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WHISPERING WINGS®

NEWSLETTER



Indian Scops Owl

Otis bakkamoena

Gurjit Virk

CHANDIGARH®

BIRD CLUB

www.chandigarhbirdclub.com

cbcchandigarh@gmail.com

From the Editor



RIMA DHILLON
PRESIDENT, CHANDIGARH BIRD CLUB

EIn the world of birding, each sighting is a reminder of nature's beauty, diversity, and delicate balance. It is vital for humanity to always keep that thought in mind —the fine balance.In today's world, progress and development often lead to destruction. Planting trees after cutting down a mature forest benefits no one, least of all the flora and fauna that have inhabited it for ages. Cutting down forests, draining wetlands, plowing up grasslands, and unashamedly mining riverbeds in the name of progress are tragedies of our times.This summer's extraordinarily high temperatures are attributed to global warming. From April to July, our region experiences the peak of the breeding season. During this time, nesting is in full swing, and birds coordinate the arrival of their fledglings with the hatching of insects that form the food base for their brood. However, excessively high temperatures can disrupt this cycle, leading to poor breeding seasons for birds and, in the long run, impacting their populations.During seasonal migrations, numerous reports have emerged of species being seen in areas for the first time. These birds may have been blown off course by atmospheric phenomena or altered their routes to avoid man-made disturbances along their usual flyways. The Russia-Ukraine war, for instance, is considered a major factor. Regardless of the cause, it is the avian populations that bear the brunt of the disasters caused by our actions and greed.As the birding community grows by leaps and bounds, there is hope that we can come together to help the creatures whose beauty and diversity captivate us all.

Secretary's Report



SARBJEET KAUR
SECRETARY

Our avian friends have become increasingly active in the summer season.The season has brought about a flurry of activity among birds, with sightings of pairs carrying nesting materials to their chosen habitats, ensuring a peaceful environment for nesting.

This summer has been notably intense, marked by high temperatures posing significant challenges to wildlife survival. This intense heat and human negligence led to devastating wildfires in Kasauli and other areas of the Shivalik Hills, causing significant damage to wildlife. During the breeding season, many chicks were burnt alive, and nests along with eggs, newly hatched birds, and fledglings awaiting food were destroyed.

Despite these adversities, our observations continue to reveal fascinating aspects of bird behavior. It's an opportune period for birders to discern between male, female, and juvenile birds, enriching our understanding of their life cycles.

Our recent field trip to Thapli and Morni hills on June 12th, 2024, was a resounding success. The trip showcased the remarkable avian diversity of these regions. Participants were treated to exciting sightings, underscoring the importance of these areas as vital sanctuaries for numerous bird species. Despite the challenges posed by environmental changes, these locations stand as resilient bastions of nature's beauty.



I am pleased to highlight the commendable efforts of Karmanya, one of our young and dedicated members. His research on insects has garnered significant attention, culminating in an invitation from the IUCN committee for the Red List Assessment concerning Tiger Beetles in India. This recognition reflects his passion and the quality of research within our CBC group.

In the words of E. B. White, "Early summer days are a jubilee time for birds. In the field, around the house, in the barn, in the woods, in the swamp—everywhere love and songs and nests and eggs."

Let us continue to cherish these moments of discovery and observation, celebrating the resilience of our avian friends amidst the seasonal challenges.



Kalij Pheasant *Lophura leucomelanos*

I wonder how it survived the wild fire.



Birding at Pong Dam

Dr. Simmi Waraich

On 26 th November 2021 we set out from Chandigarh for Pong dam. Saroj, Mohit and I were excited about the trip. We had heard stories about the abundance of migratory birds there and were looking forward to the sight of hundreds of Geese, ducks, plovers, terns etc and the Northern Lapwing.

We reached the forest rest house at Nagrota Surian in the afternoon and rested.

Pong Dam is constructed on river Beas and is also known as the Maharana Pratap Sagar Lake. It is one of 25 International Ramsar sites in India. It is under an area of 24529 hectares with a unique biodiversity and is listed to have around 220 species of birds in total.

It comprises of a number of locations around the lake but we had headed to Nagrota Surian as the forest rest house was located there.

We contacted Ankush a forest guide and headed to the dam as there were 2-3 hours of daylight left.

The Pong dam is known for attracting migratory birds. In 2021, the staff there reported around 88 species and 68,000 birds.



Bar-headed Geese *Anser indicus*

The bar headed geese, flocks of which cross the Himalayas, are the highest flying birds in the world. They have extra capillaries in their pectoral muscles and special kind of haemoglobin which absorbs more oxygen helping them to fly over 7000 metres. In 2021 there were approximately 27,139 Bar headed

geese ie 40 % Of the total migratory birds. In another census the Bar headed geese were 50243 of a total of 11702 birds.

As we headed out to the water, all along the way, there were myriad number of pipits and Larks which we later identified with the help of photographs we had taken.There were Sand Larks,Oriental Skylarks, and Eurasian Larks. We were also keeping our eyes open for the Northern Lapwing, which is found in the northern part of India. Male and females have a black crest and the breeding male has green and black colours with a black band across the breast. It is near threatened on the IUCN list.(IUCN-International union for conservation of nature).



Northern lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

As we headed out to the water shore we could see scores of Lapwings, Egrets, Plovers,Terns and Gulls flying around in their hunt for food.

Hundreds of of Bar headed Geese along with Pintails, Gadwalls, Green winged Teals, Northern Shovellers, Common Pochards were a treat to the eyes as they glided over the water in tranquility. By this time the light was too harsh for photography so we just feasted our eyes on them and returned back to the guest house for lunch.



Small Pratincole *Glareola lactea*

The next morning, we returned eager to visit the sight of the Vulture 'restauant'. Here carrion is fed to vultures by the forest department after vetting the carcasses for diclofenac or other harmful chemicals.There were a few Egyptian vultures around though we didn't see any other vulture specie at the time.Our luck continued as we spotted a single Northern Lapwing hiding among tall bulrushes. The light was softer in the morning and we got splendid shots of the elegant Bar headed Geese and the many shorebirds. As we roamed around in their midst the wonder of it all seeped in. Birds migrating from as far as Siberia flying over miles to reach this habitable lake to escape the harsh winter there told an ancient tale of inter-connectedness where there are no boundaries. The birds could travel where they found food and we humans had the responsibility of making these wetlands sustainable for them so they could continue their annual migration over the Flyways uninterrupted for years to come and we could continue to see our foreign friends .

A flyway is the entire range of a migratory bird species (or groups of related species or distinct populations of a single species) through which /it moves on an annual basis from the breeding grounds to non-breeding areas, including intermediate resting and feeding places as well as the area within which the birds migrate. Major Waterbird flyways include 9 flyways of which the Central Asian and West Asian East African flyways are relevant to India.

Among amphibians Pong dam has 4 species of frogs, 4 species of turtles, 4 species of lizards, 18 species of snakes (of which venomous snakes are Spectacled Cobra, Common Krait, Common Indian Krait, Russel's Viper, and Saw Scaled Viper).

Mammals-24 species of Mammals have been recorded in Pong. Common species are Common Leopard, Sambher Wild Boar, Porcupine , Mongoose-Small Indian Mongoose ,Common Indian Mongoose,Jungle Cat, Civets -Common Palm Civet, Small Indian Civet, Blue Bull , Indian Smooth Otter ,Jackals , Monkeys and Langoors, Three Striped Squirrels, and many species of rats, mice and other rodents.

There is nothing quite like spending time with like minded birders who are content with just being among the company of birds. We headed back that afternoon after a wonderful trip . Being close to Chandigarh it warrants more visits to see these beautiful visitors and spend some quality time amidst them.



