a good variety of deer

and wild boar. New birds for us today included Brown Fish Owl, Blue-bearded Bee-eater and a pair of Greater Flamebacks excavating a nest-hole; the latter was something of a revelation for the Camp's birdguide as he'd been identifying them as Himalayan Flamebacks for the last ten years.

Sunday 15 November CHITWAN - GAIDA WILDLIFE CAMP ( & Ibisbills)

On our early morning walk we tried in vain to re-locate yesterday's Brown Fish Owl. After breakfast the area behind the elephant yard was explored including the Lodge's small rubbish dump where we had good views of a family of Indian Mongooses. Birds of note included several Pale-chinned (Brook's) Flycatchers and Shamias, and another Brown Fish Owl. The group split into two parties before lunch, one going directly onto Gaida Wildlife Camp, the other taking a packed lunch to the Ibisbill site. Each group met with success, one enjoying more elephant rides at Gaida; Cliff, David and Kate being especially fortunate in obtaining clear views of a Leopard and Leo and Paddy notching up their second and third Brown Fish Owls of the day. While the other party managed great views of at least five Ibisbills, enjoyed their first White-capped River Chat and chanced upon a tiny Collared Owlet. Another warm welcome awaited us at Gaida, which despite its name is another Lodge-type hotel.

Monday 16 November GAIDA WILDLIFE CAMP GAIDA JUNGLE CAMP

Gaida Camp is situated on the north bank of the Rapti. Habitats in the immediate vicinity include patches of riverain forest and riverside scrub while across the river there is tall elephant grass and a large patch of tropical forest. The day started as usual with morning tea followed by a leisurely stroll to focus our eyes and sharpen our appetite.

After breakfast we boarded two dug-out canoes for an exciting two-hour journey downriver to the confluence with the Narayani. As with the elephant-rides there was lots to see: a rare Lesser Fishing Eagle in a riverside tree, six big Mugger Crocodiles and two bigger, fish-eating, Gharials with their long, beak-like snouts. (Where else can one watch crocodiles and snowy-white egrets resting in front of 8,000 metre peaks?) We landed a mile downriver from the jungle camp which was then reached by following a wide track through tall grassland; Green-billed Malkohas and Grey-capped Prinias livened up the way. Arriving an hour before lunch the camp warden did his best to explain things above the babble of a large group of German tourists that were like fish out of water in this place. A search for Blue-eared Kingfisher after lunch could only turn up its familiar lookalike, the Eurasian. Nevertheless, some exciting birds were recorded in the process including a Changeable Hawk Eagle, 18 Pompadour Green Pigeons, Red Junglefowl and a Large Racket-tailed Drongo typically leading a party of Greater Necklaced Laughing

Thrushes through the middle-storey of the forest. From mid-afternoon to dusk the group drove out to Lami Tal, a small lake frequented by Himalayan Fishing Eagles. One was quickly located by the first group on the scene and soon all telescopes were trained on this handsome, grey and white eagle. The lake itself held a few interesting birds including Brown Crake and there were masses of Red-whiskered and Red-vented Bulbuls in the reeds beyond. We started back to camp as dusk fell, hopeful of glimpsing some mammals in the headlights. In this respect the leading jeep had the advantage even though it had to rely on the lights of the following vehicle, so that those in the front jeep had good views of Hog Deer and an adult Rhino with calf, and those behind didn't! To add insult to injury the following stalled midway through a stream requiring everyone to get out and push. Good fun, really!

Tuesday 17 November CHITWAN (CHURIA HILLS)

After an early breakfast landrovers took us to the outskirts of a small village from where we walked one mile to the lush forest of the park. Here we split into two groups, one moving a little faster than the other, for the hike into the Bharba (Southern Churia Hills) which stretches upwards to the Indian border. This was undoubtedly the best forest habitat we had encountered in Chitwan and from start to finish exciting birds were seen by both parties, not always the same ones. An eagle which allowed us a long close look was finally identified as another Changeable Hawk Eagle on account of it not having a long crest, even though the pattern of streaks and bars on the underparts appeared most to resemble a Mountain Hawk Eagle. The biggest bird wave to date swept across our paths and was followed for some time through open Sal forest. Long-tailed Minivets, White-bellied Yuhinas, Tickell's Flowerpecker, Small Minivets, Western Crowned and Grey-faced Leaf Warblers. Also, only our second Lesser Racquet-tailed Drongo, a scarce bird at Chitwan which lit the enthusiasm of our delightful (Gaida) guide and friend, Hadat, whose field skills belied his meagre three years experience.

