



Sikkim and West Bengal, India 28/3-15/4 2004

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Report compiled by Roger Ahlman

## Introduction

We decided to do a three week hardcore birding trip to the northeastern part of India in the Himalayas. Originally we had ideas of doing it on our own by hiring vehicles, finding hotels en route and buying food. We did however find Gorudongma tours and treks on the internet and asked for their prices and services. We got a price for a full package including guide and all transports, food and accomodations. We accepted and we never regretted this. We can strongly recommened any birders to use the excellent services of Adventure Gurudongma with Peter Lobo as guide. He knows the birds well. The logistics worked as good as it possibly could and we are highly satisfied with all arrangements.

Participants on this trip were:

Roger Ahlman, Värnamo, Sweden      All photos taken by Roger

Christer Brostam, Täby, Sweden

Seppo Haavisto, Vallentuna, Sweden

Lars Högström, Gårdby, Sweden

Ulf Karlsson, Farsta, Sweden

Anders Lundkvist, Gårdby, Sweden

## Red tapes

None. We found people up here to be very friendly and honest. The roads are generally narrow and not very good but our drivers were careful. Only in Siliguri we found a few mosquitos and at lake Khecheoperi leeches were plentiful.

## Equipment

All of us had high quality binoculars and good telescopes too. Telescopes are very useful in all situations except when walking in dense forest. Roger had two MiniDisc taperecorders and microphone. We also had Birds of Nepal and Birds of the Himalayas tapes (Scott Connop) for playback and reference. Peter Lobo also had a taperecorder with prerecordings. Using tape playback is vital to see some species like Shortwings, Scimitar-babblers etc.

We all had the Pocket Guide to the Birds of the Indian Subcontinent (Grimmett, Inskipp & Inskipp 1999) and also one copy of the bigger version with more text. This book was very useful as a reference. We also had Birds of Thailand and south-east asia (Craig Robson 2000). This book covers Burma and thus is very useful for northeast India, specially since the pictures are very good and also the sound descriptions are very good. It is also more up-to-date regarding taxonomy, for instance the Seicercus warblers. The pocket guide is reasonably good but as you bird you realise that the pictures are not perfect.

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Birding sites

East Metropolian Bye Pass, Calcutta

We had a few hours before our flight from Calcutta to Bagdogra and got info about an easy-to-visit site from Sumit Sen at Calcutta birdclub. Thank you Sumit! To find this site drive from the airport to Ruby hospital. Go straight past the hospital, cross a bridge and after about a kilometre there is a dirttrack to the left with some paddies and wasteland on either side. This is a good site for Bengal bushlark and some wetland birds. 30 minutes from the airport.

Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary (Mahananda WS)

This site is only about 20 mins north of Siliguri. We birded the first afternoon at a site called Sorea. The next two full days were spent in the west and south part of the park and also walked along the river Teesta riverbed. As it is in the lowlands the wheather was hot. The forest was very dry and birding not very good. The understorey was almost completely clean of birds and very few birds were singing. This site is probably better when the area is wetter.

Mahananda Forest Reserve (Mahananda FR)

This site is nearby but in the foothills and thus with a different avifauna. Higher up, at about 600 m, bamboo started to be a significant part of the vegetation and we started to see more birds. This site was also very dry. One full day was spent along the road from 250-800 metres.

Birds seen at both the lowlands and the foothills are put as Mahananda.

## Samtar

This is where Gurudongma has a farmhouse with great hospitality. We started to bird about 20 mins back from the house along the road. The habitat is dry scrub with some patches of forest. The altitude around 1000-1500 metres. We birded here for a full day. Birding was very good.

## Lava

This is a traditional site about 45 mins from Kalimpong. If reading tripreports most people bird the road around Lava and also the nearby Neora trail. We spend one full day walking the absolutely superb Pipeline trail. This trail is 11 kms and goes from 1960 m down to about 1700 and then steep up to 1860 when it meets the main road back to Kalimpong about 10 kms from Lava. The trail goes through excellent forest and gently sloping downhill along the pipeline. Lots of birds and we encountered many flocks. Birding was however challenging as the flocks were moving very fast.

Day two was spent on the track up the Neora valley. Rather slow birding compared to the day before.

## Sandakphu trek

We spent five full and two half days on this trek. From Manaybanjang at 2000 m the 31 km jeeptrack ascends to 3660 m at Sandakphu and the birds vary accordingly as do the scenery. Nights were spent in trekkers huts along the track. We were unfortunate to have too much fog/low clouds on this trek. We also had two afternoons completely lost to rain. During the

second night at Sandakphu some snow and hail fell. The next morning was clear and pro

duced some birds and a spectacular scenery of the Kanchenzonga massif.

Best birding was undoubtedly around the Gairibas lodge at about 2600 m. Birding around the Tumlin lodge was completely useless and, although the food and accomodation here was good, another night at Gairibas is better.

## Hilley

This small cluster of houses in western Sikkim offered very good birding and is also the launching point for visiting the Varsey Rhododendron Sanctuary. We camped here two nights and birded the road back. The first two-three kilometres goes through open country with patches of bamboo but still birding was good. The road then enters good forest and birding was very good. Broad-billed warbler was found to be rather common here once we learned the song.

## Varsey Rhododendron Sanctuary

This absolutely wonderful place is just above Hilley. To reach the campsite at the top it is a 4 km walk on a concrete trail mostly through fantastic rhododendron forest with lot of bamboo in the understorey. Up at the top the trees and bushes were in full bloom with Kanchenzonga as a spectacular fond. The forest was draped in mosses and birding would have

been very good here if the ever-present fog wouldn't have been here. We only had shorter spells of clear weather. We camped here one night and walked 9 kms down to the city Soreng on the east side of the mountain to be picked up by our jeeps. This walk started through good forest before coming out into open country before coming in to scrubby forest again lower down. The total descend is nearly 1500 m. Birding was good and varied. We were the first foreign birders to visit this site on recommendation by Peter Lobo. This site should, together with Hilley, be a natural part of a birding trip to Sikkim for future birders. According to Peter this is a very good site for Fire-tailed Myzornis although we didn't find it, but that was probably due to the bad weather.

#### Pemyangtse

We birded around the monastery and along the road back to Pelling where we stayed. Our main target here was Red-faced Leucichla which we searched for in vain.

#### Khecheoperi lake

This small sacred lake about an hour north of Pelling offered very good birding and the surprise of the trip - a Black-necked Crane which is a major rarity in India. Apart from that we had gripping views of a Black-tailed Crane, or some of us had, that is those that could stand

the huge numbers of leeches here. The wimps in the group ran their asses off back to the pavement. It is important to be here early as the place is soon crowded with tourists.

Map next page.

## Itinery

### Day 1 (28/3)

Predawn arrival at Calcutta. After the normal procedures at the airport, we hired two taxis to take us to EM Bye Pass and we soon found our main target here, the Bengal Bushlark. Rather poor wetland birding produced some widespread species. Midday flight to Bagdogra in the West Bengal where we were met by our guide Peter Lobo from the Gurudongma tours and treks. A short drive to nearby Siliguri and check in at our hotel. In the afternoon



we did a short drive north to the outskirts of Mahananda WS to a place called Sorea to get some introduction to the birds. Night in Siliguri.

Highlights: Bengal Bushlark in Calcutta and Stork-billed Kingfisher at Sorea.

#### Day 2 (29/3)

We set off at dawn to bird the western part of Mahananda WS. We were held up by a small bridge just inside the park by lots of birds (and breakfast). Rather slow birding throughout the day.

Highlights: Great Hornbills, Black Bazas, Collared Falconet, Pale-chinned and Blue-throated Flycatchers, Spot-winged Starling.

#### Day 3 (30/3)

We birded the southern part of the park, starting off in style with a pair of Red-naped ibises. Cuckoos were plentiful in the morning with four heard Chestnut-winged cuckoos. None came in to playback unfortunately. During the hot midday hours we walked along the Teesta riverbed. Overall rather poor birding today too.

Highlights: Black Ibis 3, Chestnut-winged Cuckoos, Great Thickknees, Lesser Adjutant, Orange-headed Thrush and Pale-billed Flowerpecker.

#### Day 4 (31/3)

We started at dawn and drove for an hour, stopping for our first Black-backed forktails, before reaching the lower parts of the foothills where we had breakfast. From here at about 250 m we walked slowly uphill to about 600 m where the bamboo started to be a prominent part of the vegetation and we started to see more birds. Best so far was without any doubt a pair of Pale-headed woodpecker. In the late afternoon we drove and made just a few stops, one of them produced the bird of the trip for most of us - gripping views of a pair of Long-tailed broadbills! Night in the charming guesthouse in Samtar. Here is where we first came across the local drink 'chang' which is various herbs in a can with hot water. This brew is fermenting in a similar way to beer. You simply add some hot water as you drink and you'll have a full glass! We did however prefer ordinary beer.