INDIAN GREY FOX

Species seen-

1. Jungle Babbler	*Turdoides striata*
2. Yellow eyed Babbler	*Chrysomma sinense*
3. Lesser Whitethroat	*Sylvia curruca*
4. Grey hooded Warbler	*Phylloscopus xanthoschistos*
5. Hume's Warbler	*Phylloscopus humei*
6. Common Chiffchaff	*Phylloscopus collybita*
7. Red vented Bulbul	*Pycnonotus cafer*
8. Himalayan Bulbul	*Pycnonotus leucogenys*
9. Wire tailed Swallow	*Hirundo smithii*
10. Red rumpled Swallow	*Cecropis daurica*
11. Streak throated Swallow	*Petrochelidon fluvicola*
12. Barn Swallow	*Hirundo rustica*
13. Plain Prinia	*Prinia inorata*
14. Ashy Prinia	*Prinia socialis*
15. Jungle Prinia	*Prinia sylvatica*
16. Common Tailorbird	*Orthotomus sutoris*
17. White browed Wagtail	*Motacilla maderaspatensis*
18. White *Wagtail*	*Motacilla alba*
19. Gray Wagtail	*Motacilla cinerea*
20. Citrine Wagtail	*Motacilla citreola*
21. Western Yellow Wagtail	*Motacilla flava*
22. Greater Coucal	Centropus sinensis
23. House Sparrow	*Passer domesticus*
24. Russet Sparrow	*Passer rutilans*
25. Gray Bushchat	*Saxicola ferreus*
26. Brown Rockchat	*Cercomela fuscus*
27. Black Redstart	*Phoenicurus ochruros*
28. Plumbeous Waterstart	*Rhyacornis fuliginosa*
29. Indian White-eye	*Zostherops palpabrosa*
30. Blue Whistling Thrush	*Myophonus caeruleus*
31. Oriented Magpie Robin	*Copsychus saularis*

32. Indian Robin	*Saxicoloides fulicatus*
33. Bank Myna	*Acridotheres ginginianus*
34. Common Myna	*Acritotheres tristi*
35. Brahminy Starling	*Sturnia pagodarum*
36. Chestnut bellied Nuthatch	Citta cinnamoventris
37. Eurasian Collared Dove	*Streptopelia decaocto*
38. Rock Pigeon	*Columba livia*
39. Yellow wattled Lapwing	*Vanellus malabarica*
40. Red Wattled Lapwing	*Ciconiiformes saurischia*
41. Northern Lapwing	*Vanellus vanellus*
42. River Lapwing	*Vanellus duvaucelli*
43. Rufous Treepie	*Dendrocitta vagabunda*
44. Large Billed Crow	*Corvus machrorhynchos*
45. Gray headed Canary Flycatcher	*Culicicapa ceylonensis*
46. Cinereous Tit	*Parus cinereus*
47. White throated Fantail	*Rhipidura albicollis*
48. Ashy Drongo	*Dicrurus leucophaeus*
49. Black Drongo	*Dicrurus macrocercus*
50. Indian Roller	*Coraciiformes saurischia*
51. Plum headed Parakeet	*Psittacula cyanocephala*
52. Alexandrine Parakeet	*Psitttacula eupatria*
53. Brown headed Barber	*Megalaima zeylanica*
54. Coppersmith Barbet	*Megalaima haemacephala*
55. White throated Kingfisher	*Halcyon smyrnensis*
56. Eurasian Hoopoe	*Upupa epops*
57. Black Kite	*Milvus migrans*
58. Egyptian Vulture	*Neophron percnopterus*
59. Common Kestrel	*Falco tinnunculus*
60. Steppe Eagle	*Aquila nipalensis*
61. Red naped Ibis	*Pseudibis papilllosa*
62. Medium Egret	*Ardea intermedia*
63. Eastern Cattle Egret	*Bubulcus coromandus*
64. Grey Heron	*Ardea cinerea*

65. Purple Heron Ardea purpurea
66. Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*
67. Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*
68. Little Cormorant *Microcarbo niger*
69. Yellow bellied fairy Fantail *Chelidorhynx hypoxantha*
70. Long tailed Shrike *Lanius schach*
71. Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker *Dendrocopus canicapillus*
72. Gray Francolin *Francolinus pondicerianus*
73. Black Francolin Francolinus francolinus
74. Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta*
75. Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*
76. Long billed Pipit *Anthus similis*
77. Paddyfield Pipit *Anthus rufulus*
78. Sand Lark *Alaudala raytal*
79. Oriental Skylark *Alaudala gulgula*
80. Eurasian Skylark *Alauda arvensis*
81. Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*
82. River Tern *Sterna aurantia*
83. Whispered Tern *Chlidoniashy hybrida*
84. Lesser black backed Gull *Larus fuscus*
85. Slender billed Gull *Chroicocephalus genei*
86. Black headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*
87. Brown headed Gull *Chroicocephalus brunnicephalus*
88. Pallas's Gull Ichthyaetus ichthyaetus
89. Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*
90. Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*
91. Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*
92. Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*
93. Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*
94. Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*
95. Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*
96. Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*
97. Black Winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

98. Eurasian Coot	*Fulica atra*
99. Small Pratincole	*Glareola lactea*
100. Common Pochard	*Aythya ferina*
101. Common Teal	*Anas crecca*
102. Northern Pintail	*Anas acuta*
103. Northern Shoveller	*Spatula clypeata*
104. Indian Spot Billed Duck	*Anas poecilorhyncha*
105. Gadwall	*Anas Strepera*
106. Bar Headed Geese	*Anser indicus*
107. Ruddy Shelduck	*Tadorna ferruginea*

TRIP TO OLD MAGAZINE HOUSE

Ganeshgudi, Karnataka - February 2024

Jaideep Grewal



I had been hearing many good things about Old Magazine House near Ganeshgudi, Karnataka and was always looking for an opportunity to visit this wonderful birding spot. Getting there from Goa is supposed to be the most convenient but one is always short of time on a Goa holiday ! So when my wife and I planned a trip to Bangalore for 10 days in February 2024, I managed to steal a few days slip away to OMH as OMH is very doable from there And indeed it's a great birding and outdoor experience not to be missed.

On enquiry, February they said is good weather, and a tip was to go there during the week avoiding a weekend. I booked for 2 nights and got 3 full days in the end, as I was traveling on overnight trains. It turned out to be a very convenient and comfortable train journey by 1st class AC on the Rani Chennamma express to Alnavar and then a 1 hour journey by road.The drive was over a narrow road, running through open fields of sugarcane as a mill had recently come up nearby, and teak plantations.

OMH is near Ganeshgudi in a slightly hilly terrain just off the Dandeli to Goa highway along a short red mud track through the thick jungle



The Track

As the name (Magazine House) suggests,it was a storage house for dynamite used for construction of dams and alterations to water bodies in the 1960's.

Being now a part of the Jungle Lodges in Karnataka Government in partnership with a private enterprise, I was confident that this place would be run efficiently with good facilities and food, which turned out to be true.



Bhimbeshwari Fishing Camp

I had previously visited their Bhimeshwari Fishing Camp many years ago, where there is plenty of wildlife.Those days I was not a birder. Now they have almost 20 camps and Lodges all over Karnataka.

At OMH some buildings have been renovated and others are in the process of being done up. Being alone I opted for the dorm room as I wanted to be closer to the dining area and the bird hide, so as not to miss out on any action. I had not been impressed with the photos that I had seen of the hide on YouTube taken by others before I reached, but on seeing it I realised that it was designed pretty practically.



The Bird Hide

After a hurried check-in at 8:30 am, I went straight to see the action at the hide, and the show was on. An Emerald Dove was posing proudly, followed by Brown-cheeked Fulvettas, White-belled Blue Flycatchers and Verditer Flycatchers, all coming in for a dip in the water. A Black-throated Munia hung around the side of the undergrowth

A pair of Red Spurfowl foraged on the edge too.



Red Spurfowl *Galloperdix spadicea*

Keeping to their timing the staff at OMH herded us towards breakfast set up close by, where we could always have one eye on the birds flitting on to the perches in the hide nearby. Later a Black Eagle hovered overhead and a shy Blyth's Reed Warbler flitted and twitted around in the bamboo bushes behind the hide.



White-bellied Blue Flycatcher *Cyornis pallipes*

Bonding over breakfast with fellow birders I got to know that the four friends had driven up from Pune, one of whom had been coming to OMH every year for the last 15 years. My cabin mate came in from Hyderabad and he proved to be a great companion for the next few days.



Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps indicus*

After breakfast we walked around the property with the naturalists of OMH and were delighted to hear that the Great Hornbill and the Malabar Pied Hornbills were nesting in the forest nearby. Though we patiently stood for half an hour to get a glimpse of the Malabar Pied Hornbill we were not greeted by its sighting. However the Great Hornbill male did not disappoint us. We witnessed it from a distance, coming in to feed the female in her nest. The loud whooshing sound of its wings as it flew over the tree tops with his heavy wing beats coupled with its bright colours was the most powerful and memorable moment of my entire trip



Malabar Pied Hornbill *Anthracoceros coronatus*

We walked around the jungle till lunch was served, sighting the Asian Fairy Bluebird, .Orange Minivets, Blue-capped Rock Thrush, Greater Malabar Flameback, White-cheeked Barbets, Yellow Tit,Velvet-fronted Nuthatches and a pair of Crested Goshawks that briefly perched on the higher branches before speeding away into the depths of the forest. the road. This was



Malabar Barbet *Megalaima malabarica*

We were not expecting to see the Malabar Barbet from close range but were delighted to spot a male busy working on a new nest alongside again a special species for this area.



Yellow-browed Bulbul Acritillas indica

The Puff-throated Babbler was a late arrival, but the bird that closed the day for us was the Indian Pitta, which made its entry past 6 pm, and continued till we downed our soup served while we birded and till our cameras performed to our satisfaction.



Puff-throated Babbler *Pellorneum ruficeps*

The food at the lodge was simple and delicious. I primarily enjoyed the South Indian cuisine whenever it was served.The following days birding plan was finalized over dinner.A visit to the Hornbill Festival being held at the Timber Depot in Dandeli was also on the cards.. The drive to Dandeli was in a safari jeep belonging to the resort, accompanied by a naturalist, with 7 of us on board. The Timber Depot was surprisingly almost covered in mist when we arrived and the Malabar Pied Hornbills were there in good numbers.However the shutterbugs had to wait to for the weather to improve before they could get the desired shots.



