
Whispering Wings®



Newsletter of the Chandigarh Bird Club®

Volume 7 - 4th Edition

April - June 2023

Editors Desk



Rima Dhillon

President, Chandigarh Bird Club

Dear Friends

I take this opportunity to thank our outgoing President Prof. Mitinderpal Singh Sekhon for helming the affairs of the club since its inception as a registered entity in 2016.

Under his capable guidance we have been able to make Chandigarh Bird Club an important source of information for all birding activities in the ISCR (InterState Chandigarh Region). Club members have conducted awareness birdwalks in Nagarvan for city residents in collaboration with the UT Forest Department. A bird related column was started in the vernacular dailies giving their readership an insight into the wonderful birdlife of our region. In his capable hands the newsletter Whispering Wings was established and the website of CBC was launched.

We are ever grateful to him for handing over to us a club with a strong foundation.

I would also like to thank our young and energetic member Amandeep S Channa. He has ably assisted Prof. Sekhon in presenting the newsletter every quarter and has single handedly worked on, set up and managed, all the social media accounts of the club from the website to Instagram and Twitter.

In recent months the club has widened its sphere of activities to include habitat study along with birding.

CBC is collaborating with AHWS (Avian Habitat & Wetland Society) in monitoring the water bodies around Chandigarh mainly to gauge the health of the Sukhna Lake and the source of its water from the check dams in Nepli and Kansal forests. The purpose of the study would show the reasons for the numbers, or lack of, the waterfowl visiting the lake during migration and summer breeding. This scientific study is being led by our young member Karmanye Chowdhary. A monthly report is being regularly submitted with the UT Forest Dept.

I, along with the rest of the committee members hope to take CBC forward to achieve newer bird conservation targets with the able cooperation of all CBC members.

It brings to mind a quote by Mehmet Murat

“Where there are Birds, there is Hope”

As avid bird lovers let us be the Hope for the Birds by fighting for their habitats.
Happy Birding!



Laughing Dove

Secretary's Report



Sarbjeet Kaur

In winter, wetlands turn into birdwatching havens in most of the areas. Harike is one of the Ramsar sites visited by thousands of not only waterfowl but terrestrial avian beauties too. In January, Chandigarh Bird Club participated in the annual Asian Waterfowl Census conducted by the Panjab Wildlife Department, in Harike, Ropar, Nangal, Shallapatan and Keshopur. The club fieldtrip was held from 17th-19th February 2023 at Rajgarh, Himachal Pradesh. Sixteen CBC members participated. Highlight of the trip was a large flock of White-throated Laughingthrushes. At last count there were over 300 birds in the flock.

Karmannaya our young enthusiast & totally dedicated birder has taken the initiative to do Waterfowl & Invertebrate survey of the Sukhna Lake and other water bodies of Sukhna WLS in order to ascertain the health of the lake and its benefits towards the birdlife which feeds there.

Fieldtrip for the month of June was conducted at Jawaharpur. A few Streaked weavers were busy building their intricate nests almost camouflaged in the tall grass. Other breeders observed were Spotbilled ducks with flocks of ducklings. Common Moorhens with juveniles were seen too. Yellow bellied Prinia was a lifer for some members in the group. There wasn't too much activity due to degradation of avian habitat but some charm of birding is still alive.

God save the Avian Habitats

FIELDTRIP FOR THE MONTH OF MAY 2023

Participants:-Rima, Sarabjeet, Aprajita, Lalit Bansal, Aryan Bhalla, Sushil Kumar, Rohit Bhonsle, Kamal

Date:-25th May 2023

Time:- 5.30 am to 8.00am

Weather conditions :-Heavily overcast with thundery conditions



In May the club fieldtrip was conducted at Jawaharpur, Derabassi. Jawaharpur is a small village surrounded by agricultural fields near Chandigarh. Besides fields the habitat has open grassland with a seasonal drain and one or two small ponds. The area is the flyway of many migrants. In summer passage migrants like Sykes' warbler, Grasshopper Warbler and Booted Warbler can be seen in winter Short-eared Owls pass through.

This is also a breeding ground for Prinias, Munias, swifts and Weavers. Spot-billed Ducks and other resident waterfowl.

Unfortunately, like elsewhere there is a lot of habitat degradation as sand mining is quite rampant.

The weather was heavily overcast and the fieldtrip had to be wound up due to torrential downpour.



Total of 43 species were seen. Both Streaked and Baya Weavers were nest building. Spot-billed Ducks and Common Moorhens were seen with juveniles.

- 1.Lesser Whistling Duck
- 2.Indian Spot-billed Duck
- 3.Gray Francolin
- 4.Feral Pigeons
- 5.Eurasian Collared Dove
- 6.Laughing Dove
- 7.Greater Coucal
- 8.Asian Koel
- 9.Common Hawk-cuckoo
- 10.Eurasian Moorhen
- 11.White-breasted Waterhen
- 12.Black winged Stilt
- 13.Red wattled lapwing
- 14.Common Sandpiper
- 15.Grey Heron
- 16.Cattle Egret
- 17.Indian Pond Heron
- 18.Spotted Owlet
- 19.White-throated Kingfisher
- 20.Asian Green Bee-eater
- 21.Blue-tailed Bee-eater
- 22.Coppersmith barbet
- 23.Rose-ringed Parakeet
- 24.Black Drongo
25. House Crow

26. Ashy-crowned Sparrow lark
27. Crested Lark
28. Yellow-bellied prinia
29. Grey-breasted prinia
30. Ashy Prinia
31. Plain Prinia
32. Zitting Cisticola
33. Wire-tailed Swallow
34. Red-vented Bulbul
35. Yellow-eyed Babbler
36. Common Myna
37. Bank Myna
38. Pied Bushchat
39. Baya Weaver.
40. Streaked Weaver
41. Brown Rockchat
42. Scaly-breasted Munia
43. House Sparrow



Grasslands at Jawaharpu, Derabassi, Panjab



Wild flowers of Jawaharpur

Prinias of Jawaharpur

Photographer-Lalit Bansal



Yellow-bellied Prinia



Plain Prinia

BIRDING IN WEST BENGAL

22-26th May 2023

A Trip Report

Dr.Simmi Waraich



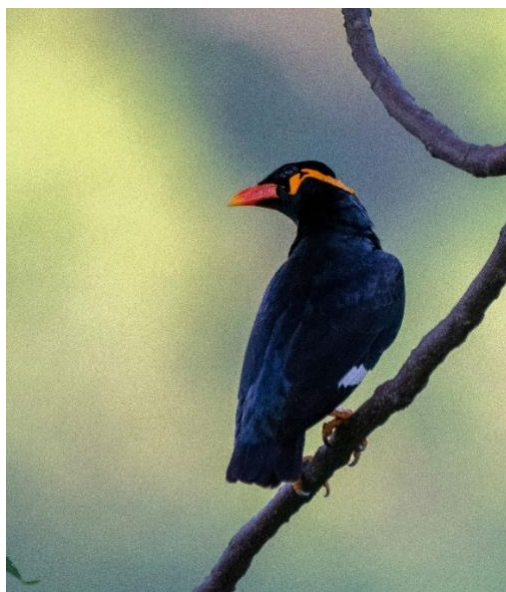
A quick trip to Lava is what Sarbjit Ma'am called me for and I decided on the spur of the moment to go. I had never been to West Bengal before and though it may not have been the ideal time (best time would possible be September to March) yet birding is always a treat and so we headed off. Neeraja, Sarbjit, Preet Cheema and self. Col Cheema had his list ready and we knew we had an expert at hand plus witty comments to keep us in splits (the best birders are among the wittiest people- not bird brains for sure) Sarbjit and Neeraja had been to the North east before so I was the novice here.

We arrived in Siliguri 2 hours later than expected due to flight delays. We were already a trifle distraught at missing out on a morning of birding. Our guide picked us up and we headed off to Rishop, Lava, Kalimpong District.

