

The following is a brief summary of the bird "highlights" of our trip. We were in Nepal 6 weeks, in which we did the Annapurna circuit, visited Chitwan (with 4-day "jungle trek"), and Kosi.

Some highlights were Wood Snipe (photos attached) in Muktinath Nov 28, both snowcocks at high camp Nov 26, (I believe Hathan said this was the first record of Himalayan snowcock east of Thorung La), and Golden-naped Finch at Pulchowki.

Overall, the east-side of the Annapurna circuit seemed best for birds, with rich diversity, feeding flocks, habitat diversity, although this may have been effected by starting on the eastside, where everything was new and exciting. Although the west-side appears to be much more frequently visited, the east seemed more bird rich to us. Particularly Chame, Jagat, Danague, and more "alpine specialists" were near the upper elevations on the east-side than on the west. We also observed several birds above the winter elevation range given in the book (particularly for east of Thorung La).

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Kristie Nelson and Joel Ellis

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November 11, 2003: Pulchowki Mt, below first house

BARRED CUCKOO-DOVE- several (3-5)
Rufous-chinned and White-throated Laughingthrushes
Wedge-tailed Pigeon - 12
Grey-winged Thrush - pair
Northern Goshawk - 1

Gorka - Nov 12-13

Remarkable raptor migration over the ridges just North of Gorka. Huge kettles, primarily of Steppe Eagles (60%) and Griffons (40%), rising up, and filtering down to the next thermal. Counted 109 in one hour, which seemed average numbers during the peak movements. I had never seen such remarkable movements of raptors.

other birds seen around Gorka:

Golden-throated Barbet - 1
BOOTED EAGLE- 1
Peregrine Falcon - 1
Red-headed Vulture - 2

Then started our trek in Bessisahar:

Ngadi:

Nov 16 - Yellow-breasted Greenfinch - 914m

Nov 17 - Ngadi to Shyange

Slaty-headed Parakeet - many

Ashy bulbul

Rusty-checked Scimitar-babbler - 1

Little Forktail - this was where we began observing this species, which was common in following days

Green treepie, Asian house martin

Nov 18: Germu to Chamje

Collared Owlet- 1 in Jagat - 1340m

Asian Barred Owlet - 1 Germu

Aberrant Bush Warbler - 1 Jagat - 1340m

Spot-winged Grosbeak - 1 Jagat

Jagat was particularly bird rich, with many feeding flocks - firsts for us on things like Black-chinned Babbler, Whiskered Yuhina, and Ashy Drongo.

Nov 19: Chamje to Danague

Brown Dipper – first seen at Tal

SLATY-BACKED FLYCATCHER– 1 Small village, unknown name, near Dharapani

Nov. 20: Danague all day

Streaked Laughingthrush -1

Nov. 21: Danague to Chame

Hiked above Chame – saw many tits: Grey-throated, Coal and Rufous-vented.

Spotted Nutcrackers: stating to encounter them, they remained common through conifer zone

Stripe-throated Yuhinas – our first time encountering them

Snow Pigeon – small flock Chame

WHITE-CAPPED WATER-REDSTART – Came, 2615m, high elevation

Nov. 22: Chame to Pisang

Blue-fronted redstart – 1 Chame

White-browed fulvetta and Goldcrests encountered for first time on trek.

Dark-throated Thrushes: began seeing them above Paunda Danda. Both races.

White-winged Grosbeak – several.

Variegated Laughingthrush – our first was seen at an unknown town roughly half-way through day. They were quite common until we were above shrubby line. Generally, they were found in dry, low shrubby vegetation, not forest undergrowth.

Rock Bunting – first encountered below Pisang.

Plain-mountain Finch – many around Pisang

Red-billed Chough – first seen at upper Pisang.

Nov. 23: Upper Pisang to Braga

N. Goshawk – 1 upper Pisang

Snow Pigeon – flock at upper Pisang

Raven – Pisang (our first for the trip)

White-throated redstart –many around Pisang

Nov. 24: Braga

White Wagtail – high elevation at Braga – 3450m

Hill Pigeon – 1 at Braga with Rock Doves

Plain Mountain finch – many

Rock Dove – nesting with young in Braga, 3450m

White-winged Redstarts – 2 in Manang

Nov. 25: Braga to Yak Kharka (we stayed at the last, or highest lodge, just above the “town” itself)

Brown and Robin Accentors – several near Braga

Black Redstarts – a few above Braga

Red-billed Chough – still seen

Yellow-billed Chough – first seen about 1/3 of the way above Braga. We encountered them down to much lower elevations on the west-side.

WHITE-WINGED REDSTART– one seen above Yak Kharka at 4000m – high elevation

Large Billed Crow – continued to see them above Yak Kharka (4200m approx.)