At 11.30 the first party reached the stony bed of a shallow stream - shortly followed by the second group. This was a nice place to take a breather prior to the gentle but sometimes hard-going climb up the stream bed, either side of which was real jungle. We stopped for lunch soon after watching our first Black-backed Forktails skimming over stones ahead of us, invariably landing just out of sight. A sunlit Red-thighed Falconet hawked blue dragonflies from an exposed branch high above the stream as we birdlovers tucked into roast chicken (domestic variety) and boiled eggs. Exotic highlights included especially good views of Orange-bellied Leafbirds. There were brief views of Greater Yellow-naped Woodpecker, Red-billed Blue Magpie, Slaty-headed Parakeets, Himalayan Treepies, gorgeous Green Magpies and a particularly difficult Chestnut-headed Tesia. We had come here in the hope of catching a glimpse of specialities such as the beautiful Red-headed Trogon or the peculiar Streaked Spiderhunter. We were in luck, each party enjoying excellent



views of one or the other, but unfortunately not both.

An hour or so after lunch we returned downstream, out of the jungle and on to the level trail through the Sal forest, still finding plenty to interest us such as Little Pied Flycatcher, Thick-billed Flowerpecker, Hair-crested and Greater Raquet-tailed Drongos. The latter as usual seemed to be leading a flock of laughing thrushes and woodpeckers up a big, red-coloured, earth bank. Among equal numbers of Greater- and Lesser-necklaced Laughing Thrushes were our first White-crested Laughing Thrushes; Jay-sized birds with inquisitive "laughing" calls and what looks like a white turban on their heads - certainly one of the bird characters of the Himalayas.

Landrovers awaited our exit from the forest (transport arrangements were exact throughout). Stopped at some rice-paddies flushing three species of snipe in quick succession, including three Pintail Snipe and one Jack Snipe, the latter in particular providing an interesting contrast to the tropical birds of today. Through a big field of Yellow Wagtails, by ferry across the waist-high Rapti, straight into more waiting jeeps and on to Gaida with owlets stirring.

Wednesday 18 November CHITWAN - POKHARA via Mugling

The day began with tea at 5.30 followed by the almost, universally popular elephant-ride across the Rapti to look for rhinos and roosting Brown Fish Owls. The highlight of the elephant ride for Paddy and her companions was to witness her falling camera case being retrieved by their elephant, the very instant it made contact with the water and passed back to her via the mahout, in a flash! After breakfast we had some time to potter about, most of us choosing to soak up the morning sun while watching a mixed flock of Chestnut-tailed Starlings, Black-hooded Orioles and Common Ioras in the trees above the chalets. Then it was down to the riverside where a Cinnamon Bittern and a Grey-backed Shrike put in timely appearances just as we were boarding the camp jeeps take us out of the national park to where our waited to transport us northwest to Pokhara, via a couple of delightful stops. The first was Hazari Tal, a crocodile-infested lake, watched in safety from a raised bank. It held a rich assortment of larger birds including egrets, storks, ibises, Crested Serpent Eagles, Osprey, Bronze-winged Jacana and Blue Peafowl. From here a series of dirt tracks led us across the east west highway at Bharatpur, onto a fast road overlooking the white waters of the Narayani, down which careered a party of rafters. At Mugling we joined the Kathmandu-Pokhara road, stopping briefly on the Trisuli bridge where a good variety of river species was seen including Little Forktail and Brown Dipper. Finding two Wallcreepers was exciting but they were rather distant and it was difficult keeping them in view. Further on we stopped to have lunch by the Marsyandi river and were treated to amazing views of two more Wallcreepers probing for food on boulders just a few metres in front of us throughout our picnic. Bijay pointed out the distant village of Gorkha on which the famous Gurkha

regiment was originally founded after 150 hill men resisted 1,000 British soldiers. By late afternoon we reached the outskirts of Pokhara and saw our first Himalayan Griffon Vulture and 35 Egyptian Vultures coming into roost. We were amused to see advertised on the way into town the surprisingly-named, Hotel Bedrock; we were glad to be staying at the New Chrystal Hotel.