Highlights: Rufous- and Pale-headed Woodpeckers, Long-tailed Broadbill, Sapphire Flycatcher and White-browed Scimitar-babbler.

#### Day 5 (1/4)

Birding along the road at Samtar forest about 20 mins from the guesthouse. Very good birding around 1000 m with many flocks. Late afternoon was spent at Kalimpong ridge. Night in Kalimpong at Gurudongma guest house. We met General Jimmy Singh here and he noted that Anders had birthday today. He had a bottle of Jonny Walker Black Label 12 Yrs which he had been given thirteen years earlier by the King of Bhutan when he was working there. He gave us this bottle to celebrate! Thank you Mr Singh!

Highlights: Yellow-rumped Honeyguide, Black Eagles, Cutia, Black-eared Shrike-babbler and Rusty-fronted Barwing.

#### Day 6 (2/4)

A very nice walk on the Pipeline trail near Lava through excellent forest. This trail follows a gently sloping water pipeline and you walk for 11 kms and end the walk with a steep uphill for 20 mins to the main road between Lava and Kalimpong.

Highlights: Red-headed Trogon male, Hodgson's Redstart, Spotted Forktail, all three Tesias, Black-faced Warbler, Cutia.

#### Day 7 (3/4)

Lava and birding along the track up to Neora. Rather poor birding but by some houses we found or first Scaly-breasted wren-babbler and Golden Bush-robin. In the morning and late afternoon we birded along the main road 6-12 kms before Lava coming from Kalimpong.

Highlights: Tickell's Thrush, Chestnut Thrush, Scaly-breasted Wren-babbler in the open.

#### Day 8 (4/4)

Long drive from Kalimpong to Manebhanjang, where the Sandakphu trek starts. We had to change vehicles to Landrovers from the 60s. We drove about halfway to Sandakphu to the Gairibas lodge at 2500 m. Fog for most of the afternoon and this weather was to be the prevailing weather for the rest of the trip unfortunately. Good birding during the spells with clear weather.

Highlights: Satyr Tragopan male seen, Kalij Pheasants, Green Shrike-babbler, Hoary-throated Barwing, stunning Fire-tailed Sunbirds, Collared Grosbeaks in flocks.

#### Day 9 (5/4)

Drive from Gairibas to Sandakphu at 3660 m with several birding stops/walks. Last 4 kms up to Sandakphu was very steep and some in the group preferred to study the inside of their eyelids. After a fine morning at Gairibas we had fog for most of the day.

Highlights: Darjeeling Woodpeckers, Plain-backed Thrush, Slender-billed Scimitar-babblers, Maroon-backed Accentor and Blanford's Rosefinches.

#### Day 10 (6/4)

Sandakphu all day. We were happy to have a clear morning with a spectacular view of the Kanchenzonga mountain. Birding along the track north of Sandakphu for a few kilometres with some sidetrails. During the late afternoon we had a hailstorm. During the night some snow fell and the weather was rather miserable.

Highlights: Blood Pheasant, Indian blue Robin, Red-headed Bullfinch, White-winged Grosbeak and Gold-naped Finch.

#### Day 11 (7/4)

After the nights bad weather we had a fine but cold morning and birded around the village and saw lots of things. Don't miss the rubbish dump, it had several accentors and rosefinches. Most of the morning was a rather boring steep downhill walk for 6 kms to Kalaphokri partly in rain. Afternoon was also poor birding along the track, mostly in fog.

Highlights: Blood Pheasant, White-throated Redstart, Dark-breasted and Dark-rumped Rosefinches.

#### Day 12 (8/4)

Early start from Kalaphokri and a fine walk to Gairibas. We started on the track but about halfway we took a sidetrack that was not a shortcut but provided excellent birding with highlights like Black-throated parrotbills and Golden-breasted fulvettas etc. The afternoon was completely spoiled to rain and fog.

Highlights: Slender-billed and Streak-breasted Scimitar-babblers, Western crowned Warblers, Black-headed Shrike-babblers, Fulvous Parrotbills and Gold-naped Finch.

#### Day 13 (9/4)

Early start and hard walk from Gairibas at 2500 m up to Tumlin at 3000 m. Rather poor birding mainly due to poor weather but the uphill took it's toll to us as well. Afternoon was completely spoiled to rain and storm. For some in the group this was welcome as a cold grazed in the group. The habitat around Tumlin is all gone and it would probably be better to spend another night at Gairibas where birding is very good. Food and accomodation at Tumlin is good though.

Highlights: Satyr Tragopan and some of the earlier highlights.

#### Day 14 (10/4)

12 kms walk from Tumlin to Manebhanjang mostly in fog. Afternoon was long driving to Hilley in Sikkim and camping.

Highlights: Brown Parrotbill, White-crested and Greater necklaced Laughingthrush

#### Day 15 (11/4)

All day birding along the road back from Hilley, partly in fog. Good birding in a nice forest that reminds a bit of Lava. Broad-billed warbler was found to be rather common here once we had learned and recorded the song.

Highlights: White-browed Shortwing, Broad-billed Warblers, Grey-sided and Scaly Laughingthrushes, Golden-breasted Fulvettas.

#### Day 16 (12/4)

Walk from Hilley up to the top at Varsey Rhododendron Sanctuary, about 4 kms on a good trail. Unfortunately this beautiful place was covered in fog for most of the day with only short clear spells. Very nice with all the blooming Rhododendron trees. Camping at the top. During the early night we had rain, hail, strong winds and a good thunderstorm. The food, rice with eight side dishes warmed.

Highlights: Snowy-browed Flycatcher and good views of White-browed Shortwings and several Scaly-breasted Wren-babblers, Black-throated Parrotbills and Crimson-browed Finches.

#### Day 17 (13/4)

Walk from Varsey at about 3000 m down to Soreng at 1500 m. This walk was said to be 9 kms but it felt longer. First part goes through good forest then a few kilometres through open/cultivated land and last part through secondary forest. Afternoon was driving to Pelling and unproductive afternoon birding around the Pemyangtse monastery. Very nice with a shower after nine days without washing.

Highlights: White-tailed Robin, Broad-billed Warbler, Yellow-bellied Flowerpecker and Gold-naped Finch.

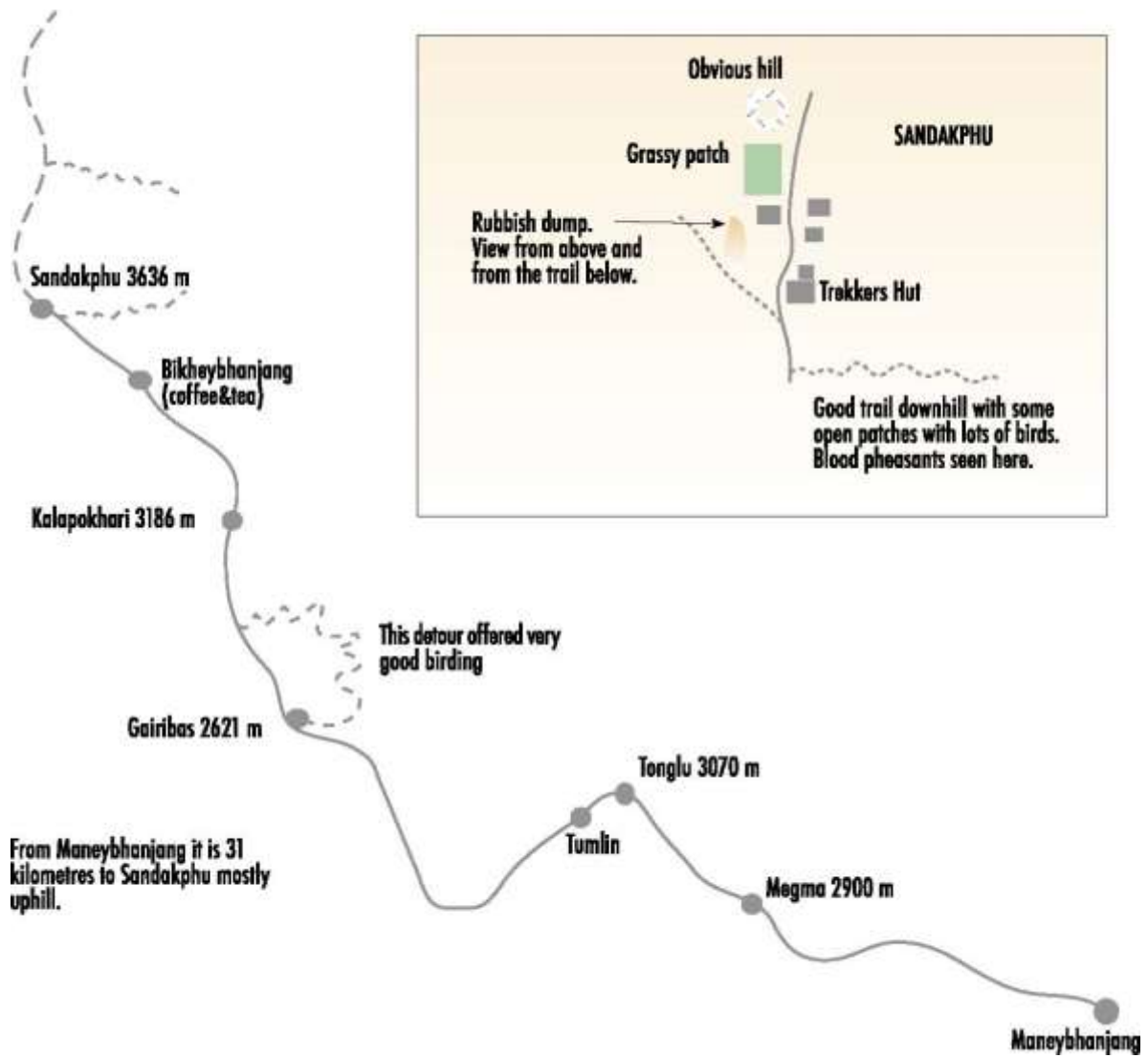
#### Day 18 (14/4)