We arrived after lunch time and were pleasantly greeted by a cloudy afternoon with a Green-tailed Sunbird traipsing around, a Black-throated Parrotbill sighting etc. The sunbird was a resident and we saw 2-3 of them which bathed and perched and did their shenanigans to our hearts content

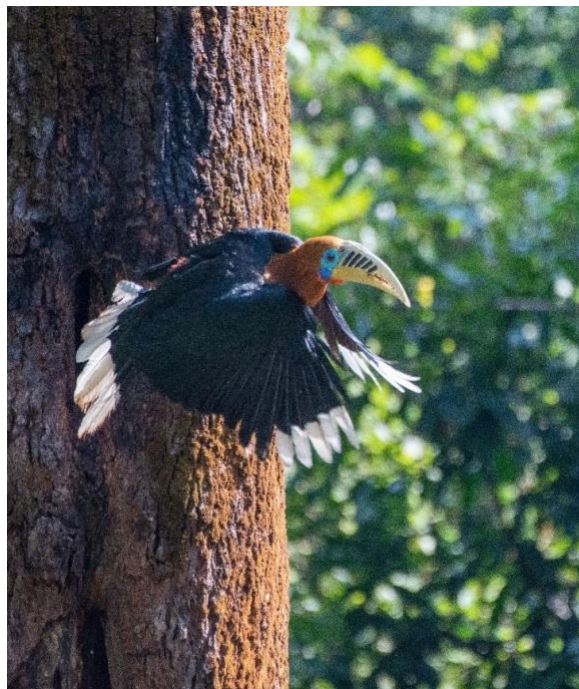


Having missed a half day of birding the next morning we were up at 4 am. The birds called early here as the sun rose earlier than in our part of the country. Surprisingly our guide was a late-latif as we discovered to our consternation. However we did our own birding. The bird calls indicated a Lesser Shortwing, Golden Babblers, elusive birds and we caught sight of the Golden babbler and a gorgeous Rufous-capped Babbler among other beauties. We headed off for a walk in the forest and were rewarded by a plethora of beauties- a Ferruginous Flycatcher, Blue-tailed Minla, a flock of Himalayan Cutias (exceedingly cute!) Hoary-throated Barwings, Black-faced and Chestnut-crowned Warblers, Striated Bulbul and Common Cuckoo among others. The Golden Babbler was commonly heard but remained elusive to being photographed



Hill Myna *Gracula religiosa*

.Rufous necked Hornbill *Aceros nipalensis*



Unwilling to turn back but with hunger pangs having set in we walked back , ate lunch and set off again to our next stop - Latpanchor. This was a small hamlet in Darjeeling district and we stopped en route for a quiet stealthy sighting of a Red headed Trogon female amidst the trees. We reached our very basic Hotel and waited eagerly for the next morning.

Sure enough we were up at 4:30 am again and lo and behold our guide arrived 2 hours later at 6:30 am to take us downhill to a promise of a Rufous-necked Hornbill feeding its mate.

We walked , half slid as the rain had made the path slippery. We set ourselves up in a camouflage behind trees and bushes.

And waited. Sure enough we could see some movement in the slit in the huge tree the Hornbill female was ensconced in and in a while the flapping of wings announced the arrival of the male Hornbill. A most beautiful being- it's rufous neck and yellow beak carrying breakfast for its lifelong mate, it was a sight one will not forget in one's lifetime.

Rufous necked Hornbill feeds its partner who is locked in the tree for 99-110 days till the chick is old enough to emerge with it. 1200-7000 birds exist in North East India, and South East Asia while it has apparently gone extinct in Nepal. All the hornbills of which India has 9 species are secondary cavity nesters which means they don't build nests but revisit built ones. And they show nest fidelity ie return to the same nest every year.

While we were waiting for this treat we also spotted Gray-chinned Minivets, Sultan Tit and White-throated Bulbuls



We were back on top of the hill by 9:30 am. Our oldest member, the young 73 yrs old Sarbjit Ma'am was faster than many of the young boys there who were astounded at her hill climbing abilities. They were left huffing and puffing while she walked up with nonchalance!

After this our guide told us tales of utopia- the promised land for birders - the nursery apparently it is called. While we did see a mixed flock of Long-tailed Broadbills, Large Woodshrikes, Scarlet Minivets, Common hill Mynas and Gray-chinned Minivets before we knew it he had brought us down to Siliguri with 2 hours of daylight to spare. This guy was really getting on our nerves now!

He had stopped our birding in the morning by 9 am promising us more later in the afternoon and then not even given us the time to walk around rushing us back to the plains. We realised we could have come to Siliguri earlier and spent more time in Mahananda.

The next day we headed off to Tiger Hill Darjeeling. It was a misty morning with swathes of mist. However in between we got sightings of Scaly, Spotted, Gray-sided and Chestnut crowned laughing thrushes along with the majestic Hill partridge and the Aberrant and Gray-sided Bush Warblers. On our way back we stopped at Ghoom and got a lovely sighting of the Lesser Shortwing and Chestnut-tailed Minla, Rufous Sibias, Common Rosefinches etc. Our day was made.

Mahananda sanctuary sprawls over 150 sq km of green verdant forest and was started as a game sanctuary in 1955. In 1959, it got the status of a sanctuary mainly to protect the Indian bison and royal Bengal tiger, which were facing the threat of extinction.

It lies between Teesta and Mahananda rivers and more than 300 birds species are found here, a haven for birds.

We spent a humid morning there on the 26th May, our last day here and were lucky enough to see the Necklaced Laughingthrushes, a Mountain Imperial Pigeon, Chestnut-winged Cuckoos, Minivets, Greater Racquet-tailed Drongo, Pin-striped Tit-Babbler and the beautiful Black Baza, Collared Falconet and the Green billed Malkoha.

We had to ward off a few leeches but that was acceptable to us as the area was breathtakingly pretty. The sight of the heritage train heading off to Darjeeling along the road added to the charm of it. We could have spent another 2-3 days in this landscape- And the advice would be to go spend 2-3 days in Mahananda reserve. Just for the sheer beauty of it- driving through the greenery being thankful our

birds have a space like that to soar in. All in all it was a good introduction to the birds of the north east for me amidst the company of experienced and insightful birders.



Black Baza

Checklist of Birds seen:

1. Hill Partridge *Arborophila torqueola*
2. Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus* SEP SEP
3. Red Junglefowl *Gallus gallus*
4. Rock Pigeon (Blue Rock Pigeon) *Columba livia*
5. Oriental Turtle-Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*
6. Spotted Dove *Spilopelia chinensis*
7. Asian Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps indica*
8. Mountain Imperial-Pigeon *Ducula badia*
9. Green-billed Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus tristis*
10. Chestnut-winged Cuckoo *Clamator coromandus*
11. Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*
12. Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*
13. Black Baza *Aviceda leucophotes*
14. Mountain Hawk-Eagle *Nisaetus nipalensis*
15. Black Eagle *Ictinaetus malaiensis*
16. Shikra *Accipiter badius*
17. Brown Hawk-Owl *Ninox scutulata*
18. Red-headed Trogon *Harpactes erythrocephalus*
19. Rufous-necked Hornbill *Aceros nipalensis*

20. White-throated Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis*
21. Chestnut-headed Bee-eater *Merops leschenaulti*
22. Great Barbet *Psilopogon virens*
23. Blue-throated Barbet *Psilopogon asiaticus*
24. Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker *Yungipicus canicapillus*
25. Greater Flameback *Chrysocolaptes guttacristatus*
26. Lesser Yellownape *Picus chlorolophus*
27. Grey-headed Woodpecker *Picus canus*
28. Greater Yellownape *Chrysophlegma flavinucha*
29. Collared Falconet *Microhierax caerulescens*
30. Long-tailed Broadbill *Psarismus dalhousiae*
31. Grey-chinned Minivet *Pericrocotus solaris*
32. Short-billed Minivet *Pericrocotus brevirostris*
33. Scarlet Minivet *Pericrocotus speciosus*
34. White-browed Shrike-Babbler *Pteruthius aeralatus*
35. Indian Golden Oriole *Oriolus kundoo*
36. Black-hooded Oriole *Oriolus xanthornus*
37. Maroon Oriole *Oriolus traillii*
39. Large Woodshrike *Tephrodornis virgatus*
40. White-throated Fantail *Rhipidura albicollis*
41. Ashy Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus*
42. Hair-crested Drongo (Spangled Drongo) *Dicrurus hottentottus*
43. Greater Racket-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus paradiseus*
44. Yellow-billed Blue Magpie *Urocissa flavirostris*
45. Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher *Culicicapa ceylonensis*
46. Sultan Tit *Melanochlora sultanea*
47. Green-backed Tit *Parus monticolus*
48. Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius*
49. Black-crested Bulbul *Rubigula flaviventris*
50. Striated Bulbul *Pycnonotus striatus*
51. Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer*
52. Himalayan Bulbul (White-cheeked Bulbul) *Pycnonotus leucogenys*
53. White-throated Bulbul *Alophoixus flaveolus*
54. Himalayan Black Bulbul *Hypsipetes leucocephalus*
55. Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*
56. Grey-cheeked Warbler *Phylloscopus poliogenys*
57. Whistler's Warbler *Phylloscopus whistleri*
58. Chestnut-crowned Warbler *Phylloscopus castaniceps*
59. Blyth's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus reguloides*
60. Grey-sided Bush Warbler *Cettia brunnifrons*
61. Black-faced Warbler *Abroscopus schisticeps*
62. Aberrant Bush Warbler *Horornis flavolivaceus*
63. White-browed Fulvetta *Fulvetta vinipectus*
64. Black-throated Parrotbill *Suthora nipalensis*
65. Whiskered Yuhina *Yuhina flavicollis*
66. Pin-striped Tit-Babbler *Mixornis gularis*
67. Golden Babbler *Cyanoderma chrysaeum*
68. Rufous-capped Babbler *Cyanoderma ruficeps*
69. White-browed Scimitar-Babbler *Pomatorhinus schisticeps*
70. Grey-throated Babbler *Stachyris nigriceps*
71. Rufous-winged Fulvetta *Schoeniparus castaneiceps*
72. Striated Laughingthrush *Grammatoptila striata*
73. Himalayan Cutia *Cutia nipalensis*