The Camp Dining Hall

The towering trees around the depot had many interesting species - Malabar Starlings, Jerdon's & Golden -fronted Leafbirds, Velvet Nuthatches, Indian Nuthatch, Jungle Owlets, Small Minivets and Racket-tailed Drongos. At lower levels we spotted some flycatchers, a Forest Wagtail and Yellow-throated Sparrows.Grey Jungle Fowl kept calling from the bushes in the thick undergrowth but wouldn't give us a sighting. The naturalist showed us a pair of Brown Hawk Owls in a thick cluster of trees before we headed back to the jeep.

We got back to the camp for a late breakfast only to be excitedly asked to come to the parking area as a male Malabar Trogan had been spotted. It was disturbed by the large gathering and moved from a lower perch to a higher one but still gave us some great viewing. The female was seen later in the afternoon.



Malabar Trogon *Harpactes fasciatus*

The day was spent shuttling between the hide and the road leading to the highway. The loud call of the White-bellied Woodpecker attracted us from within the jungle. We had to patiently wait for it to come closer to the road to give us some brief hidden views. A Speckled Piculet entertained us from a branch just above the road before our lunch break.



White-rumped Shama *Copsychus malabaricus*

The evening birding was at the hide for most of the time except for more views of the Malabar Trogon and the Great Hornbill Tickell's Blue Flycatcher was the biggest poser.



Tickell's Blue Flycatcher

The new sightings at the hide were Rusty-tailed Flycatcher and Indian Blackbird. A pair of Blue-bearded Bee-eaters showed themselves in the trees high above. We retired early after two days of very satisfying birding.



Flame-throated Bulbul *Pycnonotus(m)gularis*

The final morning was spent by trying some longer walks into the jungle and onto the main road outside the property and I added Bronzed Drongos and a Common Iora to my checklist. A pair of Rufous-bellied Eagles flying in the distance, another lifer,was a fitting culmination to my trip.



Rufous-bellied Eagle *Lophotriorchis kienerii*

One tends to reflect whether hide birding gives a good enough experience as compared to being out in a natural wild environment. The hide here at OMH does not lure the birds with food in any way but only provides pools of water for bathing, which in a way is quite natural. The variety of bird species were great and so it was pretty entertaining. Besides photography in hides is always easier.

Out of a total of 26 lifers seen by me during the trip, 20 were seen in their natural habitat and 6 around the hide.

All said and done a great birding experience.

Checklist:

1.	Red Spurfowl	*Galloperdix spadecia*
2.	Asian Emerald dove	*Chalcophaps indicus*
3.	Black-naped monarch	*Hypothymis azurea*
4.	Blyths Reed Warbler	*Acrocephalus dumetorum*
5.	Yellow-browed Bulbul	*Acritillas indica*
6.	Red-whiskered Bulbul	*Pycnonotusjocosus*
7.	Verditer Flycatcher	*Eumyias thalassinus*
8.	Black-throated Munia	*Lonchura kelaarti*
9.	Oriental honey-buzzard	*Pernis ptilorhynchus*
10.	Crested Goshawk	*Accipiter trivirgatus*
11.	Brahminy Kite	Haliastur indus
12.	Malabar Barbet	Psilopogon malabaricus
13.	Malabar Flameback	*Chrysocolaptes socialis*
14.	Black Drongo	*Dicrurus macrocercus*
15.	Ashy Drongo	*Dicrurus leucophaeus*
16.	Malabar Trogon	*Harpactes fasciatus*
17.	Great Hornbill	*Megalaima virens*
18.	Malabar Grey Hornbill	*Ocyceros griseus*
19.	Malabar Pied Hornbil	*Anthracocerus coronatus*
20.	Asian Green Bee-eater	*Merops orientalis*
21.	White-cheeked Barbet	*Megalaima viridis*
22.	Common Flame back	Dinopium javanense

23.	Indian Pitta	*Pitta brachyura*
24.	Orange Minivet	*Pericrocotus flammeus*
25.	Bronzed Drongo	*Dicrurus aeneus*
26.	Indian Paradis Flycatcher	*Terpsiphone paradisi*
27.	Indian Black-lored Tit	*Machlolophus aplonotus*
28.	Grey Junglefowl	*Gallus sonneratii*
29.	Spotted Dove	*Spilopelia chinensis*
30.	Asian Koel	*Eudynamys scolopaceus*
31.	Jungle Owlet	*Glaucidium radiatum*
32.	Brown Boobook	*Ninox scutulata*
33.	Chestnut-headed Bee-eater	*Merops leschenaulti*
34.	Black-rumped Flameback	*Dinopium benghalense*
35.	Roseringed Parakeet	*Psittacula krameri*
36.	Plum-headed Parakeet	*Pittacula cyanocephala*
37.	Small Minivet	*Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*
38.	Greater racket-tailed Drongo	*Dicurus paradiseus*
39.	Velvet-fronted Nuthatch	*Sitta frontalis*
40.	Indian Nuthatch	*Sitta castanea*
41.	Chestnut-tailed Starling	*Sturnia malabarica*
42.	Malabar Starling	*Sturnia blythii*
43.	Orange-headed Thrush	*Geokichla citrina*
44.	Asian brown Fycatcher	*Muscicapa latirostris*
45.	Oriental Magpie robin	*Copsychus saularis*
46.	Red-breasted flycatcher	*Ficedula parva*
47.	Jerdon’s Leafbird	*Chloropsis jerdoni*
48.	Golden-fronted Leafbird	*Chloropsis aurifrons*
49.	Yellow-throated sparrow	*Petronia xanthocollis*
50.	Forest Wagtail	*Dendronanthes indics*
51.	Black Eagle	*Ichtinaetus malaiensis*
52.	Speckled Piculet	*Picumnus innominatus*
53.	White-bellied Woodpecker	*Dryocopus javensis*
54.	Blue-bearded Bee-eater	*Nyctyornis athertoni*
55.	Streak-throated Swallow	*Petrochelidon fluvicila*

56.	Flame-throated Bulbul	*Rubigula gularis*
57.	Indian White-eye	*Zostherops palpabrosa*
58.	Dark-fronted Babbler	*Rhopocichla atriceps*
59.	Brown-cheeked Fulvetta	*Alcippe poloicephala*
60.	Indian Blackbird	*Turdus simillus*
61.	White-rumped Shama	*Copsychus malabaricus*
62.	Rusty-tailed flycatcher	*Muscicapa ruficauda*
63.	Crimson-backed sunbird	*Leptocoma minima*
64.	Rufous-bellied Eagle	*Lophotriorchis kienerii*
65.	Common Iora	*Aegithina tiphia*
66.	Greenish Warblers	*Phylloscopus trochiloides*
67.	Tickell"s Blue Flycatcher	*Cyornis tickelliae*
68.	Blue-capped Rockthrush	*Monticola* **c***inclorghynchus*
69.	Purple-rumped Sunbird	*Leptocoma zeylonica*
70.	Southern Hill Myna	*Gracula indica*
71.	Asian Fairy Bluebird	*Irena puella*
72.	Puff-throated Babbler	*Pellorneum ruficeps*
73.	White-bellied blue flycatcher	*Cyornis pallipes*



Malabar Red Squirrel *Ratufa indica*

Hidden Treasures of Thapli

Lalit Mohan Bansal



Thapli Village

Nestled in the serene and picturesque region of Haryana, Village Thapli and its surrounding areas offer a unique and enriching experience for birding enthusiasts. With its diverse habitats and rich biodiversity, Thapli has become a hidden gem for bird watchers seeking to explore the avian treasures. The villagers live amid natural surroundings. Early in the morning, we can listen to the sweet songs of birds. We can enjoy the beauty of the rising sun and the sweet breeze of the greenery of fields around, which are the various pleasures that abound in the countryside.

Thapli is a village located in the Morni Block of Panchkula district in Haryana. A 30-minute run from Chandigarh, it is the most preferred place for birding in Peak Summer Season. The people of Thapli are very peaceful, cordial and helpful. Agriculture is the main profession of residents of Thapli. Though a large number of birders visit these areas, especially on weekends, they never object to the presence and even assist them in bird watching. The optimal time for birding in Village Thapli is during the early morning and late afternoon. These periods coincide with the peak activity times for many bird species, increasing your chances of observing them in their natural behaviours. Additionally, the cooler temperatures during these times make for a more comfortable birding experience.

In peak summer season, when there is hardly any birding activity left at Chandigarh, I prefer to visit Thapli and adjoining areas. Though the avian check list of this area is long, yet my focus remains on the three Indian beauties, the Indian Pitta, the Indian Golden Oriole and the Indian Roller as this is the best place to watch these in their natural habitat.