Khecheoperi lake in the morning. This small lake held the surprise of the trip - a Black-necked crane that later in the day, when more tourists came, decided to leave. This bird is a major rarity in India. Another of the best birds of the trip was seen here by those of us who didn't mind the masses of leeches that lives here. Gripping views of a Black-tailed crane. Another bird with very few records in India. After some stops along the way back to Pelling we made another try around the monastery for Red-faced Leucichla in vain and it soon started to rain and we aborted this effort.

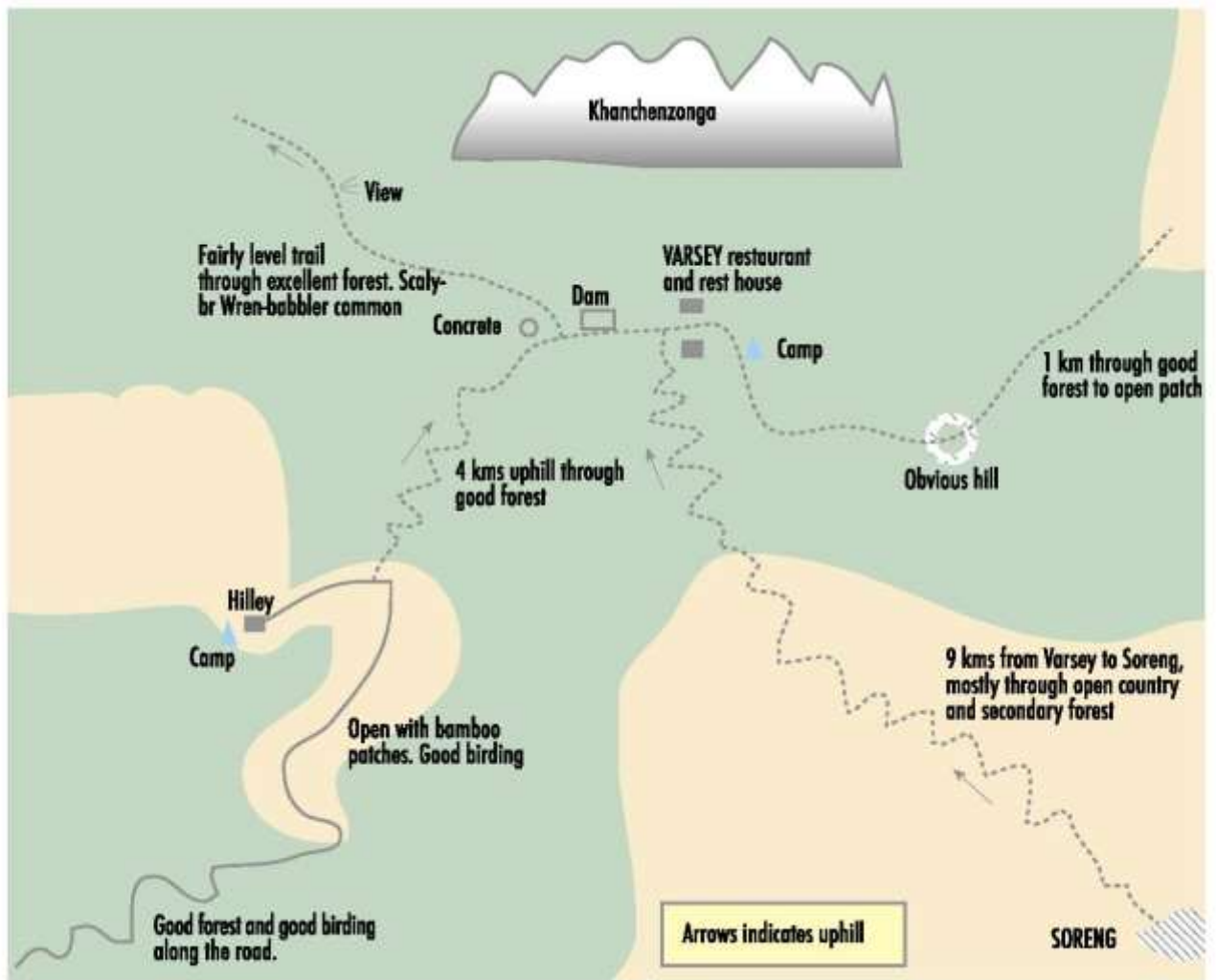
Highlights: Apart from the above mentioned species we also saw Crimson-breasted Woodpecker, Tickell's Thrush, Yellow-cheeked Tit, White-rumped Munia.

#### Day 19 (15/4)

A day of transport. We started of the morning in style though when we made a short roadside stop at a site Peter had for Rufous-necked laughingthrush and within a minute we had them on the list. As a bonus we saw a pair of Rusty-sided scimitar-babblers feeding on the road. When we came to Bagdogra at about 11.30 we found out that the airline had changed our flight to Delhi and put it almost two hours earlier! After a rush through the numerous security controls we just made onto the plane. In Delhi we had 9 hours to kill at the airport before our European flight.



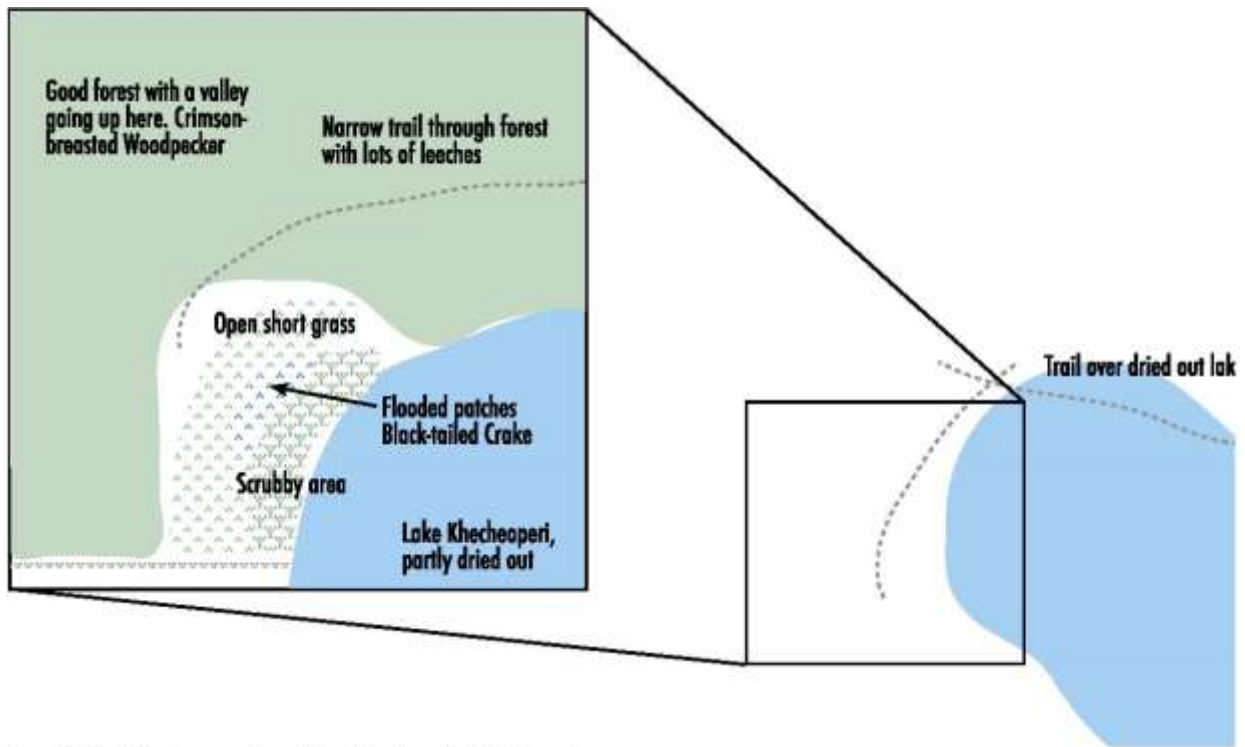
Map of Sandakphu and the Sandakphu Trek.