74. Scaly Laughingthrush *Trochalopteron subunicolor*
75. Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush *Trochalopteron erythrocephalum*
76. Rufous Sibia *Heterophasia capistrata*
77. Hoary-throated Barwing *Actinodura nipalensis*
78. Blue-winged Minla *Actinodura cyanouoptera*
79. Chestnut-tailed Minla (Bar-throated Siva) *Actinodura strigula*
80. Red-billed Leiothrix *Leiothrix lutea*
81. Red-tailed Minla *Minla ignotincta*
82. Lesser Necklaced Laughingthrush *Garrulax monileger*
83. Spotted Laughingthrush *Lanthocincla ocellata*
84. Greater Necklaced Laughingthrush *Pterorhinus pectoralis*
85. White-throated Laughingthrush *Pterorhinus albogularis*
86. Grey-sided Laughingthrush *Pterorhinus caerulatus*
87. White-tailed Nuthatch *Sitta himalayensis*
88. Velvet-fronted Nuthatch *Sitta frontalis*
89. Sikkim Treecreeper (Brown-throated Treecreeper) *Certhia discolor*
90. Common Hill Myna *Gracula religiosa*
91. Chestnut-tailed Starling *Sturnia malabarica*
92. Grey-winged Blackbird *Turdus boulboul*
93. Tickell's Thrush *Turdus unicolor*
94. Ferruginous Flycatcher *Muscicapa ferruginea*
95. Oriental Magpie-Robin *Copsychus saularis*
96. White-rumped Shama *Copsychus malabaricus*
97. Rufous-bellied Niltava *Niltava sundara*
98. Verditer Flycatcher *Eumyias thalassinus*
99. Lesser Shortwing *Brachypteryx leucophris*
100. Blue Whistling-Thrush *Myophonus caeruleus*
101. Chestnut-bellied Rock-Thrush *Monticola rufiventris*
102. Grey Bushchat *Saxicola ferreus*
103. Green-tailed Sunbird *Aethopyga nipalensis*
104. Crimson Sunbird *Aethopyga siparaja*
105. Golden-fronted Leafbird (Golden-fronted Chloropsis) *Chloropsis aurifrons*
106. Orange-bellied Leafbird (Orange-bellied Chloropsis) *Chloropsis hardwickii*
107. Russet Sparrow *Passer cinnamomeus*
108. Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*
109. Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*
110. Brown Bullfinch *Pyrrhula nipalensis*

Sarbjett Kaur
SS Cheema
V Neeraja
Simmi Waraich



BIRDS OF LAVA, LATPANCHAR AND DARJEELING

Black-throated Parrotbill *Suthora nipalensis*

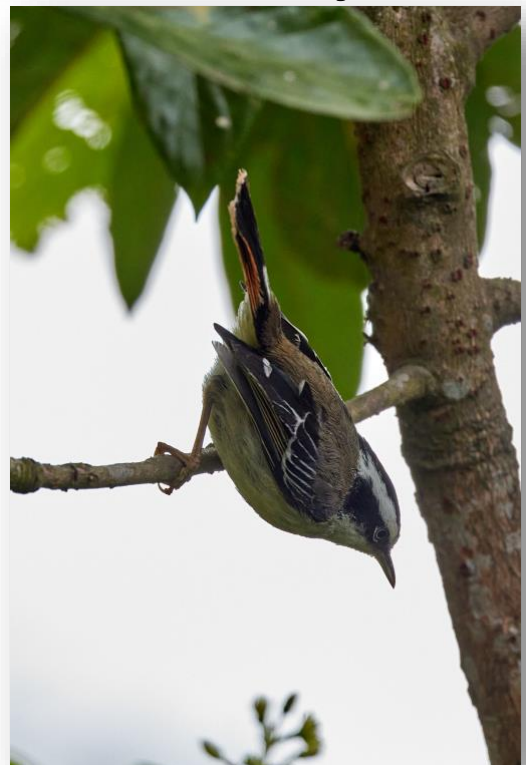


Red-tailed Minla *Minla ignotincta*



Red-tailed Minla *Minla ignotincta*

Red-tailed Minla *Minla ignotincta*



Green-tailed Sunbird *Aethopyga nipalensis*



Chestnut-crowned Warbler *Phylloscopus castaniceps*



Chestnut-crowned Warbler *Phylloscopus castaniceps*



Whiskered Yuhina *Yuhina flavicollis*



Rufous-capped Babbler *Cyanoderma ruficeps*



Verditer Flycatcher *Eumyias thalassinus*



Green-tailed Sunbird *Aethopyga nipalensis*



Ferruginous Flycatcher *Muscicapa ferruginea*



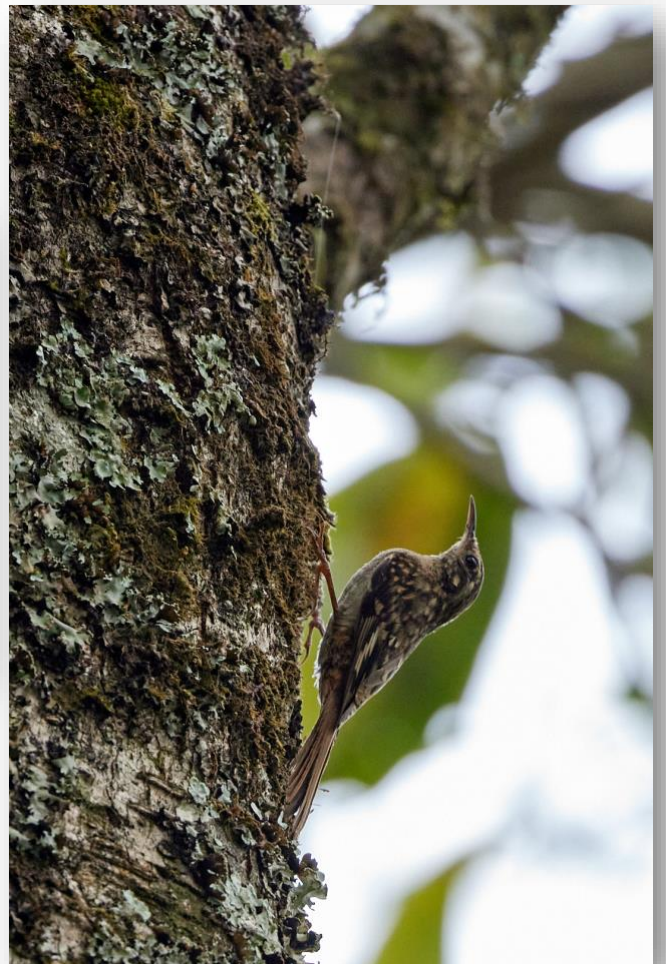
Ferruginous Flycatcher *Muscicapa ferruginea*



Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*



Sikkim Treecreeper (Brown-throated Treecreeper)
Certhia discolor



Black-faced Warbler *Abroscopus schisticeps*



Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*



Hoary-throated Barwing *Actinodura nipalensis*



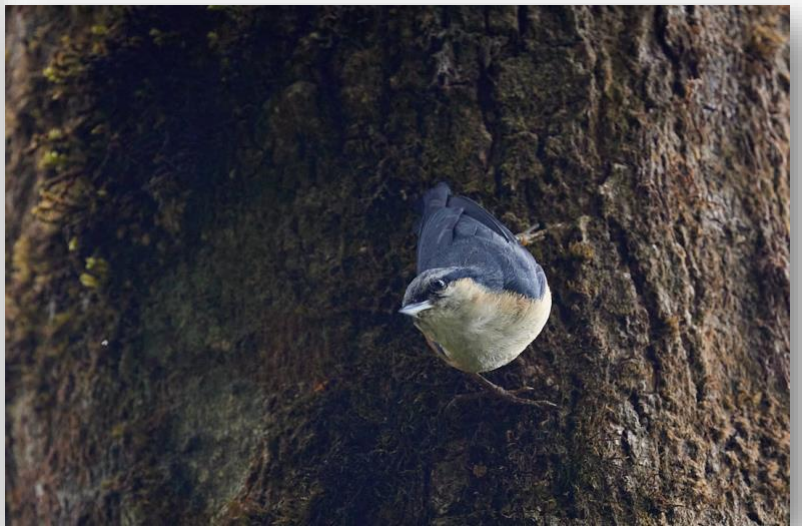
Himalayan Cutia *Cutia nipalensis*



Rufous-bellied Niltava *Niltava sundara*



White-tailed Nuthatch *Sitta himalayensis*



Himalayan Cutia *Cutia nipalensis*



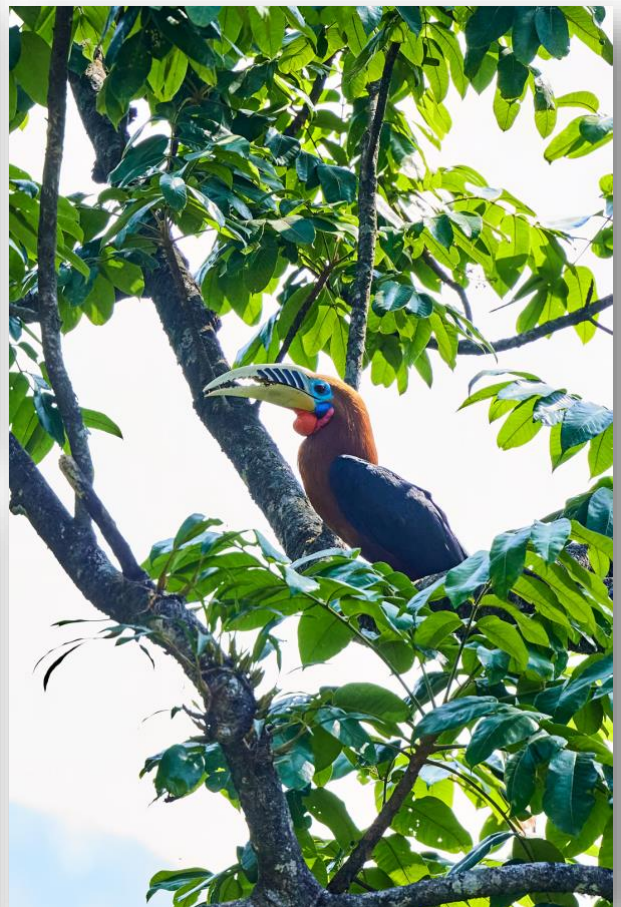
Blyth's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus reguloides*



White-tailed Nuthatch *Sitta himalayensis*



Rufous-necked Hornbill *Aceros nipalensis*



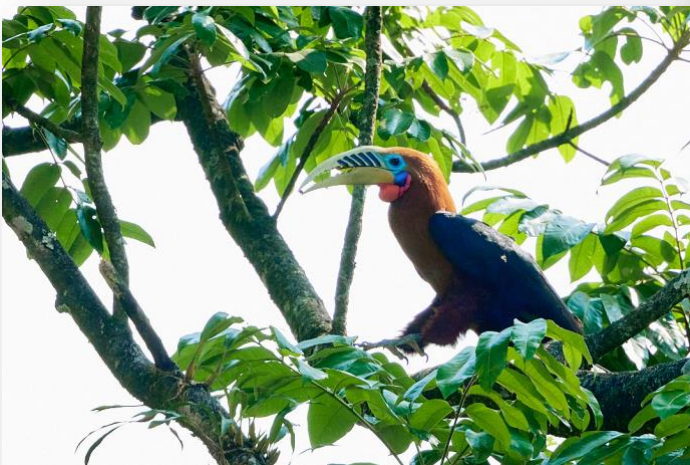
Grey-sided Laughingthrush *Pterorhinus caerulatus*



Green-backed Tit *Parus monticolus*



Rufous-necked Hornbill *Aceros nipalensis*

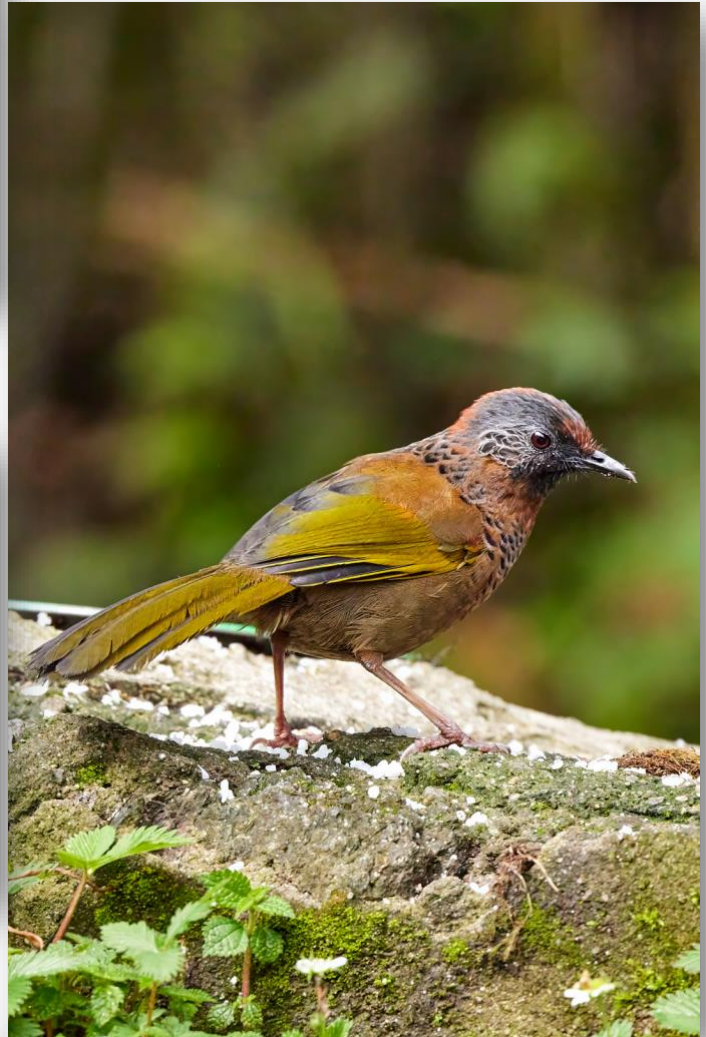


LAUGHINGTHRUSHES OF DARJEELING

Scaly Laughingthrush *Trochalopteron subunicolor*



Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush *Trochalopteron erythrocephalum*



Grey-sided Laughingthrush *Pterorhinus caerulatus*



White-throated Laughingthrush *Pterorhinus albogularis*



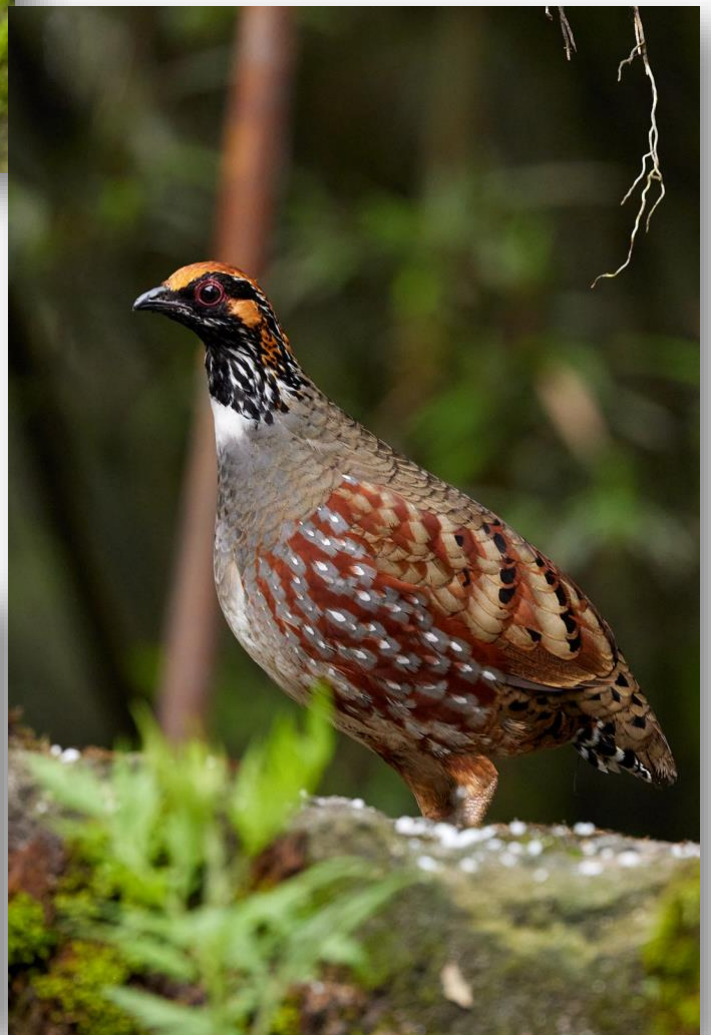
Spotted Laughingthrush *Ianthocincla ocellata*