Nov 26: Yak Kharka to Thorung La High Camp

Eurasian Blackbirds – 20-25 birds at Yak Kharka – 4000M

Birds seen at Yak Kharka (elevation interest)

Beautiful Finch

Himalayan Griffon

White-winged Redstart

Raven

Thorung Phedi Birds:

Altai Accentor – fairly common

Robin Accentor

Birds at High Camp:

Alpine Accentor

Lammergeier

HIMALAYAN SNOWCOCK – 7. Photos taken, which turned out very blurry (cold and low light), but identifiable

TIBETAN SNOWCOCK – 2

RED-FRONTED ROSEFINCH – 2 observed at the last tea shack at approx. 5100m! Only ones we saw on our trip

Nov. 28: Muktinath

Highlight was two WOOD SNIPE at mostly frozen pond at nunnery. Photos taken

Variegated Laughingthrushes, white-winged and white-throated redstarts, Robin and Brown accentors, Great and Beautiful rosefinches were all common in the shrubberies.

Hill pigeon - several

Nov 29: Muktinath to Kagbeni

Searched ponds around Jhargot for solitary snipes – none found

COMMON MOORHEN – immature in reeds of a frozen pond below Jhargot - 3615. High elevation!

Nov. 30: Kagbeni to Marpha

Great Cormorant – 1 at Jomosom

One flock of finches near Kagbeni that we did not see well, may have been Twites.

Dec. 1: Marpha to Lete

First Blue-capped Redstart near Lete and Kobang

Rufous-breasted Accentor – first seen near Lete

Bar-tailed treecreeper – in conifers

Streaked Laughingthrush – by Lete

Dec. 2: Lete to Ghasa

Birded forest near Lete, which produced many birds. Highlight was Brambling with many Chaffinches, and interesting were flocks of both Spot-winged and Coal tits, which were in separate, single species flocks, but seen near each other.

Some birds around Lete 2470m:

Green-backed, rufous-vented, grey-crested, coal and spot-winged tits.

BRAMBLING – 1

Chaffinch – many

Orange-flanked Bush robin – first for the trip

Ghasa 2040m: Chestnut-tailed Minla, Darjeeling Woodpecker, Chestnut-crowned LT, Whiskered Yuhina, White-throated Fantail, etc

Dec. 3 : Layover in Ghasa

Left at 430 am to climb the hills in search of pheasants, with a local guide. We did hear different crowing calls, which according to the guide were Koklass, Cheer and Monal. A few flushed as we walked up to them, but we never saw any pheasants! Saw our first Eurasian Crag Martins, and Streak-breasted Scimitar Babblers.

Dec 4: Ghasa to Tatopani:
Chestnut-headed Tesia

Dec 5: Tatopani to Beni
Probable Spiny Babbler at tatopani, but hard to see!
First Velvet Nuthatch

Dec. 7

We had a very productive day at Pokara, birding the forest along the Southeast part of the lake. Continuous flocks of birds, many, many Yellow fantail, rufous-gorgetted flycatcher, Velvet fronted nuthatch, Grey treepie. Many woodpeckers: Fulvous-breasted (2), Grey-headed (1), Greater Yellow-nape (several), spotted Piculet.

LONG-TAILED BROADBILL – small flock

PALE BLUE FLYCATCHER – 3-4

Lesser-rac. tailed Drongo, grey-bellied Tesia, Maroon oriole, lemon-rumped warblers, green treepies, etc.

Chitwan: saw many birds, very exciting for us, but not many significant or unusual sightings.

We did a jungle trek over 4 days: Sauraha to Ghitgan, second day based from Ghitgan, then Ghitgan to Gardi, and Gardi to Meghauli. Hem Subedi was our guide – an excellent birder and observer. I have associated with many top ornithologists in California (USA), and can tell Hem has the same kind of birding caliber as other “pros”. We were impressed and very glad to have him as our guide. His dedication to conservation issues are also admirable.

Lesser-spotted eagle – 1 at Suaraha Dec. 13

Little Cormorant – 1 near 20,000 lakes

Then we went to Kosi Tappu Dec. 17-19. Again, exceptionally skilled ornithologist guides. Again, nothing very unusual, but highlights as follows:

Little Bunting – small flock Dec. 17

Eurasian Starling – 1 Dec 17 (only one the whole time in Nepal)

Little Stint – 2 Dec. 17. Observed well through spotting scopes. Blunt, straight bills, black legs, grey backs and pale breasts made them stand out strongly from the Temmnick’s Stints.

Dec. 18: River rafting trip

Lesser Kestrels – about 300 flying by in Kettles

Imperial Eagle – 1

Bluethroat – 1

DUSKY WARBLER WITH BAND: amazing to actually see the legs of a dusky warbler well enough, but I happened to notice one was banded. Turned out (Som told us) it was almost exactly where a mist net had been placed a year before. Apparently returning to the same winter territory.

Dec 19: we stayed in Hetauda to break up the long bus ride back to Katmandu. We saw 4 IBISBILL down the river at Hetauda.

Dec. 22: last day of birding Nepal, which we spent at Pulchowki. Started at summit in morning and worked down.

BUFF-BARRED WARBLER – were very abundant, and except for 2-3 Ashy-throated warblers, they were the only warblers we observed. Earlier visits had a larger diversity of *Phloscopus*, and few or no Buff-barred.

White-throated Blackbird – 1-2

Brown wood Owl – 2

Hoary Barwing – 2

Crimson breasted Woodpecker – 1

GOLD-NAPED FINCH – 1 male

Green-tailed sunbird