Map of Varsey and Hilley

been very good here if the ever-present fog wouldn't have been here. We only had shorter

Map of Varsey and Hilley



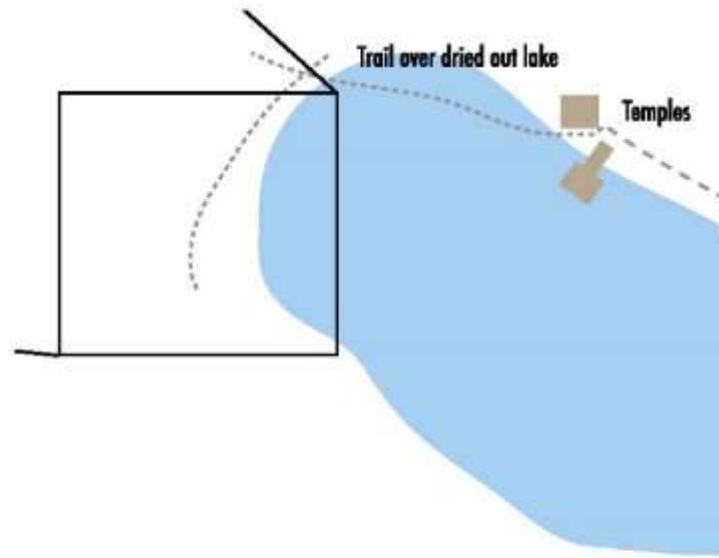
Map of lake Khecheoperi and the Black-tailed Crake site







*Map of lake Khecheoperi and the Black-tailed Crake site*



Map of lake Khecheoperi and the Black-tailed Crake site

Map of lake Khecheoperi



Spot-winged Starlings at Mahananda



A grand view over the Teesta river

Birdlist

This list follows Pocket Guide to the Birds of the Indian subkontinent (Grimmet, Inskipp & Inskipp 1999) both by names and taxonomy

Common Hill-Partridge *Arborophila torqueola*

1 heard in Mahananda FR, singles heard daily on the Sandakphu trek and Varsey/Hilley

Blood Pheasant *Ithaginis cruentus*

1 pair seen at Sandakphu and 1 pair seen along the road below Sandakphu.

Satyr Tragopan *Tragopan satyra*

1 male seen on the road near Gairibas 4.4, 4 males heard near Gairibas 5.4, 1 male seen above Gairibas 9.4, 1 heard at Varsey 12.4

Red Junglefowl *Gallus gallus*

5-10 heard and seen at Mahananda WS daily.

Kalij Pheasant *Lophura leucomelanos*

1 pair seen on the track to Sandakphu after about 1 kilometre, 1 male seen at Gairibas.

Common Peafowl (Indian) *Pavo cristatus*

Fairly common to common at Mahananda WS, 1 seen between Kalimpong and Manebhanjang.

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*

7 seen in Teesta river at Mahananda WS

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*

1 male seen in Teesta river at Mahananda WS

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

1 male seen in Teesta river at Mahananda WS

Goosander *Mergus merganser*

10 seen in Teesta river at Mahananda WS

Yellow-rumped Honeyguide *Indicator xanthonotus*

1 seen near Samtar 1.4 This species is very rare and seldom recorded. Peter Lobo hadn't seen it in this area before.

Speckled Piculet *Picumnus innominatus*

1 seen in bamboo at Mahananda FR

Rufous Woodpecker *Micropternus brachyurus*

1 seen on the lower part of the Mahananda FR

Pale-headed Woodpecker *Gecinulus grantia*

1 pair seen in bamboo in the Mahananda FR at about 600 masl.

Grey-capped Woodpecker *Dendrocopos canicapillus*

9 seen at Mahananda WS, 1 seen at Samtar, 2 seen at Neora, Lava and 1 seen near Gairibas

Crimson-breasted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos cathpharius*

1 seen at lake Khecheoperi

Darjeeling Woodpecker *Dendrocopos darjellensis*

2 seen at Neora, Lava, Up to 5 seen around Gairibas and 1 near Tonglu, 1 seen at Varsey

Greater Yellownape *Picus flavinucha*

Common at Mahananda, 1 seen at Neora, Lava

Grey-headed Woodpecker *Picus canus*

A total of 7 seen and heard at Mahananda and 1 seen at Lava.

Black-rumped Flameback *Dinopium benghalense*

3 seen at Mahananda WS including a female in a nesthole.

Greater Flameback *Chrysocolaptes lucidus*

10 seen at Mahananda WS southern part.

Great Barbet *Megalaima virens*

Common in the mountains

Lineated Barbet *Megalaima lineata*

Common at Mahananda

Golden-throated Barbet *Megalaima franklinii*

3 seen at Samtar and 2 heard at Pipeline trail, Lava

Blue-throated Barbet *Megalaima asiatica*

Common at Mahananda

Blue-eared Barbet *Megalaima australis*

1 seen at Mahananda FR at 700 masl.

Coppersmith Barbet *Megalaima haemacephala*

1 seen at Calcutta

Indian Grey Hornbill *Ocyceros birostris*

3 seen at Mahananda WS

Oriental Pied Hornbill *Anthracoceros albirostris*

8 seen at Mahananda WS

Great Pied Hornbill *Buceros bicornis*

4 seen at Mahananda WS

Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

2 seen at Mahananda WS

Red-headed Trogon *Harpactes erythrocephalus*

1 male seen along the Pipeline trail, Lava

Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis*

Common at Mahananda WS

Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis*

6 seen at Mahananda

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

2 seen at Mahananda WS

Stork-billed Kingfisher *Pelargopsis capensis*

1 seen at Sorea, Mahananda WS

White-throated Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis*

2 seen at Calcutta. Fairly common at Mahananda WS

Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis*

2 seen at Teesta river at Mahananda WS

(Little) Green Bee-eater *Merops orientalis*

5 seen between Mahananda and Siliguri

Blue-tailed Bee-eater *Merops philippinus*

4 seen near Teesta river, Mahananda WS

Bay-headed Bee-eater *Merops leschenaulti*

Common at Mahananda WS

Chestnut-winged Cuckoo *Clamator coromandus*

4 heard at Mahananda WS southern part. None came to playback.

Large Hawk-Cuckoo *Cuculus sparverioides*

Singles heard in the mountains although not as high as Sandakphu.

Indian Cuckoo *Cuculus micropterus*

4 heard at Mahananda and 1 heard at lake Khecheoperi. The four-note song is often translated to "you-can't-see-me" Perhaps that's why we didn't see it ;-)

Common Cuckoo (Eurasian) *Cuculus canorus*

Singles heard at low and middle altitude.

Himalayan Cuckoo (Oriental) *Cuculus saturatus*

About 5 heard daily. Goes slightly higher than Common cuckoo and is a bit more common.

Banded Bay Cuckoo *Cacomantis sonneratii*

1 seen and heard at Mahananda WS

Common Koel (Asian) *Eudynamys scolopacea*

1 seen at Sorea, Mahananda and 1 heard at Mahananda FR, 1 heard near a gasstation north of Siliguri.

Green-billed Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus tristis*

1 seen at Mahananda WS, 2 seen at Mahananda FR and 1 seen en route back from Sikkim

Greater Coucal *Centropus sinensis*

1 heard at the lower part of Mahananda FR



Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria*

Singles at Mahananda WS

Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*

Common at Mahananda WS

Red-breasted Parakeet *Psittacula alexandri*

Common at Mahananda WS specially the western part.

Himalayan Swiftlet *Aerodramus brevirostris*

Common in the mountains

White-rumped Needletail *Zoonavena sylvatica*

3 seen near Khecheoperi lake

White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus*

1 seen at Neora, Lava.

Asian Palm-Swift *Cypsiurus balasiensis*

Common in the lowlands

House Swift *Apus nipalensis*

Common in Calcutta, 1 seen at Mahananda WS

Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba*

4 seen at Mahananda WS

Crested Treeswift *Hemiprocne coronata*

20 seen at Mahananda WS

Brown wood Owl *Strix leptogrammica*

1 seen at Sandakphu and 1 heard at Varsey.