Hill Partridge *Arborophila torqueola*



Hill Partridge *Arborophila torqueola*



Large Woodshrike *Tephrodornis virgatus*



Aberrant Bush Warbler *Horornis flavolivaceus*



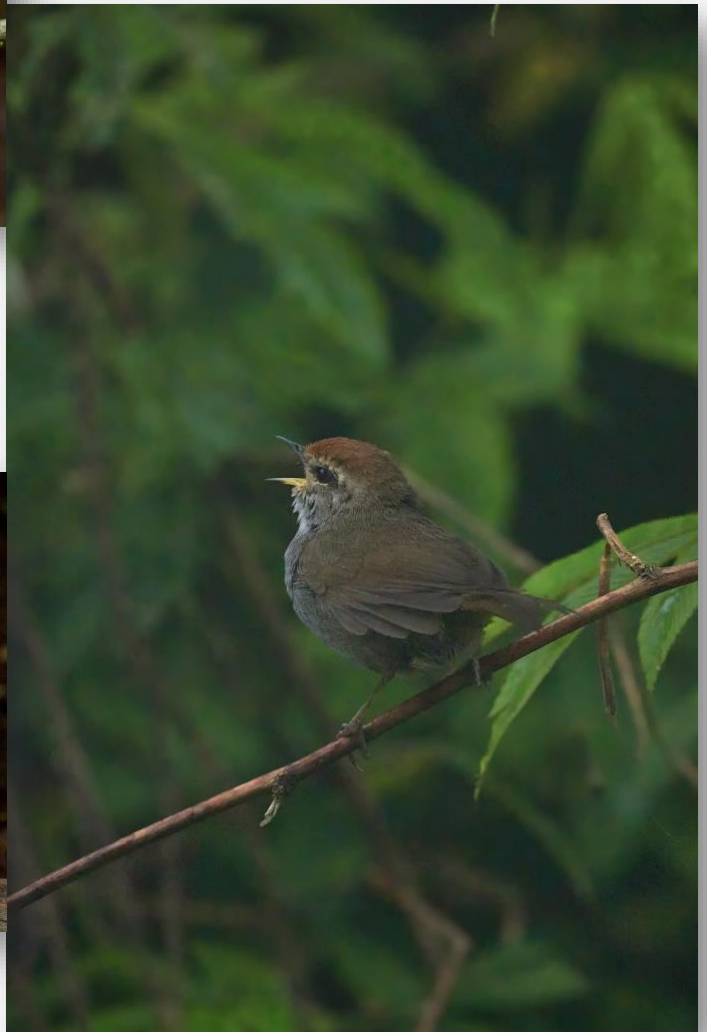
Lesser Shortwing *Brachypteryx leucophris*



Lesser Shortwing *Brachypteryx leucophris*



Grey-sided Bush Warbler *Cettia brunnifrons*

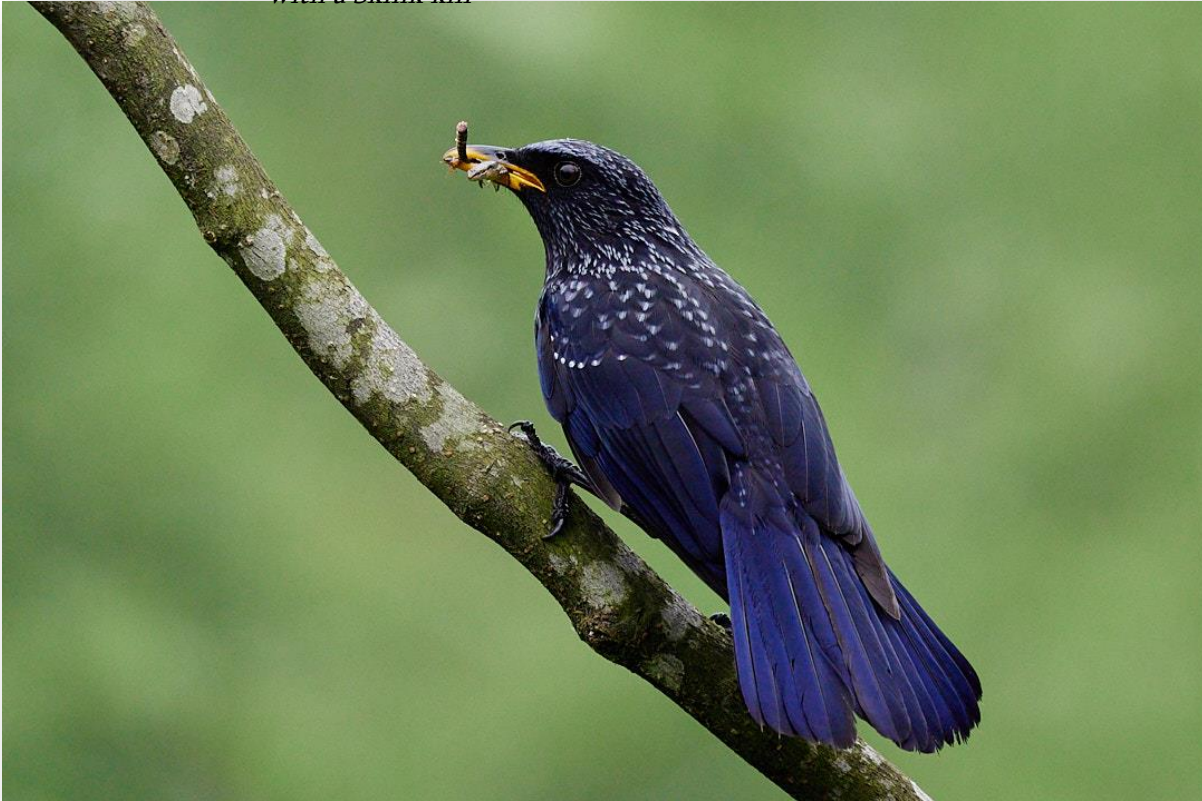


Grey-winged Blackbird *Turdus boulboul*



COMMON BIRDS OF WEST BENGAL AND NORTH INDIA

Blue Whistling-Thrush *Myophonus caeruleus*
with a Skink kill



Red-billed Leiothrix *Leiothrix lutea*



Rufous Sibia *Heterophasia capistrata*



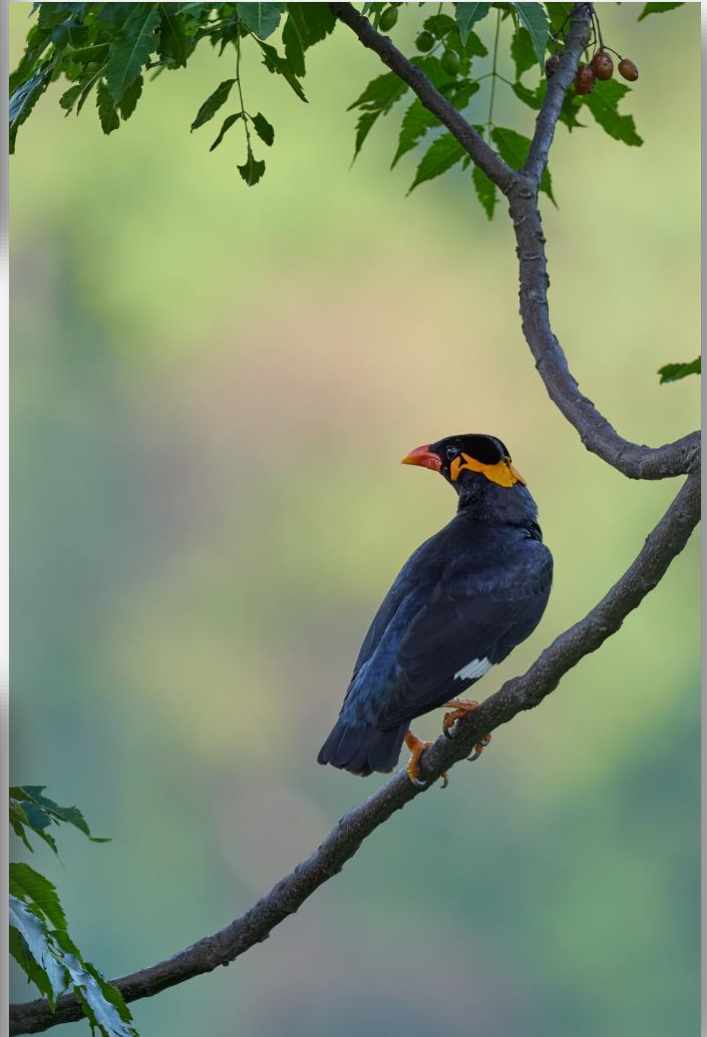
Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*