Indian Pitta *Pitta brachyura*

The Indian Pitta, often referred to as the "Nine-coloured bird" due to its vibrant and multi-coloured plumage, is a stunning avian species that captures the admiration of bird enthusiasts and nature lovers alike. This small, ground-dwelling bird is a true spectacle of nature, boasting an array of striking colours that make it

a living rainbow in the dense forests and wooded habitats it frequents. The Indian Pitta's plumage is a dazzling blend of colours. It features a bright green back, a vibrant blue rump, and a tail with contrasting black and white. The bird's underparts are a rich, warm buff, while its throat and chin are white. One of the most eye-catching features is the vivid red vent and lower belly. This striking combination of colours makes the Indian Pitta easily distinguishable from other birds. Here you can watch the jewel of the forest in every pose, looking for its Partner or collecting the nesting material.

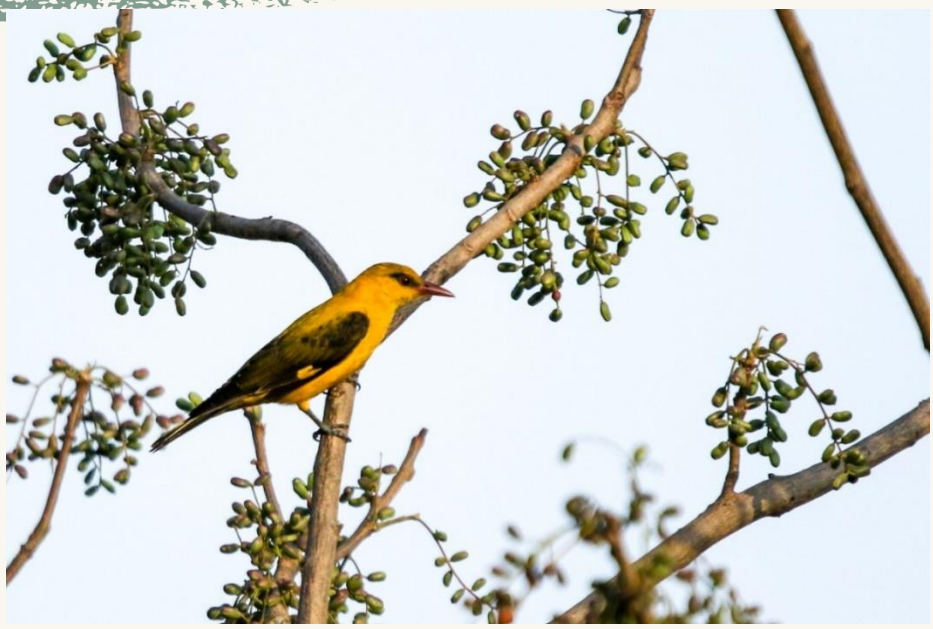


Pair of Indian Pitta



The Indian Pitta is a ground-foraging bird. It is known for its elusive nature, often staying hidden in the undergrowth, making it a delightful challenge for bird

watchers. Despite its secretive behaviour, the Indian Pitta's loud, two-note whistle call often gives away its presence before it is seen.



Indian Golden Oriole *Oriolus kundoo*

Then comes the bird known for its stunning appearance and melodious song, the **Indian Golden Oriole**. The male Indian Golden Oriole is particularly resplendent with its bright golden-yellow body, contrasting sharply with its black wings and tail. The black streak running through its eye adds a dramatic touch to its vivid appearance. Females and juveniles, while slightly duller, still showcase a beautiful mix of yellow and olive-green hues, making them equally enchanting. The bird is not just a treat for the eyes but also for the ears. It is known for its sweet, fluty calls that resonate through the trees. Its song, a series of melodious whistles, is often heard during the breeding season, adding a musical backdrop to its vibrant visual presence.



Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis*

The next in the series is the bird known for its brilliant blue plumage and striking aerial displays, the magnificent **Indian Roller**. The Indian Roller is instantly recognizable by its vivid blue and turquoise feathers. Its wings display a striking combination of electric blue and deep purples, which become even more dazzling during flight that makes it a favourite among bird watchers. One of the most fascinating behaviours of the Indian Roller is its acrobatic flight display. During the breeding season, males perform impressive aerial stunts to attract females, rolling and diving through the air, which is how the bird gets its name.

Whether you are a seasoned birder or a curious beginner, the serene landscapes and rich biodiversity of Thapli promises an unforgettable birding experience. So pack your binoculars, field guide, camera and a sense of adventure, and set out to explore the avian wonders of this charming area.

Happy Birding!

The Bird Magnet

Bindoo Nangia

The shiny black elongated slim elegant poise of the bird, with the deeply forked tail and a white prominent rictal spot behind the shiny black eye, had me lured and captivated for life! Yes it was the commonly sighted, Black Drongo, sitting elegantly on an overhead wire, my first bird sighting on my first ever Field Birding trip a couple of years ago which caught my eye and got the pleasant hormones racing, and got me hooked unto the most pleasurable hobby everBirding!! God's hand were definitely there in introducing me to this life long journey of knowing the colourful world of His wonderful creation, as I had the privilege of the most passionate birder as my mentor, the birder known as the "Bird Magnet"as my first ever guide. Ever thankful to BKG for this unique, mesmerising uplifting , exhilarating and blessed experience.



Crimson Sunbird *Aethopyga siparaja*



Indian White-eye *ostherops palpebrosa*

The excitement was palpable as I got to see one species after another. Raw, novice birders like me were not aware of the unwritten rules of birding and we were frowned upon when we closed the door of the abruptly stopped car with a wee bit of a bang, the disapproving piercing looks when my mobile rang with a loud foot-tapping song!. I was hushed to silence when I did not speak in a whisper while asking about the whereabouts of the spotted bird. I was politely told to avoid loud colourful T Shirts while birding- I was wearing a bright red one- Oops ! The perfectly poised OMR with a provocative whistling call, the colourful prancing of the bird with the ever so red beak , the Red billed Leiothrix foraging in the garbage dump, the flittering green flashes of the Indian White eye, the following piercing eyes of the wise Spotted Owlet. The Brown headed Barbet with fine hair around its beak, peeping out from the tree hole nest , the parakeets , the loud cacophony of the Rufous Treepie, the royal Himalayan Bulbul with a cute crest over its head, the Christmas father of the bird, the White-crested Laughingthrushes moving around in snowy flocks. Each of this sight was indeed captivating and exciting!



Whiskered Yuhina *Yuhina gularis*

The noisy chatter of the seven sisters ,the Jungle Babblers, the bold and the royal Mr and Mrs Khaleej , the evasive Whiskered Yuhina fluttering among the trees. The Crimson Sunbird in complete splendour on the bright red flowers of the Coral tree- its cute little face smeared with tiny pollen of the flower as it sucked nectar with its long curved beak. Mr and Mrs Purple Sunbird with glossy glistering feathers always together, in their search for the worms for the fledglings. The multi coloured Great Barbet , the Fan tail, the Robins! I was flummoxed when a birder mentioned that the identified bird is a female of the species?! How was it even possible to tell sex of the bird when I could not even spot it?? I had new found respect for the class of humans known as Birders. Only later did I learn the distinct distinguishing features of the sex of

the birds-male being the more colourful of the two. Was I hearing right- babblers, warblers? What? It took a while to register the two tongue twisters and to learn how different they were in size, plumage and habitat . How naive of me indeed! The determination of the birders was indeed praise worthy. The revered silence was almost palpable like a meditative state only to be broken by the excitement of a new lifer, of sharing and exchanging views of the new bird and comparing raw pictures on their cameras looking for the perfect record shot. We carried on despite the cold weather ..we stopped for a little break, the boot of the car was opened and lo and behold we were treated to hot tea and snacks., in the midst of nowhere! The time just flew past and we literally forced ourselves to head back home., with a heavy heart as Dil Mange More! Still wanting more and more on the list of lifers!., always hungry for more sightings..on and on



Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*

Birding Australia-Nurragingy Reserve



Eastern Spinebill *Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*

Nestled amidst the tranquil suburbs of Western Sydney lies Nurragingy Reserve, a sanctuary that beckons both nature enthusiasts and avid bird watchers alike. As you step into this verdant oasis, you are greeted by a symphony of bird calls that instantly transport you into a world of natural serenity. Walking through this reserve is a sensory delight. The air is crisp with the earthy scents of eucalyptus and native flora, while sunlight filters through the canopy, casting dappled patterns on the winding trails. Each step unveils new surprises – from tranquil ponds where ducks playfully swim, to dense thickets alive with the rustling of leaves and hidden avian treasures. Bird watchers are particularly drawn to Nurragingy for its diverse avian population.



Brown Thornbill *Acanthiza pusilla*

Among the tall eucalypts and paperbark trees, you can spot the striking plumage of Rainbow Lorikeets, Galahs, Eastern Rosellas and Crimson Rosellas darting through the branches.