Thursday 19 November POKHARA (FISHTAIL FOREST)

Early risers were disappointed to find only the summit of Machapuchare, the beautiful "Fishtail Mountain" which towers over Pokhara, not hidden by cloud. After a leisurely breakfast the jeeps ferried us to the Fishtail Hotel above which a well-forested hill by the big lake, Phewa Tal, invited exploration. An elderly guide (without a word of English) was hired to be of assistance to Bijay in escorting anyone who wished to return to the hotel for lunch. This seemed a straight forward enough arrangement at the start of the walk and he certainly knew his way about, energetically shepherding us up the initially steep slope. Once on more level ground birding became easier with an especially obliging male Small Niltava remaining still long enough for everyone to get it in the scope. Other highlights along the way including a Hodgson's Redstart, more Green Magpies (they really are the most vivid green), Chestnut-crowned Warblers, Slaty-headed Parakeets, White-browed Scimitar Babblers and a Blue Whistling Thrush shaking the life out of then eating a freshwater crab after its victim's desperate, pincer-snapping struggle. As the path began to climb again we split into three groups with Bijay acting as a third leader. Unfortunately at this point, in his enthusiasm to be of assistance to us all, our guide lost Bijay's party, which included Paddy whose bag he was carrying. Sometime after lunch at the hotel the anxious guide delivered the bag, much to Paddy's gratitude. Meanwhile, back on the hill, the two remaining groups continued to find new birds, but slowly. Jurgen discovered a good vantage from which Chris' party was able to have lunch and watch a stream of raptors and hirundines including no less than six species of vulture and a Bonelli's Eagle. Nearby, Cliff's team was getting to grips with some leaf-rustling White's Thrushes. Six species of flycatcher included 20 Yellow-bellied Fantails, 12 Orange-gorgetted, five more Small and six Rufous-bellied Niltavas and single male Snowy-browed and Pale Blue Flycatchers. Cliff and Dunacn also had a long look at a partly-hidden Barred Owlet, Chris crept up on a Puff-throated (Spotted) Babbler, Jurgen surprised a Grey-bellied Tesia and the intrepid David and Gareth discovered a large beehive, too late!

The early part of the evening saw us all together again at Lakeside the touristy part of Pokhara beside the lovely Phewa Tal. While shopping for souvenirs, a few of the group managed to keep an eye open for roosting falcons. A conservative estimate of 300 kestrels went over the town of which only one Lesser Kestrel was identified, and no Amur Falcons.

Friday 20 November POKHARA - KATHMANDU

Some of the group skipped breakfast in order to return to the "Fish-tail Forest" for a couple of hours birding and photography prior to checking out at 11am. The early start paid dividends as bird activity quickly dispelled thoughts of food. Two groups of Kalij Pheasants, two Red-tailed Minlas, two male Short-billed Minivets (alongside two male Long-tailed Minivets for comparison) and several Grey-faced Leaf Warblers were found, in addition to some of the species seen yesterday. Many were in one superb wave of birds; try to imagine the flowing colours of 50 Scarlet Minivets, 30 Grey hooded Warblers and 30 Oriental White-eyes, 12 Green Magpies, ten Velvet-fronted Nuthatches, numerous Blue-throated Barbets, ten Orange-bellied Leafbirds, ten Maroon Orioles, four Grey-headed, three Lesser Yellow-naped, two Fulvous-breasted and two Grey-crowned Pygmy Woodpeckers being led by three Lesser Racquet-tailed Drongos. This time, thankfully, the wave remained in one area of mostly open forest for at least 30 minutes, with many birds at eye-level. In contrast, a big flock of phylloscs later went largely unidentified such was the speed and height at which they moved through the canopy. Back at the hotel forecourt the Himalayan peaks were holding most people's attention with the towering ice, snow and rock faces of Annapurna and Machapuchare filling binocular and camera lens alike. With our flight to Kathmandu delayed by an hour there was time to do some last minute bargaining for Tibetan trinkets or beautiful, hand-made carpets. Just as we were about to board the plane an adult Lammergeier, a bird we had for the past two days been hoping to see, slowly glided into view. Once in the air Bijay and the stewardess helped us put names to some of the fantastic peaks on view, including to everyone's delight, Mount Everest. Back in the capital we had lunch downtown before crossing the road to see a pair of Spotted Owlets Chris had sussed out between courses. The afternoon was spent variously relaxing in the hotel gardens, browsing through book shops or taking in more of the sights of Kathmandu. Dinner tonight was another Chinese banquet, at the Annapurna Hotel where Cliff, already a connoisseur of Nepalese beer, unearthed a bit label-swopping!