Collared Owlet *Glaucidium brodiei*

1 heard at Neora, Lava and 1 heard at Gairibas

Asian Barred Owlet *Glaucidium cuculoides*

Fairly common in the lowlands and lower mountains.

Jungle Owlet *Glaucidium radiatum*

1 heard at Khechoeperi lake

Brown Hawk-Owl *Ninox scutulata*

1 heard at Gurudongma's place in Kalimpong

Rock Pigeon *Columba livia*

Common in villages

Oriental Turtle-Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*

Common

Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis*

Singles in the lowlands

Red Collared-Dove *Streptopelia tranquebarica*

10 seen at/near Mahananda

Eurasian Collared-Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

20 seen at Calcutta, 5 seen at Mahananda WS

Barred Cuckoo-Dove *Macropygia unchall*

2 seen + a few heard at the Pipeline trail and 2 seen at Neora, Lava

Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps indica*

2 seen at Mahananda WS and 1 seen at Mahananda FR

Pompadour Green-Pigeon *Treron pompadora*

1 seen at Mahananda WS

Yellow-footed Green-Pigeon *Treron phoenicoptera*

2 seen at Sorea, Mahananda WS and 10 seen at Mahananda WS southern part.

Pin-tailed Green-Pigeon *Treron apicauda*

1 seen at Mahananda FR

Wedge-tailed Green-Pigeon *Treron sphenura*

1 seen at Mahananda WS and 1 seen at Mahananda FR

Black-necked Crane *Grus nigricollis*

1 seen at lake Khecheoperi 14.4. The bird was seen

leaving the place when too many tourists arrived.

A major rarity in India and the surprise of the trip.

Black-tailed Crake *Porzana bicolor*

1 seen and 1 heard at lake Khecheoperi.

Rare with few records in India.

Pintail Snipe *Gallinago stenura*

2 seen at EM Bye Pass, Calcutta

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

2 seen at EM Bye Pass, Calcutta

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

20 seen at Teesta river, Mahananda WS

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

2 seen at Mahananda WS

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

2 seen at Calcutta

Common Sandpiper *Tringa hypoleucos*

3 seen at Mahananda WS

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

4 seen at Mahananda WS

Eurasian Thick-knee *Burhinus oedicnemus*

1 seen at Sorea, Mahananda and 2 seen at Mahananda WS

Great Thick-knee *Burhinus recurvirostris*

4 seen at Teesta river, Mahananda WS

Little Pratincole (Small) *Glareola lactea*

About 100 seen at Teesta river, Mahananda WS

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

4 seen at Mahananda WS

River Lapwing *Vanellus duvaucelii*

8 seen in Mahananda WS along stone riverbeds

Red-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus*

2 seen at Mahananda WS

Jerdon's Baza *Aviceda jerdoni*

1 pair seen at Mahananda WS and 1 seen at Mahananda FR

Black Baza *Aviceda leuphotes*

10-15 seen at Mahananda WS

Black-winged Kite (Shouldered) *Elanus caeruleus*

3 seen at Delhi airport

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*

Fairly common in the lowlands

Slender-billed Vulture *Gyps tenuirostris*

4 seen at Mahananda WS

Himalayan Griffon *Gyps himalayensis*

About 20 seen at Sandakphu.

Common at Mahananda and Lava

Some of the Griffons in the lowlands may

have been other species than Himalayan.

Short-toed Snake-Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*

2 seen at Mahananda WS

Crested Serpent-Eagle *Spilornis cheela*

10 seen at Mahananda, 1 seen at Neora, Lava,

1 seen at Varsey and 5 seen near lake Khecheoperi.

Black Eagle *Ictinaetus malayensis*

3 seen at Samtar, 2 seen at Lava, 2 seen between Gairibas and Tonglu and 1 seen between Soreng and Pelling.

Crested Goshawk *Accipiter trivirgatus*

2 seen at Neora, Lava, 1 seen at Gairibas, 1 seen at Varsey and 1 seen at lake Khecheoperi.

Shikra *Accipiter badius*

Fairly common at Mahananda

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

2 seen at Mahananda WS

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

1 seen between Varsey and Soreng

Oriental Honey-Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*

12 seen at Mahananda

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

2 seen at Mahananda, 2 seen at Sandakphu, 1 seen at Hilley and 1 seen at Varsey.

The bird at Hilley matches the *Buteo b. refectus* race.

Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis*

3 seen at Mahananda WS and 1 seen at Sandakphu

Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus*

1 seen at Samtar

Changeable Hawk-Eagle *Spizaetus cirrhatus*

2 seen at Mahananda WS and 1 seen at Neora, Lava

Collared Falconet *Microhierax caerulescens*

5 seen at Mahananda

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

1 seen at Mahananda FR, 2 seen below Sandakphu, 1 seen near Tonglu and 1 seen at Varsey

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

2 seen at Sandakphu

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

1 seen in lake Khecheoperi. This species is a vagrant here.

Indian Cormorant *Phalacrocorax fuscicollis*

Common at Calcutta and about 15 at Mahananda WS

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

5 seen at Mahananda WS

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

2 seen at Calcutta and 1 seen at Mahananda WS

Great Egret *Casmerodius albus*

3 seen at Mahananda WS



Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Common in the lowlands

Indian Pond-Heron *Ardeola grayii*

Common at Calcutta. 2 seen at Mahananda WS

Black Ibis *Pseudibis papillosa*

3 seen at Mahananda WS southern part.

Asian Openbill *Anastomus oscitans*

50 seen at Calcutta

Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus*

1 seen at Sorea, Mahananda

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*

3+2 seen at Mahananda WS

Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilos javanicus*

2 seen at Mahananda WS

[Blue Pitta *Pitta cyanea*]

One in the group had a very swift view of something that could have been a Blue Pitta at Mahananda WS

Long-tailed Broadbill *Psarisomus dalhousiae*

1 pair seen at Mahananda FR at about 1000 masl. Bird of the trip for most in the group!

Golden-fronted Leafbird *Chloropsis aurifrons*

Fairly common in Mahananda

Orange-bellied Leafbird *Chloropsis hardwickei*

10 seen at Samtar and 2 seen at Pemyangtse

Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*

3 seen at Calcutta and 1 seen at Mahananda WS

Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach*

2 seen at Calcutta, 1 seen at Mahananda FR, 1 seen at Samtar, 2 seen at Lava, 1 seen between Kalimpong and Manaybanjang.

Grey-backed Shrike *Lanius tephronotus*

2 seen at Mahananda WS

Yellow-billed Blue Magpie *Urocissa flavirostris*

Singles to fairly common on the Sandakphu trek and at Hilley/Varsey.

Green Magpie (Common) *Cissa chinensis*

2 heard at Mahananda FR, 1 heard at Lava and 1 seen at lake Khecheoperi.

Rufous Treepie *Dendrocitta vagabunda*

6 seen at Mahananda WS

Grey Treepie *Dendrocitta formosae*

1 seen at Samtar and 2 seen at Lava, 2 seen near Tonglu and 7 seen at Hilley/Varsey

Spotted Nutcracker *Nucifraga caryocatactes*

Fairly common on the Sandakphu trek. Race *N c hemispila*

House Crow *Corvus splendens*

Common in the lowlands/cities

Large-billed Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos*

Fairly common to common throughout.

Common Raven *Corvus corax*

Singles on the Sandakphu trek

Ashy Wood-swallow *Artamus fuscus*

3 seen at Mahananda WS

Black-hooded Oriole *Oriolus xanthornus*

7 seen and heard at Mahananda WS

Maroon Oriole *Oriolus traillii*

3 seen at Samtar, 1 seen at Pipeline trail, Lava and 1 seen at lake Khecheoperi

Large Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina macei*

8 seen at Mahananda, 1 seen near Gairibas

Black-winged Cuckoo-Shrike *Coracina melaschistos*

3 seen at Mahananda FR, 2 seen at Samtar, 1 seen at Lava, 2 seen at Varsey

Long-tailed Minivet *Pericrocotus ethologus*

1 seen at Mahananda WS, 2 seen at Gairibas, 1+4 seen at Varsey

Short-billed Minivet *Pericrocotus brevirostris*

1 seen at Mahananda WS, 10 seen at Samtar, 6 seen at Lava and 2 seen at the lower part of the Sandakphu trek.

Around Gairibas we had about 40 unidentified minivets.