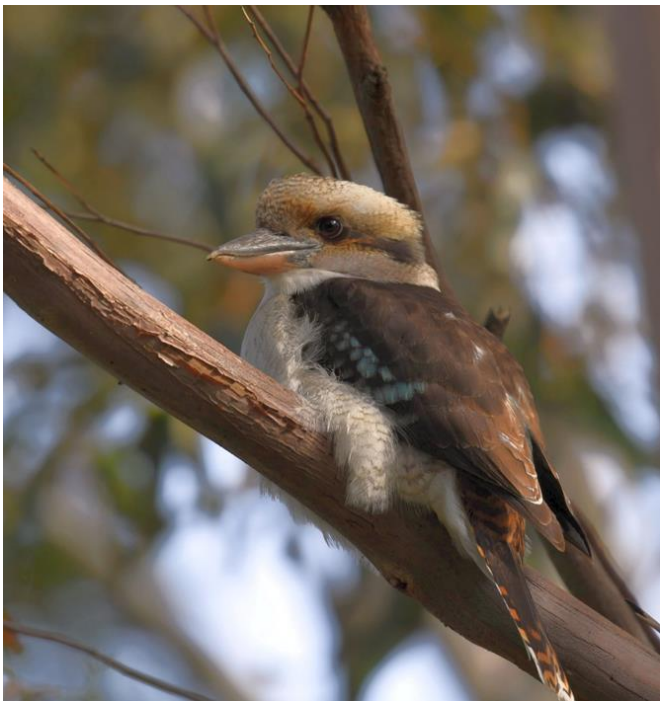


Crimson Rosella (Juv) *Platycercus elegans*



Australian King Parrot *Alisterus scapularis*

The distinctive calls of Kookaburras echo through the bush, adding a quintessential Australian charm to the landscape. For the keen-eyed observer, the reserve offers opportunities to spot species such as the Powerful Owl, King Parrot, Azure Kingfisher or the elusive Satin Bowerbird, known for its intricate nests adorned with blue trinkets. Patient watchers may even glimpse rarer species like Musk Lorikeet, Yellow and Blue faced Honey eaters, Brown and Yellow Thornbills, Spotted Pardalote, Golden Whistler, Pacific Baza, Rose Robin, apart from a variety of water birds like Darters, Cormorants and Black Ducks that inhabit the creek that passes through the reserve.



Laughing Kookaburra *Dacelo novaeguineae*

So, grab your binoculars, lace up your walking shoes, and immerse yourself in the wonders of this beautiful area and discover why this haven continues to captivate and inspire those who seek solace and connection with nature's winged inhabitants.! As they say, every bird's song is a celebration of life's symphony.

Enjoy !



Red-browed Firetail *Neochmia temporalis*

BLAZE IN THE SHIVALIKS:

Karmanye Choudhary

After the monthly meeting of the Chandigarh Bird Club, where we meticulously laid out plans for the upcoming Chandigarh Bird Fest, I set off for my farmhouse, nestled in the verdant Shivalik Hills of Punjab. By the time I arrived, the sun had long since dipped below the horizon, and the mountains stood bathed in an ethereal moonlit glow. Determined to document the nocturnal insect life, I promptly set up a light trap near the dam we had constructed. Before long, a myriad of insects, drawn irresistibly to the light, began to settle on the white cloth. My camera and collection jars were soon busy with specimens of ichneumon wasps and water beetles, creatures of intricate beauty and ecological importance.

The night yielded a treasure trove of photographs and samples, and I eventually retired, content with the results. At the break of dawn, I was gently roused by the melodious calls of Indian Pittas. The symphony of their voices heralded the new day. As I stirred and stretched, I noticed Mali Bhaiya, our ever-diligent gardener and caretaker, busily planting grass beside the solar panels. From the veranda, I observed a thin wisp of smoke rising from behind the hills. When I inquired, Mali Bhaiya speculated that someone might have ignited a fire far away. My curiosity piqued, I ascended the hill, and a disturbing sight met my eyes: a massive forest fire was raging in the far eastern mountain range. Alarmed, I immediately contacted the forest department, reporting that the fire was on their land. They assured me they would dispatch a team to extinguish it.

Descending the hill, my concern grew as the smoke thickened and advanced closer. Along with Mali Bhaiya, I climbed the hill once more to assess the situation. To our horror, the wind had shifted, driving the flames towards us. The scene was chaotic: Sambar deer bolted in panic, and Drongos screeched as they flew overhead, their cries a cacophony of terror.





We raced back down, opening all the water and drip lines that spanned across the farm. I summoned every labourer I could find and arranged for a water tanker from a neighbouring farm. The fire, now a ferocious wave, had reached the boundary of our property. The labourers fought valiantly, wielding curry leaf bushes and channelling the drip pipes. Armed with a high-pressure hose, I joined the fray, but the fire moved with terrifying speed. The sound of dried bamboo igniting was deafening, accompanied by the agonising cries of burning Bulbuls. In the midst of the inferno, I was momentarily engulfed by a large flame. I managed to douse it with the hose, but not without burning my hand. Despite the pain, our efforts began to bear fruit; the towering flames started to subside. We successfully prevented the fire from breaching our farm's boundary. Eventually, a forest ranger arrived to assess the situation. He informed us that the fire had been raging for three days, and their fire truck was busy elsewhere.

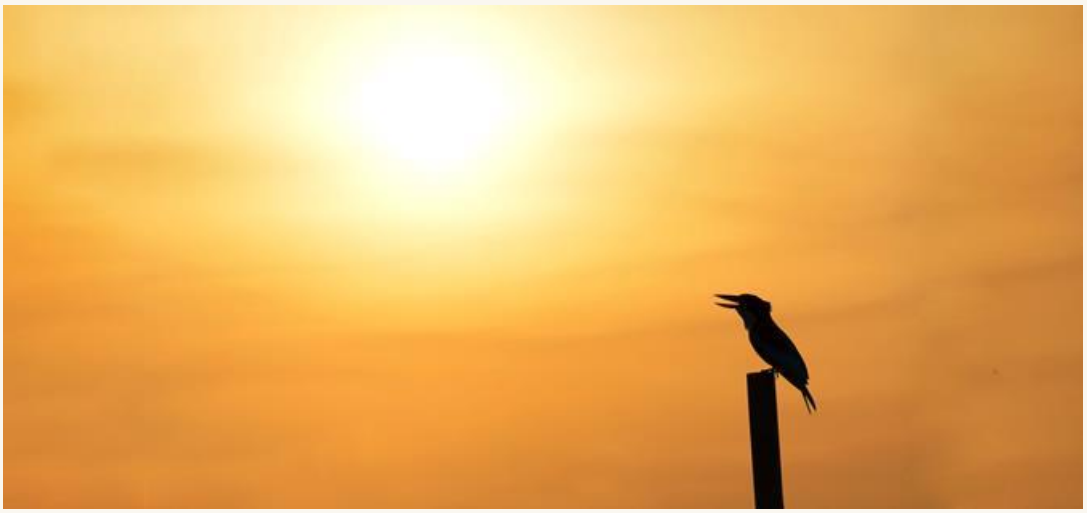




Exhausted, we collapsed onto the charpoy under the shed. It was now six in the evening. Smoke still rose from distant charred areas, but our trees were safe, and even the mountain's older trees had survived, only losing the tall, dried grasses. As we refreshed ourselves with water, our eyes red and our stomachs empty, a sudden crackle from a nearby bamboo bush startled us. Just then, the forest department's fire truck arrived, and the rangers swiftly began extinguishing the remaining flames.

Relieved, I walked back to the house to gather my belongings. As I was about to enter, I witnessed a remarkable sight: a large assembly of birds—eleven Drongos, six Orioles, eight Bee-eaters, and two White-breasted Kingfishers—all perched together on a dried tree by the dam. They took turns diving into the water, cooling off after the ordeal. With a sense of relief,

I drove back to the city, eagerly anticipating a much-needed meal and rest. The experience had left an indelible mark, a testament to the resilience of nature but in the end, the dawn promised a brighter tomorrow.



What they teach and tell?

Geeta Goswami

If you are aware and are watching the little things flying around us, you will be able to really learn simply by being observant...

It was a bright and sunny day, 4th of May 2024, a usual summer morning in Chandigarh. The parched potted plants adorning my terrace, needed a little care and conversation. As I was watering the pots, I saw a frequent yet vigilant coming and going off a pair of Bulbuls. I did not pay much cognizance to it thinking that they are only here to enjoy the fresh drops of water. So wrong was I!