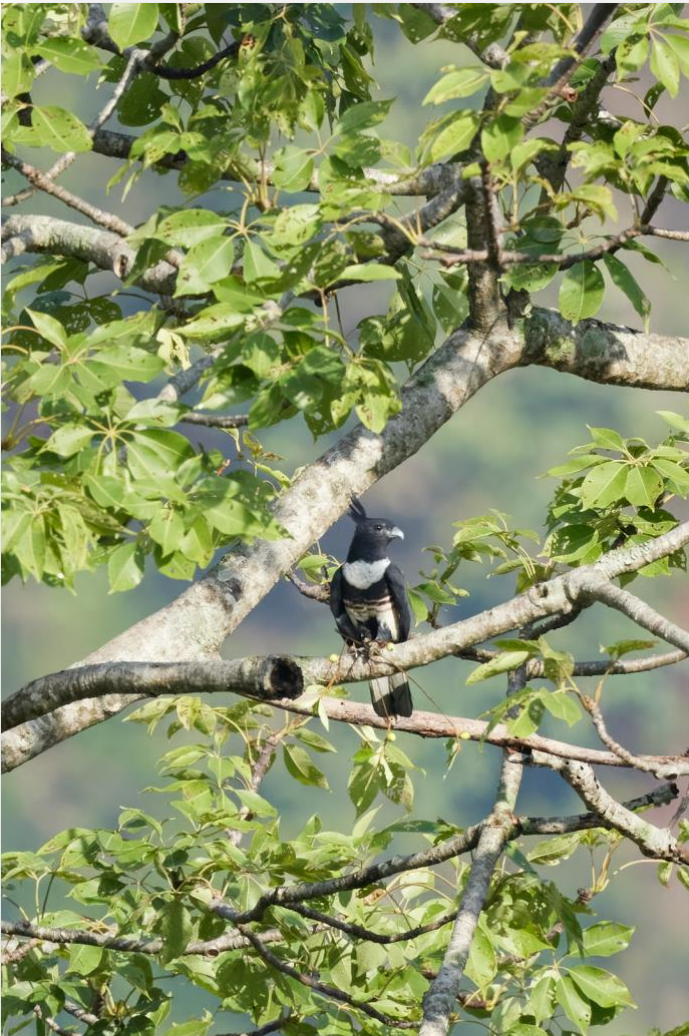
Chestnut-tailed Minla (Bar-throated Siva) *Actinodura strigula*



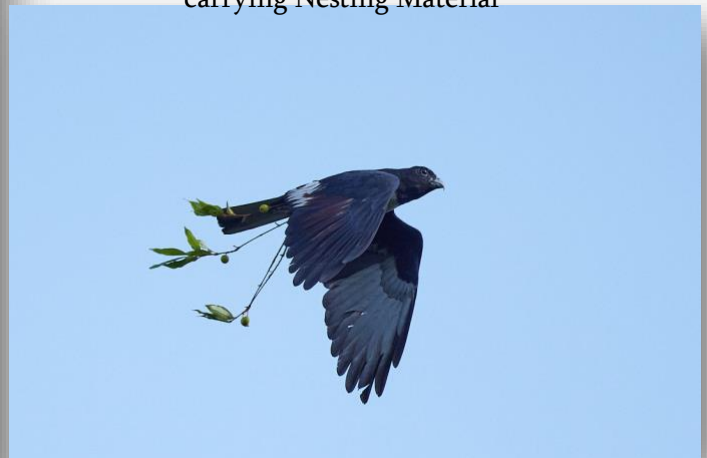
Common Hill Myna *Gracula religiosa*



Black Baza *Aviceda leuphotes*



Black Baza *Aviceda leuphotes*
carrying Nesting Material



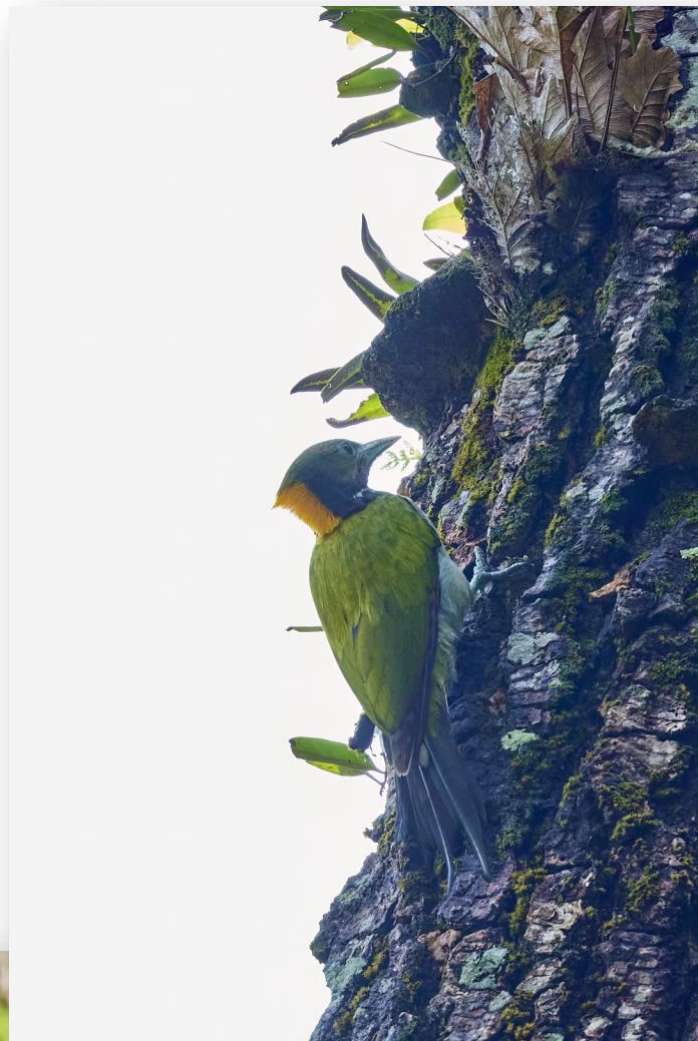
Greater Flameback *Chrysocolaptes guttacristatus*



Green-billed Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus tristis*



Greater Yellownape *Chrysophlegma flavinucha*



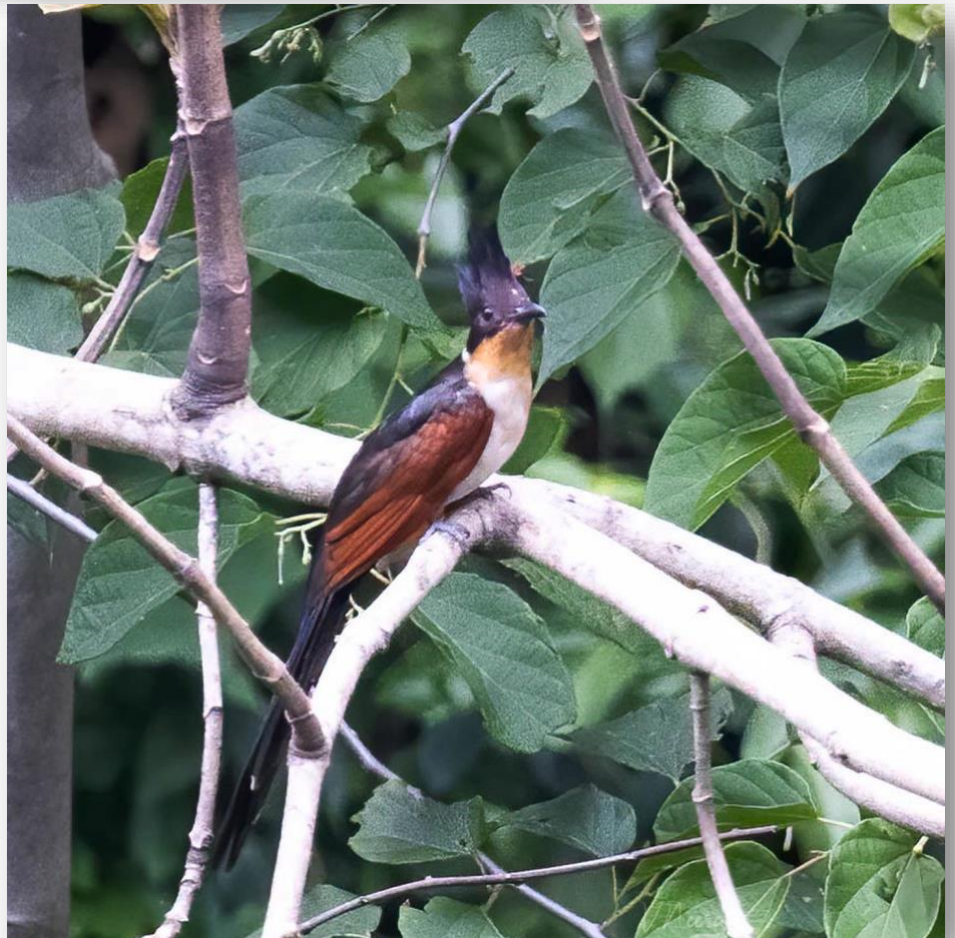
Collared Falconet *Microhierax caerulescens*