Saturday, 21 November KATHMANDU (PHULCHOWKI/GUIDED TOUR)

Our last full day in Nepal. Half the group chose to do their own thing in the morning and take a guided tour of the valley after lunch, while others spent the whole day on Phulchowki. This time the lower half of the mountain received most attention and although few birds were seen in the afternoon, the morning provided some of the best birding of the trip. A particularly rich vein was struck immediately we began exploring the sunlit scrub around the fish ponds at Godaveri. New birds came thick and fast with Spotted Forktail, Golden Bush Robin, Rufous-chinned Laughing Thrush, Barred Owllet, Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler and Black-breasted Sunbird all giving excellent views. Next, a flock

of about 30 small finches was spotted from the jeeps. Settling in some alders they were easily identified as Tibetan Serins (uncommon birds in Nepal) although the streaked females looked very much like the Siskins at home. We stopped to explore a woodcutters' track leading up a small ravine where three White-throated Bulbuls, one of which scoped by Chris, came as a big surprise as none had previously been seen in the Valley. In the same ravine was a Black-crested Bulbul and six Mountain (Rufous-bellied) Bulbuls, our seventh species of bulbul on Phulchowki, nicely completing the set of Nepal bulbuls. Other new birds in this ravine included a pair of Crimson-breasted Woodpeckers, Black-chinned and Grey-throated Babblers and Black-eared Shrike Babblers; Chris also had brief views of a Golden-throated Barbet and three Red-billed Leiothrixes. With so much that was new for us David revised his objective of seeing 10 new birds today to 20. We climbed higher searching without luck for Cutias at 7,500ft before lunch and the start down with David five short of his target.

All too soon, we knew thousands of miles and another age would be separating us from the Himalayas and the laughing thrushes, sunbirds, sibilias, minlas, yuhinas and fulvettas; birds which by now had become quite familiar to us. David reached his target with a dazzling Black-faced Warbler and a Red-flanked Bluetail among his - and the group's - last five species of the trip. Phulchowki had again worked its magic for us.

Sunday 22 November      KATHMANDU - KATHMANDU - DELHI!

David and Gareth made a return trip to Gokarna in the morning while the rest of us had a lie-in and a late breakfast before setting off on more sight-seeing and shopping sprees. After lunch in the garden there was just time to finish off those postcards before leaving the hotel. After bidding farewell to Bijay we had a short wait before waving our first good-bye to Kathmandu. Two hours later we were back, unable to land at Delhi. An hour later we took off again this time landing without a hitch and were soon at the Centaur Hotel. Early the following morning the group caught the 5am flight to London, Heathrow.