As I kept observing this pair, I realised their beaks weren't empty every time they sat on the Bougainvillea pot. It was an insect, a butterfly or a something in the beak. The Bulbul would first sit on the railing, then flitter to the Bougainvillea and only focused at the centre of the plant, oblivious to me. Mind you, I was just a few inches away and at time at the centre with the bird on one side and the plant on the other. It got me suspicious. I knew there was more to this journey of the pair of Bulbuls to my terrace. I suppressed my curiosity and moved away giving the bird some space. Observing from behind the wall I saw the other Bulbul join the one waiting at the railing with its beak full. The pair paused, ensuring safety, went right at the heart of the Pink Bougainvillea. It was their nest which held three little babies in a nest.



o Filled with warmth in my heart, remembering feeding my own little daughter so many years back; I let them be. I came downstairs, thrilled. Suddenly, I heard a commotion... a real commotion and alarm calls from the Bulbul. On looking out I saw that a Treepie seated just opposite my house on a huge Amala tree and making its crackles. Knowing that Treepie is an egg and chick thief, I kept observing them. Whether right or wrong I shooed away the Treepie. Thinking all is over, I was about to move in, when I realised that now there are two Treepie eyeing the nest and the chicks. Here comes a wonderful twist in this story. A number of alarm calls and not only by these two parents but two more bulbuls raised, joined by jungle Babblers(the best surrogates), the noise kept rising. Not understanding the reason of the Babblers joining the orchestra, I also saw a little Purple Sunbird add to the symphony. It was as if they were shooing away the Treepie in a shared melody. They ensured the safety of the little nes for this day.

It doesn't matter whose chicks they were, they fought as a collective whole to preserve and protect the start of life.

Lessons for humans BE CONCERNED AND CARING.

So I sat in my daughter's room overlooking the terrace this morning again. Witness the three little Bulbul chicks gain their strength. I run not for my camera, a simple mobile click is enough to share the story of harmony in nature for this day.



Red-vented Bulbul

MY JOURNEY IN BIRDING

Gagandeep Singh

Hello fellow bird enthusiasts,

I am an IT professional and an Avid Birder.I would like to share my birding journey with all the fellow birding enthusiasts. This journey began as a hobby during the Monsoons of 2021 and as the winter approached it turned into a passion. It all started one day when I decided to visit the Sukhna Reserve Lake Trail after coming to know of the place through YouTube.



Indian Golden Oriole *Oriole kundoo*

Besides being a native of Chandigarh, renowned as The City Beautiful, which embodies the profound beauty of nature, my introduction to the natural world was largely through television. I often sat beside my elder brother, engrossed in nature documentaries and web series on BBC and Discovery channels. Even now, the voice of Sir David Attenborough never fails to give me goosebumps.



Gray-headed Woodpecker *Picus canus*

Reflecting on my first experience on the trail, it was both scary and exciting. Having only visited a zoo once in my childhood, I found the natural setting quite intimidating. However, after aFew visits the trail I met a young individual, who was carrying a camera and asked me for a sip of water. My curiosity got the better of me, and I asked him what he was doing. He simply replied, "Watching birds." This sparked a conversation that led me to invite him to join a birding related organization that I knew through my friends. Eager to learn more about nature, I also decided to join the same organization.



Himalayan Prinia *Prinia crinigera*

Gradually, I began visiting birding hotspots with my friends. An even closer look at birds through binoculars made me appreciate nature more deeply. One unforgettable visit to Chakki Moddh stands out, where I saw the most beautiful and mesmerizing bird I had ever seen. My friend shouted from across the stream, "Gagannn, tere samne wale pead par birds ayi hai, unko dekh " pointing to a flock of white-crested laughingthrushes. I was blown away by their white heads and black stripes around their eyes, amazed that such a beautiful bird resided in our country. Sadly, in Indian society, exposure to nature and birding is extremely limited, with little encouragement from families and educational systems.



White-crested Laughingthrush *Garrulax leucolophus*

That memorable day left me eager to explore more birds around my city. I began spotting birds around my house, gardens, and everywhere I went. During one such birding trip to Chaparchiri, I was intrigued by a fellow birder who identified an Ashy Prinia solely by its sound. This inspired me to start memorizing birds' sounds.



White-rumped Vulture *Gyps bengalensis*

IUCN Red List: Critically Endangered

As my interest grew deeper, I began to observe more actively, especially along the lake trail, utilizing binoculars and combining them with my mobile phone to capture photographs. All the photos featured in this article were taken using this method.



Spotted Owlets *Athene brama*

Birding has opened a world of hidden wonders and allowed me to explore places I would never have discovered otherwise. Join me, fellow birders, and readers, in our next edition for more details on my journey into observing fungi, insects, plants, and further birding experiences.

Happy Birding,

Saffron Wings:

Pitta’s Nesting, But Perplexing!!

Poetry Inspired by
the Indian Pitta's Essence!!

By Aaryan Bhalla



Indian Pitta

Indian pitta, you are a beauty
Flying high in searing heat,
Clicking you is just a treat
Sitting lonely on the tree,
But you come, and just flee!
When you ge a suitable mate
Breeding you do in June or May
Small nest on trees and shrubs

With small twigs, you fly whole day.



An Indian Pitta calling for its mate from the top of tree!

Calls they play when
they don't find you!
Sometimes you go, you ignore a few...
Then your mate thinks it's you!
You don't know now what to do??

The location of nests are shared by some
And in groups then they come
Your chicks are frightened
and in danger too
This gives chills to your mate and you!!



Indian Pittta –'Navrang'

When egoistic Photographers come,
Pittas get no respite;
(From calls till they get my pose just right!)
Hope they don't disturb us
Keeping our home safe
Don't know about these humans...
Curiosity there is still on way
Now it's a long wait, oh partner!
To get the tiny chicks in the nest
Both of you help each other
And in this you are the best.



Pitta collecting the nesting material along with mud

Sometime for food you have to run
Leaving your chicks in the scorching sun
But God is there for everyone!
He will protect your daughter and son.
Chicks cry when they are hungry!
Earthworm and insects they want early
Digging earth for worms you came

I appreciate you fly whole day
from plants to foliage.



Two-noted whistle call at dusk and dawn

New generation is ready now
To Leave the nest and fly high...
Color nature to mesmerise us
And they say adiue and bye, bye.

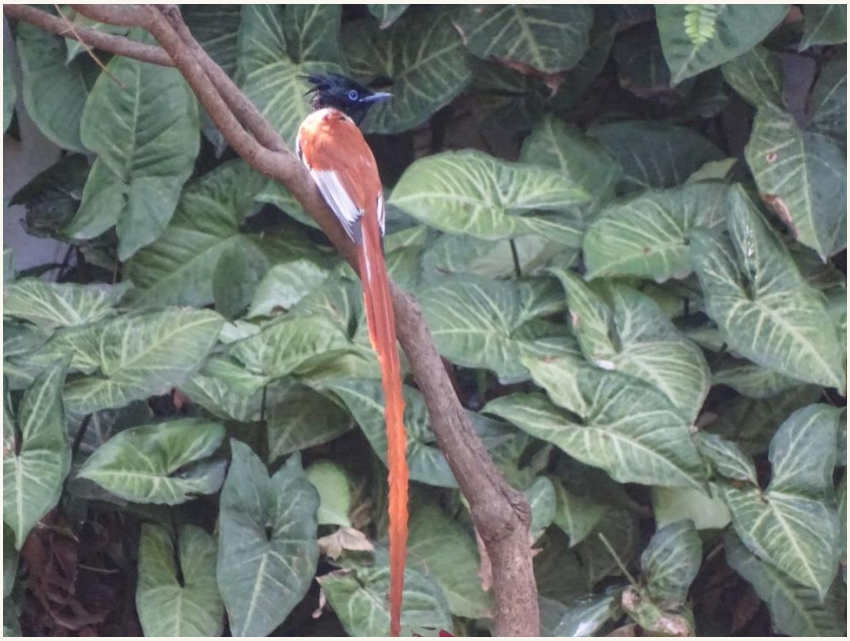
Pitta- The Vibrant Serenity!
May you hear Eternal Birdsong
Forever!



Indian Pitta *Pitta brachyura*

Backyard Birding

Suman Singh



Indian Paradise Flycatcher *Terspiphone paradisi*

The urban life, crazy busy made crazier busier by work and commitment. It has made humans lose touch with nature



Crimson Sunbird *Aethopygia siparaja*

Urbanization bringing along the concrete jungle, pushing out the birds and bees to find new pasture where they can find a habitat to survive.



Ultramarine Flycatcher *Ficedula luperciliaris*

Trees, shrubs, flowers and weeds - each have their own unique role to play in creating an atmosphere which attracts the fauna. Food, water, shelter, nesting places all become important factors for any birds to explore the area. Unconsciously planting a garden with trees, flowering shrubs and vines, annual flowers, and fruiting plants brought some beautiful winged guests in the garden. Some common, some rare, some migratory lead to my observations of their habitats. Some were early risers, some came to feed. Some to bathe or some simply to drink nectar or water. Some turned up randomly out of the blue, on their way while migrating.



Great Barbet *Megalaima virens*

Close observation of their behaviour showed patterns of caution while coming to feed, how they would build a nest and where they would need to build one.The meticulous creation and architecture could marvel anyone.



Verditer Flycatcher *Eumyias thalassinus*

The caution taken to camouflage the nest, separate entry exit points and different perches just to fool a predator or to draw them away from the nest.