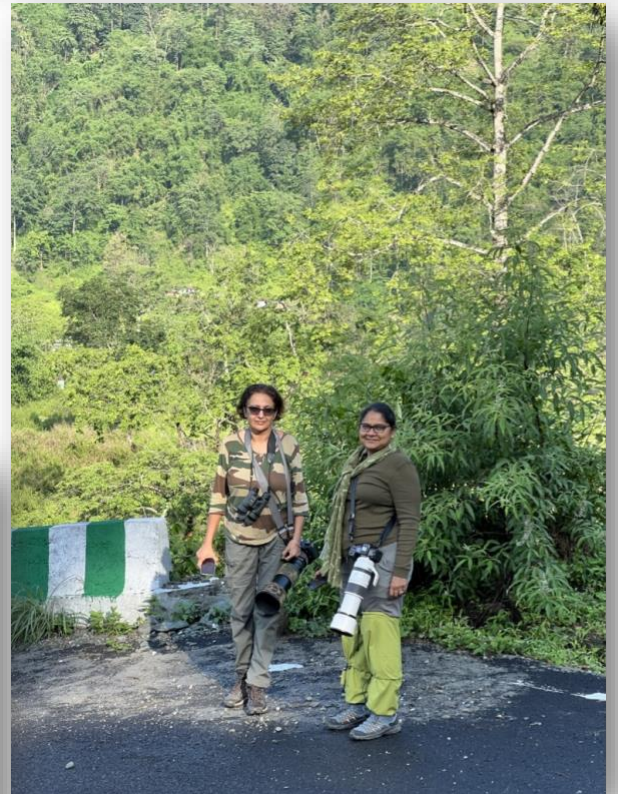
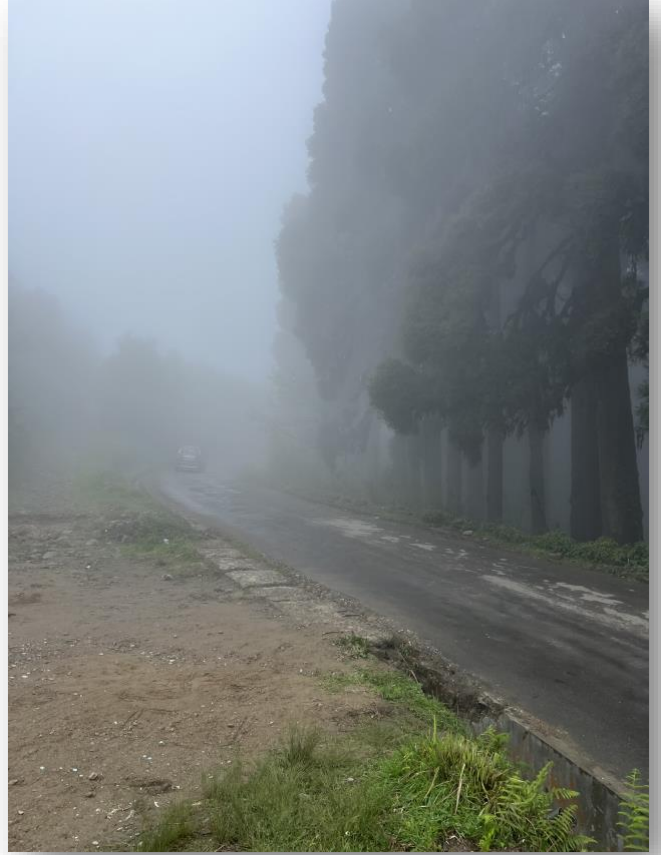
Chestnut-winged Cuckoo *Clamator coromandus*



Photographs by
@Ms Neeraja



MISC MUSINGS



Photographs by
@Ms Neeraja
@Ms Simmi
@ Cheema



CBC & Avian Habitat & Wetland Society Conducts Crucial Surveys to Safeguard Biodiversity

Karmanaye Chowdhary

Invertebrates play a vital role in maintaining the delicate balance of ecosystems, and recent surveys conducted by the Avian Habitat & Wetland Society have shed light on the concerning situation of Chandigarh's aquatic habitats. The Survey teams consisting of Karmannye, Pragye, Mr. Navjit Singh, Mr. Narbir Khalon, Mrs. Rima Dhillon, Mr. Gagan, and Mr. Sanjay embarked on a series of surveys in the Nepli Forest Range, Kansal Forest Range, and Sukhna Lake. Beginning on June 24th, the survey team undertook the first-ever Aquatic Invertebrates survey in the Nepli Forest Range, covering a vast area of Chandigarh. Over the course of six and a half hours, the team meticulously documented the presence of birds, invertebrates, reptiles, and fish, emphasizing the importance of understanding and preserving these diverse species.

A week later, the survey team shifted their focus to the Kansal Forest Range on June 30th. Despite hot and humid conditions, the team tirelessly surveyed seven major water bodies. Their findings revealed a concerning infestation of *Gambusia affinis*, commonly known as the mosquitofish. Introduced with the aim of controlling mosquito populations, this invasive species has instead caused severe degradation of the environment in Kansal, depleting the invertebrate population and disrupting the delicate ecological balance.



Drawing attention to Sukhna Lake, where the waters from Nepli and Kansal flow, AHWS and the Chandigarh Forest Department joined forces once again on July 5th. The survey team discovered a distressing problem—the lake's water exhibited high turbidity, indicating a significant presence of suspended solids. Consequently, the once-thriving invertebrate life in Sukhna Lake has suffered, posing a potential threat to the bird species dependent on these vital organisms for food and habitat.

These surveys highlight the crucial role of invertebrates in maintaining the health and balance of ecosystems. They act as indicators of environmental conditions and serve as a food source for numerous bird species. The decline in invertebrate populations due to the introduction of invasive species and increased sedimentation underscores the urgency of conservation efforts.

To address these challenges, CBC and AHWS emphasize the need for continuous monitoring and the development of sustainable management strategies. Collaboration between NGOs, government agencies like the Chandigarh Forest Department, and active participation from the community are vital in safeguarding the diverse fauna and flora that make Chandigarh's ecosystems truly remarkable. By raising awareness about the interconnections between invertebrates, bird populations, and overall ecosystem health, we strive to inspire action and ensure a harmonious coexistence between humans and nature.



Participants:

Karmanaye Chowdhary, Narbir S Kahlon, Navjit Singh,, Rima Dhillon, Om ji

Rock 'N' Roll in Thapli Continues!!...

By Aaryan Bhalla

Aao Tumhein Pitta Dekhain



Are you bored? Need something to refresh yourself? So Birdwatching is the best activity for you!

Thapli is a hotspot for birdwatchers, with over 150 species of birds to observe. But, it doesn't matter... what matters are three-pointers mandatory to follow: Your time, your patience, and how lucky you are to have encounters with different birds.

Nestled in the scenic Shivalik hills near Chandigarh when you venture into a village of Haryana the villagers welcome you.

Thapli village offers bird watchers unique sightings of a variety of indigenous birds. Head out early in the morning to catch a glimpse of colorful species like Indian Roller, Eurasian Hoopoe, Kites, Cuckoo, Orioles and more.



तब तो आपकी आँखें भी Laser Beam की तरह बस Pitta को ढूँढती हैं They can be oftentimes spotted flitting, calling through the trees and foraging on the ground.

This little birdie can be frustrating too, Whenever we got the good angle and light, it flew away! Pittas found in the Western Ghats are typically darker in colour, while those in the Himalayan foothills tend to be brighter.



On the other hand, your Homates are continuously calling you and asking when you'll come back?!
बहुत हो गई 'birding – Shirding' बस करो अब! But, rather than picking up their call pitta is more important than them right now! वर्ना वो उड़ जाएगा ना!!



Indian Pitta is favorite among all birdwatchers around India. पर करें क्या ये Summer Migrant जो ठहरा! It's actually a beauty How lucky to have 9 colors hidden in such a small passerine bird, that's why other birdies must be jealous of it. But, it's not a resident here who has been here for only a few months रौनक लगाने के लिए!

Though I know summers and birding together is not a good option But, Harsh weather and a pair of binoculars early in the cold chilly morning isn't bad, No?

During summer, it is very bold and conspicuous, often calling in the open, known for its vibrant colors and unique call that sounds like two marbles knocking together. Marbles? ये क्या कोई Coppersmith Barbet थोड़ी ही ना है?