Chris Murphy  
January 1993

NEPAL BIRD LIST 7-23 NOVEMBER 1992

LITTLE GREBE	EURASIAN GRIFFON VULTURE
GREAT CRESTED GREBE	CINEREOUS VULTURE
GREAT CORMORANT	RED-HEADED VULTURE
LITTLE CORMORANT	CRESTED SERPENT EAGLE
DARTER	MARSH HARRIER
CINNAMON BITTERN	HEN HARRIER
NIGHT HERON	MONTAGU'S HARRIER
LITTLE GREEN HERON	PIED HARRIER
INDIAN POND HERON	SPARROWHAWK
CATTLE EGRET	CRESTED GOSHAWK
INTERMEDIATE EGRET	WHITE-EYED BUZZARD
GREAT EGRET	COMMON BUZZARD
GREY HERON	LONG-LEGGED BUZZARD
ASIAN OPENBILL STORK	BLACK EAGLE
BLACK STORK	IMPERIAL EAGLE
WHITE-NECKED STORK	STEPPE EAGLE
BLACK-NECKED STORK	BOOTED EAGLE
LESSER ADJUTANT STORK	BONELLI'S EAGLE
PAINTED STORK (Delhi)	CHANGEABLE HAWK EAGLE
BLACK IBIS	MOUNTAIN HAWK EAGLE
WHITE IBIS	SHORT-TOED EAGLE
SPOONBILL	LESSER KESTREL
WHITE STORK	KESTREL
LESSER WHISTLING DUCK	RED-THIGHED FALCONET
BAR-HEADED GOOSE	RED-NECKED FALCON
RUDDY SHELDUCK	PEREGRINE
COTTON TEAL	BLACK FRANCOLIN
WIGEON	SWAMP PARTRIDGE
GADWALL	HILL PARTRIDGE
TEAL	RED JUNGLEFOWL
MALLARD	KALIJ PHEASANT
SPOTBILL	BLUE PEAFOWL
PINTAIL	RUDDY-BREASTED CRAKE
GARGANEY	BROWN CRAKE
SHOVELER	WHITE-BREASTED WATERHEN
RED-CRESTED POCHARD	MOORHEN
POCHARD	COOT
FERRUGINOUS DUCK	COMMON CRANE
BAER'S POCHARD	DEMOISELLE CRANE
TUFTED DUCK	PHEASANT-TAILED JACANA
GOOSANDER	BRONZE-WINGED JACANA
CRESTED HONEY BUZZARD	IBISBILL
BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE	LITTLE PRATINCOLE
BLACK KITE	LITTLE RINGED PLOVER
WHITE-TAILED EAGLE	KENTISH PLOVER
PALLAS'S FISH EAGLE	RIVER LAPWING
LESSER FISHING EAGLE	YELLOW-WATTLED LAPWING (Delhi)
GREY-HEADED FISHING EAGLE	GREY-HEADED LAPWING
EGYPTIAN VULTURE	RED-WATTLED LAPWING
LAMMERGEYER	EURASIAN LAPWING
WHITE-BACKED VULTURE	TEMMINCK'S STINT
LONG-BILLED VULTURE	COMMON SNIPE
HIMALAYAN GRIFFON VULTURE	PINTAIL SNIPE

WOODCOCK  
CURLEW  
REDSHANK  
GREENSHANK  
GREEN SANDPIPER  
WOOD SANDPIPER  
COMMON SANDPIPER  
JACK SNIPE  
BLACK-TAILED GODWIT  
AVOCET  
BLACK-WINGED STILT  
GREAT BLACK-HEADED GULL  
BLACK-HEADED GULL  
BROWN-HEADED GULL  
LESSER B-B GULL (L.f.heuglini)  
CASPIAN TERN  
BLACK-BELLIED TERN

ROCK DOVE  
ASHY WOODPIGEON  
COLLARED DOVE  
RED TURTLE DOVE  
SPOTTED DOVE  
EMERALD DOVE  
POMPADOUR GREEN PIGEON  
YELLOW-FOOTED GREEN PIGEON  
PALM DOVE (Delhi)  
ALEXANDRINE PARAKEET  
RING-NECKED PARAKEET  
SLATY-HEADED PARAKEET  
BLOSSOM-HEADED PARAKEET  
ROSE-BREASTED PARAKEET  
GREEN-BILLED MALKOHA  
GREATER COUCAL  
LESSER COUCAL  
EAGLE OWL  
BROWN FISH OWL  
COLLARED OWLET  
JUNGLE OWLET  
BARRED OWLET  
SPOTTED OWLET  
SHORT-EARED OWL  
LARGE-TAILED NIGHTJAR  
HIMALAYAN SWIFTLET  
ALPINE SWIFT  
LITTLE SWIFT  
CRESTED TREE SWIFT  
RED-HEADED TROGON  
WHITE-BREASTED KINGFISHER  
STORK-BILLED KINGFISHER  
KINGFISHER  
PIED KINGFISHER  
BLUE-BEARDED BEE-EATER  
LITTLE GREEN BEE-EATER  
INDIAN ROLLER