Scarlet Minivet *Pericrocotus flammeus*

Fairly common at Mahananda, 10 seen at Samtar

Yellow-bellied Fantail *Rhipidura hypoxantha*

Fairly common on the Sandakphu trek and Varsey

White-throated Fantail *Rhipidura albicollis*

1 seen at Mahananda FR, 3 seen at Samtar, fairly common at Lava, 7 seen at Varsey

Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocercus*

Common in the lowlands

Ashy Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus*

Common higher up than Black Drongo

Bronzed Drongo *Dicrurus aeneus*

2 seen at Mahananda FR

Hair-crested Drongo (Spangled) *Dicrurus hottentottus*

Common at Mahananda

Greater Racket-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus paradiseus*

Fairly common at Mahananda

Black-naped Monarch *Hypothymis azurea*

3 seen at Mahananda

Large Woodshrike *Tephrodornis gularis*

2 seen at Mahananda WS and 4 seen at Mahananda FR, 2 seen between Kalimpong and Banaymanjang

Blue-capped Rock-Thrush *Monticola cinclorhynchus*

4 seen at Mahananda FR, 2 seen at Samtar, 4 seen at Lava and 2 seen at Varsey

Chestnut-bellied Rock-Thrush *Monticola rufiventris*

2 females seen at Mahananda WS, 2 seen at Samtar, Fairly common on the Sandakphu trek, 5 seen at Varsey.

Blue Whistling-Thrush *Myophonus caeruleus*

Common in the mountains

Orange-headed Thrush *Zosterops citrina*

1 seen at Mahananda WS

Plain-backed Thrush *Zosterops mollissima*

6 seen on the Sandakphu trek mostly around Gairibas

Scaly Thrush *Zosterops dauma*

2 seen at Samtar, 2 seen at Neora, 2 seen near Gairibas

Tickell's Thrush *Turdus unicolor*

2 seen 12 kms before Lava towards Kalimpong and

1 seen near Pelling

White-collared Blackbird *Turdus albocinctus*

Fairly common in the mountains

Grey-winged Blackbird *Turdus bouboul*

5 seen near Samtar, 2 seen at Neora, Lava and

1 male seen near Soreng

Chestnut Thrush *Turdus rubrocanus*

1 seen at Neora, Lava and 1 seen at Gairibas

Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis*

1 seen at Sandakphu and 2 seen between

Kalaphokri and Gairibas

White-browed Shortwing *Brachypteryx montana*

1 seen at Hilley and four seen and heard at Varsey

Dark-sided Flycatcher *Muscicapa sibirica*

2 seen at Samtar, 1 seen at Gairibas,

4 seen at Hilley and 1 seen at Varsey

Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher *Ficedula strophinata*

Fairly common in the mountains

Red-throated Flycatcher *Ficedula albicilla*

Up to 15 at Mahananda, 2 seen along the lower  
part of the Sandakphu trek

Snowy-browed Flycatcher *Ficedula hyperythra*

2 seen along the Pipeline trail, Lava and 1 seen at Varsey

Little Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula westermanni*

2 seen at Samtar, 7 seen at lava and

4 seen at lake Khecheoperi

Sapphire Flycatcher *Ficedula sapphira*

1 female seen at Mahananda FR at 600 masl

Verditer Flycatcher *Eumyias thalassina*

Fairly common in the mountains

Large Niltava *Niltava grandis*

1 seen at Samtar, 1 seen on the Pipeline trail,

2 seen near Tonglu, 4 seen at Hilley and

1 seen at lake Khecheoperi

Small Niltava *Niltava macgrigoriae*

3 seen at Samtar

Rufous-bellied Niltava *Niltava sundara*

Singles in the mountains

Pale-chinned Blue-Flycatcher *Cyornis poliogenys*

1 seen at Mahananda WS and 1 seen at Mahananda FR

Pale Blue-Flycatcher *Cyornis unicolor*

2 seen at Samtar

Blue-throated Flycatcher *Cyornis rubeculoides*

2 males seen at Mahananda WS

Pygmy Blue-Flycatcher *Muscicapella hodgsoni*

1 male seen at Samtar

Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher *Culicicapa ceylonensis*

Fairly common at Samtar, Lava and Hilley



Indian Blue Robin *Luscinia brunnea*

1 seen at Sandakphu

Orange-flanked Bush-Robin *Tarsiger cyanurus*

2 females seen at Neora, Lava

Golden Bush-Robin *Tarsiger chrysaeus*

1 seen at Mahananda FR, 1 male seen at Neora, 6 seen at Sandakphu, 2 seen at Hilley and 1 female seen at Varsey

White-browed Bush-Robin *Tarsiger indicus*

2 2K? seen at Sandakphu and 1 male seen below Sandakphu

Oriental Magpie-Robin *Copsychus saularis*

Singles in the lowlands and 2 at Kalimpong

White-rumped Shama *Copsychus malabaricus*

2 seen at Mahananda WS and 10 seen at Mahananda FR

Indian Robin *Saxicoloides fulicata*

2 seen near Mahananda WS and 2 seen at Delhi airport

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

3 seen at Mahananda WS, 1 seen at Lava, 3 seen at Sandakphu and 1 seen at Hilley

At least the birds in Mahananda belonged to the race *P. o. rufiventris*

Hodgson's Redstart *Phoenicurus hodgsoni*

1 female seen at the end of the Pipeline trail, Lava

White-throated Redstart *Phoenicurus schisticeps*

2 seen at Sandakphu

Blue-fronted Redstart *Phoenicurus frontalis*

Fairly common in the mountains

White-capped Water-Redstart *Chaimarrornis leucocephalus*

Singles near water

Plumbeous Water-Redstart *Rhyacornis fuliginosus*

Singles near water

White-tailed Robin *Cinclidium leucurum*

1 heard 12 kms before Lava, 1 seen and 2 heard Varsey-Soreng, 5 heard around lake Khecheoperi

Little Forktail *Enicurus scouleri*

2 seen between Soreng and Pelling, 1 seen between Pelling and lake Khecheoperi

Black-backed Forktail *Enicurus immaculatus*

6 seen at Mahananda FR at roadside streams

Slaty-backed Forktail *Enicurus schistaceus*

2 seen along the Pipeline trail, Lava, 1 seen near Soreng and 1 seen between Pelling and lake Khecheoperi

Spotted Forktail *Enicurus maculatus*

1 seen along the Pipeline trail, Lava

Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*

1 female seen at Mahananda WS

Grey Bushchat *Saxicola ferrea*

Singles in open country in the mountains

Spot-winged Starling *Saroglossa spiloptera*

Three flocks at Mahananda WS containing a total of 46 birds.

Chestnut-tailed Starling *Sturnus malabaricus*

1 seen at Mahananda FR

Asian Pied Starling *Sturnus contra*

Common in the lowlands

Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis*

Common in the lowlands

Bank Myna *Acridotheres ginginianus*

4 seen in Siliguri

Jungle Myna *Acridotheres fuscus*

4 seen at Calcutta airport

Hill Myna *Gracula religiosa*

Common at Mahananda

Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch *Sitta castanea*

Common at Mahananda and singles at Lava

White-tailed Nuthatch *Sitta himalayensis*

Singles to fairly common in the mountains

Velvet-fronted Nuthatch *Sitta frontalis*

9 seen at Mahananda WS

Eurasian Tree-Creeper *Certhia familiaris*

1 seen at Sandakphu

Rusty-flanked Tree-Creeper *Certhia nipalensis*

1 seen at Samtar, 1 seen at Lava, 6 seen at Sandakphu and 1 seen at Gairibas

Brown-throated Tree-Creeper *Certhia discolor*

1 seen along the Pipeline trail and 1 seen at Neora, Lava

Rufous-vented Tit *Parus rubiventris*

Common at higher altitude

Coal Tit *Parus ater*

4 seen around Sandakphu and 1 seen at Varsey

Grey-crested Tit *Parus dichrous*

Fairly common at higher altitude on the Sandakphu trek, 1 seen at Varsey

Great Tit *Parus major*

3 seen at Mahananda WS, 1 seen at Lava

Sounds completely different from European Great Tits

Green-backed Tit *Parus monticolus*

Fairly common in the mountains

Winter Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

1 seen at Sandakphu

Yellow-cheeked Tit *Parus spilonotus*

1 seen at Samtar, 10 seen at Neora, Lava and 2 seen at lake Khecheoperi

Yellow-browed Tit *Sylviparus modestus*

Singles in the mountains

Black-throated Tit *Aegithalos concinnus*

10 seen at Samtar, 10 seen along the Pipeline trail, 2 seen at Neora and 1 seen at lake Khecheoperi

Rufous-fronted Tit *Aegithalos iouschistos*

Singles seen along the Sandakphu trek and 2 seen at Varsey

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

25 seen at Mahananda WS

Plain Martin *Riparia paludicola*

10 seen at Mahananda WS

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Singles in villages

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*

Common at Mahananda WS

Nepal House-Martin *Delichon nipalensis*

10 seen at Samtar and about 100 between Soreng and Pelling

Striated Bulbul *Pycnonotus striatus*

8 seen at Samtar and 5 seen at Pipeline trail and 1 seen at lake Khecheoperi

Black-crested Bulbul *Pycnonotus melanicterus*

Common at Mahananda

Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus*

2 seen at Mahananda WS, 3 seen at Mahananda FR, 6 seen at Lava and 2 at Kalimpong

Himalayan Bulbul *Pycnonotus leucogenys*

5 seen at Samtar, 7 seen between Kalimpong and Banaymanjang and 1 seen near Pelling.