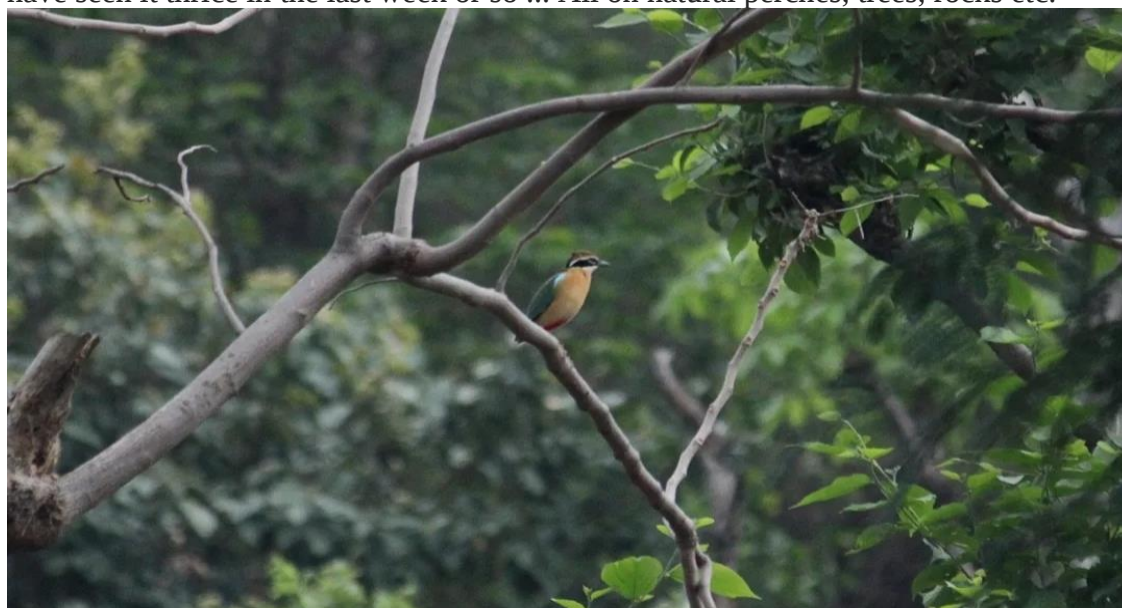


The male Indian pitta uses its call to attract a mate and defend its territory. Interestingly, the female also has a similar call, but it is used more for communication between partners.



If you ever get the chance to hear the Indian pitta's call , it's sure to be a memorable experience But, burst out in a pompous and loud display of their calls at dawn and dusk and having very hoarse calls continuously having halts. It comes here every year- have some insects, Calls up its partner, does Nesting, goes back with tiny chicks & comes again covering miles from south कैरल या तमिल नाडु से आना कौन सा आसान है यार!

It so often happens that a bird you have been chasing for some time suddenly starts appearing every time you go out! Previously, we had to search for the pair on natural perch for a long time. And we have seen it thrice in the last week or so ... All on natural perches, trees, rocks etc.



The village environment provides natural and undisturbed habitats.
The pair gave us mind-blowing shots!



Birding, I have realized, is just going alone or with a friend! What birding if it becomes a chaos or mess?! Looking, seeing, capturing... If you see something it's great, if not, then come back satisfied with a good day out. Birding is very simple - just a notebook, a field guide, and a pair of binoculars. You are done enjoying the prakirti... Wanna try? Come let's show you the real beauty! Let's work together to ensure our feathered friends thrive for generations to come.
Thanks for reading!

Happy Birding!!!

BIRD IN THE SPOTLIGHT

ASHY PRINIA *Prinia socialis*

Rima Dhillon



It was by pure accident that I spotted the nest of the Ashy Prinia .In all the years that I have been birding I had actually not seen one before.

Prinias are distributed in Africa and Asia. Worldwide there are 30 species of prinia of which 11 species are found in India.

Ashy Prinia is one such prinia which is distributed throughout the Indian sub-continent with different regions having their own races. The Srilankan race is endemic to the lowlands in that country. The Indian races have slight variations in colouration. Both the male and female are similar in colour except the male has a longer tail. Ashy Prinia is a tiny bird the size of a Common Tailorbird. It is also called Ashy wren warbler.

For such a small bird, barely 14cm, it can make quite a racket.

It moults twice a year -in spring and in autumn.

Ashy Prinia is considered a grassland bird though it is known to be quite at home in city gardens too. Its usual habitat is tall grasses and reedbeds along rivers and ponds.

Pairs are believed to be monogamous. During the nesting season the male tries to attract a female by singing loudly from the tops of bushes and making fluttering ariel displays. It makes loud slapping sound with its wings when in flight.

Though Ashy Prinia is known to make its nest in two or three different designs, this purselike shape is the most common.



The nest is very similar to that of the Common Tailorbird—a couple of leaves stitched together with bits of fibre. The egg cavity is made with soft grass strands and lined with seed fluff along with bits of hair. The nest is built precariously low, only a foot or two from the ground but in spite of it being so fragile it can withstand the most extreme weather conditions.



I did not have to photograph the actual nest as I found one abandoned a little distance away in the same garden.



I used binoculars to peep at the occupied nest through the fence and saw one fledgling in it.

Parenting

Usually Ashy Prinia lays 4 oval shaped eggs a rich brick red in colour. The pointed ends are towards the middle so that the female can incubate them evenly.

According to some research the female continues to sit in the nest for a couple of days more after the eggs hatch and only the male brings the food. In that case the fledgling I was able to see with my binoculars through the fence was at least more than two days old as both parents were observed feeding the chick. The food was mostly termite larvae. These winged insects were in abundance after the rain.

Fledglings take around two weeks to leave the nest.

The breeding season is considered to be year round as it varies with locality. Black-bellied Cuckoos are known to be brood parasites of this species. The Cuckoo needs to be extremely acrobatic to get into the Prinia nest.

The population trends for Ashy Prinia are stable and IUCN lists them as Least Concern. However the rate at which the grasslands and other areas of its natural habitat are being encroached upon it may not be long before that status changes.



Ashy Prinia - Adult

STAR SIGHTINGS

For Birdwatchers there are always some birds which are closer to their heart than others. Among these are some which are not so easily visible like Owls and Quails and then those which are seen seasonally or are in breeding plumage during this time. Here are some of these species seen in the months of April to July which have taken the fancy of the birders who photographed them.

Indian Pond Heron *Ardeola grayii*



Indian Pond Heron is a resident bird of the region. During the birding season the plumage of the male takes on a bright hue.

The beak full is a testament to its fishing skills.

Photographed by Praveen Nain at Motemajra, Panjab

Indian Golden Oriole *Oriolus kundoo*

Rima Dhillon



Indian Golden Oriole is a summer visitor. It breeds around Chandigarh .
A flash of bright yellow in the mango trees and the musical trilling song heralds its arrival in the gardens of Chandigarh in early April. Photographed by Birder Rima Dhillon in the garden in New Chandigarh

Pheasant tailed Jacana *Hydrophasianus chirurgus*



Courtship display of Pheasant-tailed Jacana on lotus leaves. The dance was photographed at Motemajra, Panjab by Birder Gurjit S Virk.

Indian Pitta *Pitta brachyura*

Indian Pitta with its brilliant colouring, holds a great fascination for the birders of this region. The long drawn out three syllable whistle is eagerly awaited from mid- May onwards. Word of its arrival spreads quickly via the whatsapp birding groups! It can often be spotted flopped down in exhaustion after its long flight from south India and also Sri Lanka, in gardens around the city. Photographed by Birder Jasbir S Randhawa in Chandigarh .

Chestnut-tailed Starling *Sturnia malabarica*



Another fascinating bird seen in this region during spring and summer is Chestnut-tailed Starling. They arrive in large flocks in late March. Photographed by Birder Rima Dhillon in New Chandigarh.

Indian Scops Owl

Otus bakkamoena



Owls are always so fascinating. The large round all seeing eyes, a head that can turn 360 degrees, a life lived in the dark hours of dusk to dawn.

Fascination and Superstition!

Photographed by Birder Narinder S Locham

Whispering Wings®

NEWSLETTER OF THE CHANDIGARH
BIRD CLUB



Incepted in 2008, the Chandigarh Bird Club dedicated itself to its goal of protecting the environment.

The Club owes its existence to those few dedicated and expert members, who started this Club in the Chandigarh Boat Club, namely Navjit Singh, Narbir Kahlon, Vikramjit Singh, Mrs Rima Dhillon, Mrs Sarbjeet Kaur, and Mrs Geeta Goswami.

The fundamental objectives of Chandigarh Bird Club continue to be to:

1. Bring people, especially the younger generation closer to nature, through birding and help them to enjoy the outdoors while making out a fun activity.
2. To make individuals and government more sensitive towards the environment to create a dynamic database for analysis to focus on conservation efforts.
3. To create a forum for birders to share information and discuss issues related to this activity.

Editor:-

Rima Dhillon

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