HOOPOE  
ORIENTAL PIED HORNBILL  
GREAT PIED HORNBILL  
GREAT HIMALAYAN BARBET  
LINEATED BARBET  
GOLDEN-THROATED BARBET  
BLUE-THROATED BARBET  
WRYNECK  
SPECKLED PICULET  
RUFIOUS WOODPECKER  
LESSER YELLOW-NAPED WOODPECKER  
GREATER YELLOW-NAPED W'PECKER  
GREY-HEADED WOODPECKER  
STREAK-THROATED WOODPECKER  
HIMALAYAN FLAMEBACK  
BLACK-RUMPED FLAMEBACK  
GREATER FLAMEBACK  
CRIMSON-BREASTED WOODPECKER  
BROWN-FRONTED WOODPECKER  
FULVOUS-BREASTED WOODPECKER  
GREY-CAPPED WOODPECKER  
RUFIOUS-WINGED BUSHLARK  
ASHY-CROWNED FINCH LARK  
SHORT-TOED LARK  
SANDLARK  
ORIENTAL SKYLARK  
PLAIN MARTIN  
CRAG MARTIN  
SWALLOW  
RED-RUMPED SWALLOW  
(HOUSE MARTIN sp)  
RICHARD'S PIPIT A.n.richardi  
PADDYFIELD PIPIT A.n.rufulus  
OLIVE-BACKED PIPIT  
ROSY PIPIT  
DUSKY CRAG MARTIN (Delhi)  
YELLOW WAGTAIL  
CITRINE WAGTAIL  
GREY WAGTAIL  
WHITE WAGTAIL  
WHITE-BROWED WAGTAIL  
COMMON WOODSHRIKE  
LARGE WOODSHRIKE  
BAR-WINGED FLYCATCHER-SHRIKE  
LARGE CUCKOO SHRIKE  
SCARLET MINIVET  
SHORT-BILLED MINIVET  
LONG-TAILED MINIVET  
SMALL MINIVET  
STRIATED BULBUL  
BLACK-CRESTED BULBUL  
RED-WHISKERED BULBUL  
WHITE-CHEEKED BULBUL  
RED-VENTED BULBUL  
WHITE-THROATED BULBUL

MOUNTAIN BULBUL  
ASHY BULBUL  
BLACK BULBUL  
COMMON IORA  
GOLDEN-FRONTED LEAFBIRD  
ORANGE-BELLIED LEAFBIRD  
BROWN DIPPER  
SIBERIAN RUBYTHROAT  
BLUETHROAT  
RED-FLANKED BLUETAILED  
GOLDEN BUSH ROBIN  
MAGPIE ROBIN  
SHAMA  
HODGSON'S REDSTART  
BLUE-FRONTED REDSTART  
PLUMBEOUS REDSTART  
STONECHAT  
PIED BUSHCHAT  
GREY BUSHCHAT  
WHITE-CAPPED RIVER CHAT  
INDIAN ROBIN  
CHESTNUT-BELLIED ROCK THRUSH  
BLUE ROCK THRUSH  
BLUE WHISTLING THRUSH  
WHITE'S THRUSH  
WHITE-COLLARED BLACKBIRD  
GREY-WINGED BLACKBIRD  
BLACK-THROATED THRUSH  
LITTLE FORKTAIL  
BLACK-BACKED FORKTAIL  
SLATY-BACKED FORKTAIL  
SPOTTED FORKTAIL  
CHESTNUT-HEADED TESIA  
GREY-BELLIED TESIA  
PALE-FOOTED BUSH WARBLER  
FAN-TAILED WARBLER  
PLAIN PRINIA (Delhi)  
ASHY PRINIA  
GREY-BREASTED PRINIA  
YELLOW-BELLIED PRINIA  
GREY-CAPPED PRINIA  
TAILORBIRD  
STRIATED MARSH WARBLER  
PADDYFIELD WARBLER  
BLYTH'S REED WARBLER  
CLAMOROUS REED WARBLER  
GOLDEN-SPECTACLED WARBLER  
CHESTNUT-CROWNED WARBLER  
GREY-HOODED WARBLER  
BLACK-FACED WARBLER  
BLYTH'S CROWNED LEAF WARBLER  
WESTERN CROWNED WARBLER  
GREENISH WARBLER  
ORANGE-BARRED LEAF WARBLER  
GREY-FACED LEAF WARBLER

PALLAS'S LEAF WARBLER  
YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER  
DUSKY WARBLER  
SMOKY WARBLER  
TICKELL'S WARBLER  
CHIFFCHAFF