Tickell's Blue Flycatcher *Cyornis tickelliea*

The loud chirping of the groups to caution the others about a predator around. The territorial wars among the birds, not allowing anyone else to breach their area. Also, over the years - they kept the date. Annually they would be sighted at the same date that they were seen last year. It's amazing to see such precision.

The joy and happiness of a new visitor in the garden is unparalleled. All we need is to provide a little greenery, a little shade, a small bowl of water and a few grains.



Himalayan Bulbul *Pycnonotus leucogenys*

If you want to listen to bird songs, don't buy cages, plant trees. It has been a very enriching and satisfying experience to sight so many species of birds, trees, butterflies and bugs. Let's learn to give back to nature. We don't take care of the garden, it takes care of us.

LIST:

1.Black Kite *Milvus migrans*
2.Oriental Magpie-robin *Copsychus saularis*
3.Indian Koel *Eudynamys scolopaceus*
4.Great Barbet *Megalaima virens*
5.Oriental Honey-buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*
6.Crimson Sunbird *Aethopyga siparaja*
7.Purple sunbird *Cinnyris asiaticus*
8.Gray wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*
9.Shikra *Accipiter badius*
10.Spotted Dove *Streptopelia Chinensis*
11.Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria*
12.Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*
13.Rufous Treepie *Dendrocitta vagabunda*
14.Brown-headed Barbet *Megalaima zeylanica*
15.Black-rumped Flameback *Dinopium benghalense*
16.Common Myna *Acridotheres tristi*
17.Oriental Turtledove *Streptopelia orientalis*
18.Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocercus*
19.Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher *Culicicapa ceylonensis*
20.White-throated Fantail *Rhipidura albicollis*
21.Feral Pigeon *Columba livia domestica*
22. Blue Whistlingthrush *Myophonus caeruleus*
23.Indian White-eye *Zostherops palpebrosa*
24.Red vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer*
25.Himalayan Bulbul *Pycnonotus leucogenys*
26.Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei*
27.Jungle Babbler *Turdoides striata*
28.Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius*
29. Long-tailed Minivet *Pericrocotus ethologus*
30.Hair-crested Drongo *Dicrurus hottentotus*
31.Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*
32.Spotted Owlet *Athene brama*

33.Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*
34.Sulphur-bellied Warbler *Phylloscopus griseolus*
35.Laughing Dove *Spilopelia senegalensis*
36.House Crow *Corvus splendens*
37.Ultramarine Flycatcher *Ficedula superciliaris*
38.Asian Green Bee-eater *Merops orientalis*
39.Taiga Flycatcher *Ficedula albicilla*
40.Red breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*
41.Indian Grey Hornbill *Ocyceros birostris*
42.Indian Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi*
43.Verditer Flycatcher *Eumyias thalassinus*
44.Tickell's Thrush *Turdus unicolor*
45.Spot winged Starling *Saroglossa spiloptera*
46.Yellow-footed Green Pigeon *Treron phoenicopterus*
47.Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*
48.Blue throated Blue Flycatcher *Cyornis rubiculoides*



Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher Culicicapa ceylonensis

PAPUA NEW GUINEA: Yes, the adventure continued!



Kiunga

KUNAL BAMBY

No news for the possibility of our flight from Mount Hagen to Kiunga. At 5.30 PM, a gentleman from Port Moresby called up Dr. Peter (our co-birder), that he has been successful in convincing the airlines to arrange a charter flight from Mt. Hagen to Kiunga for the next morning.

At last, the next morning, we got the boarding passes in our hands, to fly to Kiunga. It is a town on the Fly River, situated in the Western Province of Papua New Guinea. Local industry rests on a cornerstone of freight and haulage, particularly related to the Mines. Surrounding swamps and rainforests support yet another excellent ecosystem with a large variety of many common as well as special species. The climate here is tropical rainforest type, a lot sweaty while you are walking in the swampy forests.

The flight carrier from Mount Hagen to Kiunga was a 16-seater plane, it was especially arranged for us by an Indian VIP residing in the country. His super-special efforts only enabled us to reach our next birding destination. The flight offered splendid views of the highlands at the time of ascending and the absolutely stunning delta and marshy regions while we were descending to the Kiunga Airport. The airport terminal was as small as a Bus Station with a capacity to seat only about 20 passengers.

The Kiunga Guest House offers a descent stay and western food too, and whenever I felt uncomfortable with the food, our 2-minute noodle Maggi came to the rescue. But the food has hardly disappointed so far during the trip right from the Kumul Lodge in Mount Hagen to the Kiunga Guest House. The next important and mandatory preparation is buying the rubber boots but I was still wondering why do we need to wear them. We bought boots from the next-door department store, by the way, we needed them for the next day. It was already the afternoon and there was still some birding left to do. Our guide Skezy told us to prepare ourselves for a short drive to a nearby forest which is the lek for the Greater Bird-of-Paradise. At about 3.45 pm, we reached this small patch of forest, called the KM-17 area on the Kiunga-Tabubil Road. After wasting 2 fully frustrating days in Mount Hagen due to the flight departure disturbances, and yes, we were about to do some birding.

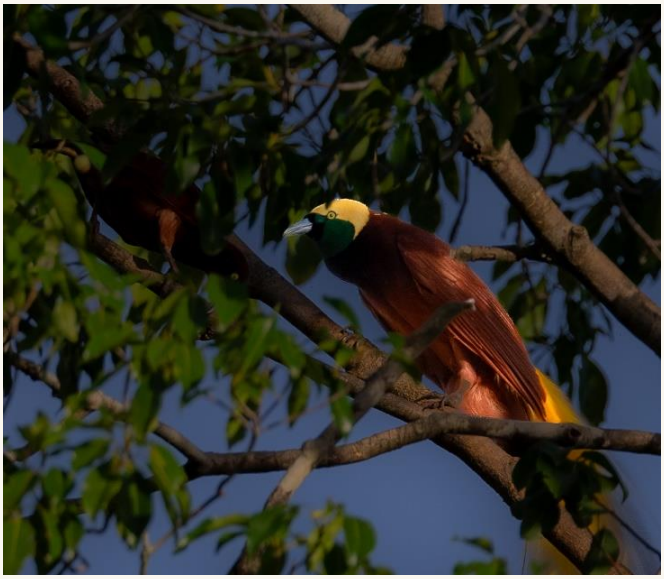
The birding was on a muddy trail inside this thick-dense rainforest, and it was tough to carry a long lens mounted on a tripod-gimbal, thankfully I was the lone one not carrying any tripods in this whole trip. This region like my last year's trip to Sulawesi and Halmahera is rich in variety of colourful doves and pigeons. **Black-bellied Cuckoo-Dove, Orange-bellied Cuckoo-Dove, Beautiful Fruit-Dove** and **Wompoo Fruit-Dove** were among the doves seen on the trail, accompanied by a variety of honeyeaters namely **Streak-headed Honeyeater, Puff-backed Honeyeater, Scrub Honeyeater** and **Tawny-breasted Honeyeater**. These birds restricted themselves to the very high canopy that they only can be seen, can't even photograph them. Papuan Babbler was the one that sticked to the eye levels. Then we saw another Bird-of-paradise called as **Trumpet Manucode**. The bird is named after its powerful and loud trumpeting calls. It has elongated horn-like head tufts and loose neck feathers. The appearance is of an iridescent blackish glossed blue, green and purple.



(file picture: Trumpet Manucode)

Golden Monarch and **Frilled-Monarch** were the next birds, with a little satisfactory photo. All these birds are really shy and inhabit the higher-canopy. The Yellow-breasted Boatbill also came quite close-by, and then, it was the time for the Greater Bird-of-Paradise. They come and display on the single tree all mornings and evenings. Yes, they were 3 males and a female, but the same problem, they were distancing about 80-90 metres away from us, on a dense tree-top. The males after seeing a female coming up, displayed so beautifully.





Greater Bird-of-Paradise (right) Beautiful Fruit-Dove (left) Marbled Frogmouth (below)

The Greater BoP is the biggest member of the genus Paradisaea, these birds were named by Carolus Linnaeus as “Legless Bird of Paradise” because natives prepared early trade-skins for Europe without feet, resulting in the misconception that these beautiful birds were the visitors from Paradise kept alone by means of their plumes and only touched the earth after they died. The BTS were very disappointing as this is the only shot, we could manage. The next birds were **Rusty Pitohui**, **Boyer’s Cuckooshrike** and **Black Sunbird**. After the rough walking birding session, which was not so successful from the photography point

of view, it was time for some nocturnal birding. The **Marbled Frogmouth** was the next target, Mr. Skezy (our guide from Kiunga) took us to a nearby village where he has sighted this nocturnal bird numerous times, the habitat was a mix of the lowland rainforests on one side and the bamboo vegetation on the other side. The bird took its time to come out in the open, about 48-50 minutes. Thereafter, had a nice dinner at the guest house.