Open country in the mountains seems to be this bird's habitat.

Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer*

Common in the lowlands

White-throated Bulbul *Alophoixus flaveolus*

1 seen at Mahananda FR

Ashy Bulbul *Hemixos flavala*

About 15 seen at Mahananda FR

Mountain Bulbul *Hypsipetes mccllellandii*

2 seen at Samtar and 1 seen near Soreng

Black Bulbul *Hypsipetes leucocephalus*

1 seen at Mahananda WS, 10 seen at Mahananda FR and about 50 at Samtar

Hill Prinia *Prinia atrogularis*

1 seen at Samtar, 1 heard at Neora, 1 heard at Banaymanjang, 10 seen and heard between Varsey and Soreng, 2 seen at lake Khecjeoperi

Plain Prinia *Prinia inornata*

10 seen at Calcutta

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*

10 seen at Calcutta

Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus*

Singles seen at Mahananda and 1 seen at kalimpong

Chestnut-headed Tesia *Tesia castaneocoronata*

1 seen along the Pipeline trail, 6 seen and heard at Gairibas, Common at Hilley and Varsey

Slaty-bellied Tesia *Tesia olivacea*

5 seen and/or heard along the Pipeline trail, Lava

Grey-bellied Tesia *Tesia cyaniventer*

3 seen and heard along the Pipeline trail, 10 seen and heard along the lower part of the Varsey-Soreng trail.

Brownish-flanked Bush-Warbler *Cettia fortipes*

5 heard at Neora, Lava

Yellowish-bellied Bush-Warbler *Cettia acanthizoides*

Fairly common at Hilley and Varsey

Grey-sided Bush-Warbler *Cettia brunnifrons*

1 seen between Gairibas and Kalaphokri, 8 seen and heard at Hilley and Varsey

Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius*

6 seen and heard at Mahananda

Smoky Warbler *Phylloscopus fulgiventis*

1 seen at Samtar, 3 seen at Lava

Tickell's Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus affinis*

3 seen at Mahananda WS, 2 seen along the lower part of the Sandakphu trek, 2 seen including singing at Hilley.

Buff-barred Warbler *Phylloscopus pulcher*

Common in the mountains. This is a core member of the flocks.

Ashy-throated Warbler *Phylloscopus maculipennis*

Singles on the Sandakphu trek and common at Hilley/Varsey

Lemon-rumped Warbler *Phylloscopus chloronotus*

6 seen at Lava and 1 seen near Banaymanjang. If we would have looked more carefully at the *Phylloscopus* this species may have been more common.



Buff-browed Warbler (Hume's) *Phylloscopus humei*

Only three positively identified. 1 at Mahananda WS, 1 at Sandakphu and 1 near Gairibas.

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*

None positively identified but almost certainly recorded at Samtar, Lava and Hilley.

We were actually busy looking at other birds rather than trying to identify these birds.

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*

2 seen at Mahananda WS, 1 singing at Mahananda FR, 10 seen at Samtar and 1 seen near Gairibas

Large-billed Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus magnirostris*

1 seen near Tonglu

Western Crowned Warbler *Phylloscopus occipitalis*

6 seen near Gairibas, 1 seen at Hilley

Blyth's Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus reguloides*

1 seen along the Pipeline trail

Golden-spectacled Warbler *Seicercus burkii*

Common in the mountains. The vast majority of these belongs to the taxon *S. whistleri*. This is supported by several recordings. Some on the Sandakphu trek, however, almost certainly belongs to *Seicercus valentini* Bianchi's Warbler. Those having a clear grey crown-stripe and distinct blackish lateral crown stripes.

White-spectacled Warbler *Seicercus affinis*

1 seen at Mahananda FR, 5 seen along the Pipeline trail, 1 seen at Sandakphu

Grey-cheeked Warbler *Seicercus poligenys*

About 20 seen along the Pipeline trail at Lava, 1 seen at lake Khecheoperi

Grey-hooded Warbler *Seicercus xanthoschistos*

1 seen at Mahananda FR, Fairly common at Lava and Samtar, 1 seen at Varsey

Chestnut-crowned Warbler *Seicercus castaniceps*

About 10 seen at Lava, 1 seen at Gairibas and 3 seen at Hilley

Broad-billed Warbler *Tickellia hodgsoni*

1 seen at Kalimpong ridge, near Samtar and 6 seen and heard at Hilley, 2 heard Varsey- Soreng

Black-faced Warbler *Abroscopus schisticeps*

10 seen along the Pipeline trail and 2 seen at Neora, Lava

Yellow-bellied Warbler *Abroscopus superciliaris*

3 seen at Mahananda FR and 1 seen at Samtar

White-crested Laughingthrush *Garrulax leucolophus*

3 seen en route to Hilley

Lesser Necklaced Laughingthrush *Garrulax monileger*

1 seen at Mahananda WS

Greater Necklaced Laughingthrush *Garrulax pectoralis*

5 seen at Mahananda WS and 2 seen en route to Hilley

Rufous-necked Laughingthrush *Garrulax ruficollis*

7 seen below Pelling on a scrubby slope. Peter knew this stake-out

Striated Laughingthrush *Garrulax striatus*

Singles seen in the mountains. The most conspicuous laughinthrush.

Spotted Laughingthrush *Garrulax ocellatus*

Singles on the Sandakphu trail and at Hilley

Grey-sided Laughingthrush *Garrulax caerulatus*

2 seen at Hilley in the bamboo

Blue-winged Laughingthrush *Garrulax squamatus*

3 seen at Samtar

Scaly Laughingthrush *Garrulax subunicolor*

6 seen at Hilley

Black-faced Laughingthrush *Garrulax affinis*

2 seen at Samtar, About 15 on the Sandakphu trek

Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush *Garrulax erythrocephalus*

2 seen along the Pipeline trail, 5 seen at Neora, Lava and 1 seen at Hilley

Puff-throated Babbler *Pellorneum ruficeps*

5 heard at Mahananda

Rusty-cheeked Scimitar-Babbler *Pomatorhinus erythrogenys*

2 seen below Pelling on the same place as the Rufous-necked Laughinthrushes. 2 heard Varsey-Soreng

White-browed Scimitar-Babbler *Pomatorhinus schisticeps*

6 seen and heard at Mahananda FR

Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babbler *Pomatorhinus ruficollis*

8 seen and heard around Gairibas and 4 heard at Hilley

Slender-billed Scimitar-Babbler *Xiphirhynchus superciliaris*

8 seen and heard on the Sandakphu trek, mainly around Gairibas, 4 heard at Hilley and Varsey

Scaly-breasted Wren-Babbler *Pnoepyga albiventer*

1 seen at Neora, 2 seen at Hilley, 8 seen and heard at Varsey.

At Hilley and Varsey two seen were of the rufous morph and 3 of the white morph

Spotted Wren-Babbler *Spelaeornis formosus*

1 heard along the Pipeline trail

Rufous-capped Babbler *Stachyris ruficeps*

1 seen at Mahananda FR, About 10 at Neora, Common at Hilley and Varsey

Golden Babbler *Stachyris chrysaea*

1 seen at Kalimpong ridge, Samtar and about 10 seen along the Pipeline trail

Grey-throated Babbler *Stachyris nigriceps*

5 seen at Samtar

Striped Tit-Babbler *Macronous gularis*

7 heard and seen at Mahananda WS, about 25 at Mahananda FR and 1 heard at Samtar

Silver-eared Mesia *Leiothrix argenteauris*

3 seen 12 kms before Lava towards Kalimpong

Red-billed Leiothrix *Leiothrix lutea*

8 seen along the Pipeline trail and 3 seen at Neora, Fairly common between Varsey and Soreng and also at Pemyangtse

Cutia *Cutia nipalensis*

One group of 8 at Samtar and one group of 10 along the Pipeline trail, Lava

Black-headed Shrike-Babbler *Pteruthius rufiventer*

A total of 7 seen around Gairibas, 1 seen at Hilley

White-browed Shrike-Babbler *Pteruthius flaviscapis*

6 seen at Samtar and 1 seen at Lava

Green Shrike-Babbler *Pteruthius xanthochlorus*

1 seen in a flock near Gairibas

Black-eared Shrike-Babbler *Pteruthius melanotis*

1 seen at Kalimpong ridge, Samtar

Rusty-fronted Barwing *Actinodura egertoni*

2 seen at Samtar, about 20 seen along the Pipeline trail

Hoary-throated Barwing *Actinodura nipalensis*

About 10 seen around Tumlin-Tonglu, 10 seen at Varsey

Blue-winged Minla *Minla cyanouroptera*

About 25 seen along the Pipeline trail and 6 seen at Neora, Lava

Chestnut-tailed Minla *Minla strigula*

Fairly common in the mountains. A few often present in the flocks.