#### SMALL NILTAVA

RUFIOUS-BELLIED NILTAVA  
PALE-CHINNED FLYCATCHER  
PALE BLUE FLYCATCHER  
VERDITER  
LITTLE PIED FLYCATCHER  
SNOWY-BROWED FLYCATCHER  
ORANGE-GORGETTED FLYCATCHER  
RED-BREASTED FLYCATCHER  
GREY-HEADED FLYCATCHER  
YELLOW-BELLIED FANTAIL  
WHITE-THROATED FANTAIL  
PUFF-THROATED BABBLED  
RUSTY-CHEEKED SCIMITAR BABBLED  
WHITE-BROWED SCIMITAR BABBLED  
BLACK-CHINNED BABBLED  
GREY-THROATED BABBLED  
STRIPED TIT BABBLED  
CHESTNUT-CAPPED BABBLED  
BLACK-THROATED PARROTBILL  
STRIATED BABBLED  
JUNGLE BABBLED  
COMMON BABBLED (Delhi)  
WHITE-CRESTED LAUGHING THRUSH  
LESSER-NECKLACED L. THRUSH  
GREATER-NECKLACED L. THRUSH  
STRIATED LAUGHING THRUSH  
RUFIOUS-CHINNED LAUGHING THRUSH  
RED-HEADED LAUGHING THRUSH  
SILVER-EARED MESIA  
RED-BILLED LEIOTHRIX  
WHITE-BROWED SHRIKE BABBLED  
BLACK-EARED SHRIKE BABBLED  
HOARY BARWING  
BLUE-WINGED MINLA  
CHESTNUT-TAILED MINLA  
RED-TAILED MINLA  
RUFIOUS-WINGED FULVATTA  
WHITE-BROWED FULVETTA  
NEPAL FULVETTA  
BLACK-CAPPED SIBIA  
WHISKERED YUHINA  
STRIPE-THROATED YUHINA  
RUFIOUS-VENTED YUHINA  
WHITE-BELLIED YUHINA  
BLACK-THROATED TIT  
YELLOW-BROWED TIT  
GREAT TIT

GREEN-BACKED TIT  
BLACK-LORED TIT  
VELVET-FRONTED NUTHATCH  
WHITE-TAILED NUTHATCH  
CHESTNUT-BELLIED NUTHATCH  
WALLCREEPER  
BROWN-THROATED TREECREEPER  
PURPLE SUNBIRD  
GREEN-TAILED SUNBIRD  
BLACK-BREASTED SUNBIRD  
CRIMSON SUNBIRD  
FIRE-TAILED SUNBIRD  
STREAKED SPIDERHUNTER  
THICK-BILLED FLOWERPECKER  
PALE-BILLED FLOWERPECKER  
FIRE-BREASTED FLOWERPECKER  
ORIENTAL WHITE-EYE  
MAROON ORIOLE  
BLACK-HOODED ORIOLE  
BROWN SHRIKE  
LONG-TAILED SHRIKE  
GREY-BACKED SHRIKE  
BLACK DRONGO  
ASHY DRONGO  
WHITE-BELLIED DRONGO  
BRONZED DRONGO  
LESSER RACKET-TAILED DRONGO  
GREATER RACKET-TAILED DRONGO  
SPANGLED DRONGO  
ASHY WOODSWALLOW  
EURASIAN JAY  
GREEN MAGPIE  
RUFIOUS TREEPIE  
GREY TREEPIE  
HOUSE CROW  
JUNGLE CROW  
CHESTNUT-TAILED STARLING  
STARLING  
ASIAN PIED STARLING  
COMMON MYNAH  
BANK MYNAH  
JUNGLE MYNAH  
HOUSE SPARROW  
TREE SPARROW  
BAYA WEAVER  
SCALY-BREASTED MUNIA  
CHESTNUT MUNIA  
TIBETAN SERIN

DARK-BREASTED ROSEFINCH  
COMMON ROSEFINCH  
BROWN BULLFINCH  
BLACK-FACED BUNTING  
CHESTNUT-EARED BUNTING  
YELLOW-BREASTED BUNTING  
BLACK-HEADED BUNTING  
CRESTED BUNTING

#### MAMMALS

FRUIT BAT  
RHESUS MONKEY  
LANGUR  
ORANGE-BELLIED SQUIRREL  
HOARY-BELLIED SQUIRREL  
FIVE-STRIPED GROUND SQUIRREL  
SMALL INDIAN FOX  
SLOTH BEAR (signs only)  
INDIAN MONGOOSE  
TIGER (signs only)  
LEOPARD  
INDIAN ONE-HORNED RHINOCEROS  
WILD BOAR  
SAMBHAR  
CHITAL  
HOG DEER  
BARKING DEER  
WILD WATER BUFFALO

also,  
MUGGER CROCODILE  
GHARIAL CROCODILE

- lots of butterflies and  
very few mosquitoes!