Red-tailed Minla *Minla ignotincta*

Singles and pairs in the mountains. In flocks with other birds but less common and less bold than Chestnut-tailed Minla.

Golden-breasted Fulvetta *Alcippe chrysotis*

4+2 seen near Gairibas, 3 singles seen at Hilley and 1 seen at Varsey

Rufous-winged Fulvetta *Alcippe castaneiceps*

Fairly common in the mountains. Most often in flocks with other birds.

White-browed Fulvetta *Alcippe vinipectus*

As rufous-winged fulvetta. Often rather tame.

Nepal Fulvetta *Alcippe nipalensis*

5 seen on the Kalimpong ridge, Samtar and about 20 along the Pipeline trail.

White-naped Yuhina *Yuhina bakeri*

2 seen at Samtar and 1 seen along the Pipeline trail

Whiskered Yuhina *Yuhina flavicollis*

Common at Samtar, Lava and lower part of the Sandakphu trek, 5 seen at Hilley and 6 at Pemyangtse

Occurs lower down in altitude than the following two species.

Stripe-throated Yuhina *Yuhina gularis*

Very common in the mountains. The core member in the flocks, often in good numbers.

Rufous-vented Yuhina *Yuhina occipitalis*

Common in the mountains. A core member in the flocks though a bit less common than Stripe-throated.

Black-chinned Yuhina *Yuhina nigrimenta*

5 seen at Samtar

White-bellied Yuhina *Yuhina zantholeuca*

10 seen at Mahananda FR

Fire-tailed Myzornis *Myzornis pyrrhoura*

1 seen by half of the group between Gairibas and Kalaphokri

Rufous Sibia *Heterophasia capistrata*

Common in the mountains

Brown Parrotbill *Paradoxornis unicolor*

1 pair seen near Tonglu

Fulvous Parrotbill *Paradoxornis fulvifrons*

A group of 5 of this gorgeous parrotbill between Kalaphokri and Gairibas

Black-throated Parrotbill *Paradoxornis nipalensis*

25+20+5 around Gairibas, 4 seen near Tonglu, 1 seen at Hilley and 30 seen at Varsey.

One of the races *P. n. humii* or *crocotius*

Bengal Bushlark *Mirafra assamica*

About 10 seen at EM Bye Pass, Calcutta

*Calandrella* sp.

A few unidentified Short-toed-types seen at Teesta river-bed, Mahananda WS

Yellow-bellied Flowerpecker *Dicaeum melanoxanthum*

1 seen along the Pipeline trail and 4 seen near Soreng

Pale-billed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum erythrorhynchus*

1 seen at Mahananda WS

Plain Flowerpecker *Dicaeum concolor*

About 15 seen at Mahananda WS was probably this species. We had very good looks at these birds and they did not have reddish eyerings and should thus have been Fire-breasted. That species is not supposed to go this low down and the birds were probably Plain Flowerpeckers.

Fire-breasted Flowerpecker *Dicaeum ignipectus*

About 10 seen along the Pipeline trail, 2 seen at Varsey and 5 seen at lake Khecheoperi.

The birds we saw in the mountains were often in pairs, suggesting that the birds in the lowlands actually were Plains as we didn't see any males Fire-breasted down there.

Ruby-cheeked Sunbird *Chalcoparia singalensis*

1 male seen at Mahananda WS

Gould's Sunbird (Mrs Gould's) *Aethopyga gouldiae*

10 seen along the Pipeline trail and 3 seen at Neora, Lava, 2 seen at Hilley

Green-tailed Sunbird *Aethopyga nipalensis*

Fairly common in the mountains

Black-throated Sunbird *Aethopyga saturata*

1 seen at Samtar, 1 seen at Lava, 3 seen at Varsey

Crimson Sunbird *Aethopyga siparaja*

1 male seen at Mahananda WS and 3 seen at Mahananda FR

Fire-tailed Sunbird *Aethopyga ignicauda*

Fairly common in Rhododendron thickets on the Sandakphu trek and at Varsey.

We found one nest at Sandakphu made of moss in a thorny bush about half a metre above the ground at 3600 masl.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Seen in villages mainly in the lowlands



Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

Seen in villages

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

1 seen at Siliguri (ssp *personata*), about 20 seen at Mahananda WS (ssp *leucopsis*)

White-browed Wagtail *Motacilla maderaspatensis*

4 seen at Mahananda WS

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*

1 seen at EM Bye Pass, Calcutta

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

Singles in the mountains

Paddyfield Pipit *Anthus rufulus*

5 seen at EM Bye Pass, Calcutta and 10 seen at Mahananda WS

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*

1 seen at Kalaphokri

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*

Fairly common throughout

Rosy Pipit *Anthus roseatus*

4 seen at Sandakphu, 10 seen between Sandakphu and Kalaphokri, 1 seen at Varsey and 1 seen at lake Khecheoperi.

Alpine Accentor *Prunella collaris*

4 seen at the rubbish dump at Sandakphu, 2 seen near Kalaphokri

Rufous-breasted Accentor *Prunella strophiate*

1 seen at Samtar, 8-10 seen at Sandakphu, 1 seen at Tonglu, 3 seen at Hilley, 4 seen between Varsey and Soreng.

Maroon-backed Accentor *Prunella immaculata*

1 seen at Neora, Lava, 5+3 seen at Sandakphu

Baya Weaver *Ploceus philippinus*

About 50 seen at EM Bye Pass, Calcutta

White-rumped Munia *Lonchura striata*

3 seen at Mahananda FR and 4 seen at lake Khecheoperi

Scaly-breasted Munia *Lonchura punctulata*

2 seen at EM Bye Pass, Calcutta

Plain Mountain-Finch *Leucosticte nemoricola*

Flocks of 10+20+50 around and below Sandakphu

Blanford's Rosefinch *Carpodacus rubescens*

Up to 10 seen at Sandakphu

Dark-breasted Rosefinch *Carpodacus nipalensis*

1 male seen below Sandakphu

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*

3 seen near Tonglu, 2 seen near Kalaphokri, up to 15 seen at Varsey and 1 at lake Khecheoperi

Pink-browed Rosefinch *Carpodacus rodochroa*

1 male seen at Sandakphu

Dark-rumped Rosefinch *Carpodacus edwardsii*

3 seen at the rubbish dump at Sandakphu

White-browed Rosefinch *Carpodacus thura*

1 seen near Tonglu and about 10 seen around Sandakphu

Crimson-browed Finch *Propyrrhula subhimachala*

4 seen on the way up to Varsey

Scarlet Finch *Haematospiza sipahi*

2 seen briefly along the Pipeline trail, Lava and 2 seen near Gairibas

Red-headed Bullfinch *Pyrrhula erythrocephala*

2+4 seen at Sandakphu

Collared Grosbeak *Mycerobas affinis*

4+20 seen near Gairibas and 2 seen at Sandakphu

White-winged Grosbeak *Mycerobas carnipes*

8 seen near Sandakphu and 4 seen near Kalaphokri

Gold-naped Finch *Pyrrhoptectes epauletta*

1 seen at Sandakphu, 1 seen below Sandakphu, 3 seen between Kalaphokri and Gairibas, 2 seen near Tumlin and 1 seen at Varsey

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*

2 seen at lake Khecheoperi



Male Peafowl



Female Black-rumped Flameback at nesthole in Mahananda WS



Bay-headed Bee-eaters at Mahananda WS



Green-billed Malkoha at Mahananda WS



Red-breasted Parakeet



Crested Tree-swift

Asian Barred Owlet



Black-necked Crane at lake Khecheoperi



A poor photo of the rare Black-tailed Crake at lake Khecheoperi



Small Pratincole at Teesta river







River Lapwing at Teesta river

Black Baza at Mahananda WS



Collared Falconet at Mahananda WS



Black Ibis at Mahananda WS



Golden-fronted Leafbird at Mahananda



Spotted Nutcracker near Gairibas





Large Cuckoo-shrike

Female Chestnut-breasted Rock-thrush



Orange-headed Thrush at Mahananda WS

White-collared Blackbird



Dark-sided Flycatcher



Verditer Flycatcher



Blue-throated Flycatcher at Mahananda WS



White-capped Water-redstart is found rather common along streams





Spot-winged Starlings at Mahananda WS

Hill Myna



White-browed Wagtail at Teesta river