The next morning, we are all set with our gum boots on, to board the speed boat. The time as 4.30 am and it was still dark. The boat journey is for 1 hour towards the various islands in the delta region of the Fly River. The temperature was about 24 degrees and it was really tough to adapt to the conditions, with the cool breeze slapping our faces, as our boat was speeding to our destination. 40 minutes later, there was some light and loud calls of birds were getting audible from both the shores of the river. The river is averagely about 600 feet wide, and the bird flight activity was fantastic, as hundreds of **Metallic Starlings** and dozens of Boyer's Cuckooshrike were in continuously move from one side of the river shore to the other. Some of the other birds were **Sulphur-Crested Cockatoo** (the bird we see in every fancy bird or a pet shop), **Papuan Eclectus, Collared Imperial Pigeon** and one of the very special species, **Channel-billed Cuckoo.**



Yet another BoP **Glossy-mantled Manucode,** showed up really well, accompanied with a **Whistling Kite, Brahminy Kites**, 2 of **Spangled Drongo**, dozens of **Dollarbirds, White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Orange-bellied Fruit-Dove, Pinon's Imperial-Pigeon, Red-Flanked Lorikeet, Black-capped Lory and Yellow-streaked Lory.**











Previous Page

Upper-Left : **Metallic Starlings**

Below-Left : **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo**

Below-Right : **Collared Imperial-Pigeon**

Current Page

Upper-Left : **Pinon's Imperial Pigeon**

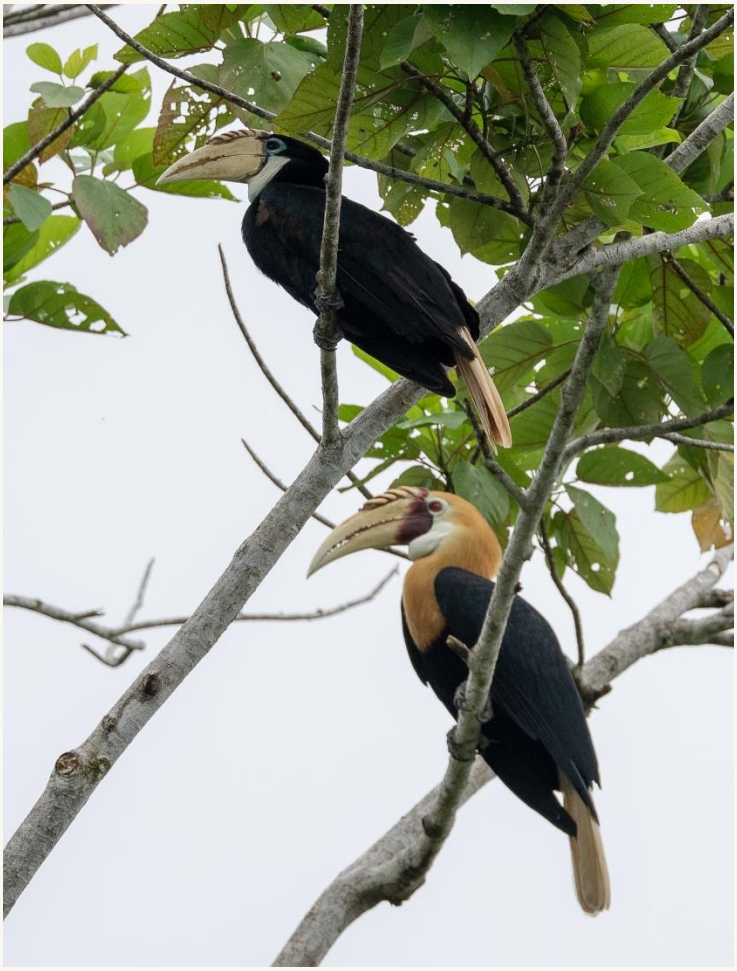
Upper-Left : **Channel-Billed Cuckoo**

Left : **Papuan Eclectus**

Below : **Glossy-mantled Manucode (BoP)**



Off the mainstream Fly River, the boat entered one of its tributaries, now the speed would be slower, light will be better, birds will be closer as the stream narrows itself. **Nankeen Night-Heron, Blyth's Hornbill, Pacific Koel, Papuan Spinetail, Rufous-bellied Kookaburra, Great Cuckoo-Dove, Fig-Parrots, Helmeted Friarbird, Spangled Drongo, Shining Flycatcher, Golden Myna, Yellow-faced Myna, Willie Wagtail, Black-capped Lory** and **Sacred Kingfisher** were additional birds seen in the relatively-narrower river stream. The quantity of **Dollarbirds** was such drastic high that every 5 out of 6 birds that flew above you is this species. **Palm Cockatoo** is a very spectacular looking Bird that we saw on the higher trees on the banks. Now the boat docks at one of the banks, and as they said that the tidal level of the river is low, we have to get down in the mud to enter one of the islands, yes that's where the gum boots came into the play.







Above: **Blyth's Hornbill** (male & female)
Left: **Large Fig-Parrot**
Right: **Palm Cockato**





Left: **Sacred Kingfisher**
Right: **Shining Flycatcher**



After getting down, we took a short ascend the banks of the river for about 40 feet, with our boots dipped in mud by 7-8 inches, and it was really troublesome. Now we asked the guide the reason to get down at this island, and he replied we'll be trying the **Flame Bowerbird** at one of the blinds set up by the local bird guides. After Walking for about 13-15 minutes, we reached that blind, and as we setup lenses through the gap-holes provided on the facing side of the hides, we saw a beautiful Bower that was built up by the Bowerbird, decorated with the blue caps and other blue garbage stuff. We heard the call of the bowerbird approaching. But surprisingly the female of the **King Bird-of-Paradise** came to check the bower. Unfortunately, the flame bowerbird didn't approach the bower, as we waited for about 60 minutes in the high-humid conditions. Hailing from the rainforests of New Guinea, the Flame Bowerbird is immediately identified by its sunset colours, its crimson top half bleeding into its orange and yellow better half, its wings and tail dipped in inky black. (file photo of Flame Bowerbird on the left)





It was decided to take brunch at one of the other islands, again the same story of getting the feet dipped in the mud and taking a short boat ride to another island and then again getting off the boat in the same style. Basically these are not islands, but different areas in the various other tributaries of the Fly River. After the short ascend with the mud flooded boots, we approached a village, whereby we had our packed brunch. Along with the food, there was a treat of birds nearby. The **Brown Oriole, White-bellied Pitohui, Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo** and **Hooded Butcherbird** I could shot while having the food. **Eastern Hooded Pitta** (recently splitted from the Hooded Pitta) also came nearby but as usual, it's a shy bird, stayed in the dense undergrowth. Other fig-parrots were seen flying around, **Dusky-cheeked Fig-Parrot** and **Double-eyed Fig-Parrot.**





Hooded Butcherbird on left, **Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo** on right





Wompoo Fruit-Dove (left) **Frilled Monarch** (right)

Other birds seen were Doria's Goshawk, Golden Monarch, Spot-winged Monarch, Rufous-backed Fantail,Red-Cheeked Parrot, New Guinea Bronzewing, Dwarf Fruit-Dove, Zoe's Imperial-Pigeon, Stephan's Dove and some Papuan Mountain-Pigeons too.

After the brunch, it's the time to go for one of the most demanded bird of the area, the **Sclater's Crowned-Pigeon**. The locals have found a nest in where, the chick is born recently, and the adult sits in the nest to keep the new-born protected and warm. The nest was situated in the thick foliage and there was hardly any good angle to shot the bird and of course, to maintain the decorrum of birding, we couldn't have gone near the nest for the obvious reasons. We waited for a while, and suddenly the bird moved to a clear perch on our right and stayed there for just for a few couple of seconds, and luckily, I was the only one who could

capture this beauty. The beauty of this bird have been luring me since I first saw this one at the Jurong Bird Park at Singapore and then again at the Bali Bird Park in Indonesia. The photo of the chick was also taken after the adult flew from the nest, and left it unattended for a long time.



The light goes bad by 4 PM, and it was time to get back to the boat and then to the guest house. Heard the **King BoP**, **Twelve-wired BoP** and **Flame Bowerbird**, but no luck in seeing them all day today. So these 3 birds become our prime targets for the next day. Next day's plan was very rigorous and thereater cruising for about 80 mins in the main Fly River and then to its tributaries, we straightaway approached the area where the Twelve-wired BoP often displays in the early mornings. So we waited for about 10 minutes and in the meanwhile, we could hear the furious **Southern Cassowary** moving towards us. But then, the Twelve-wired BoP started performing its rituals, though the perch was very far from us, we could enjoy the dancing of this bird as we see in the *netflix* series "dancing with birds". The dancing pattern as I could recall was exactly the same as I saw in the documentary. Here's some photos that we coud manage. Not disappointed that we couldn't take great pictures of this bird, but very happy seeing its behavior, seeing it perform the ballerina when the female arrives. Gosh it was a great experience.









The next target is Flame Bowerbird again, our guide took us to a different blind which went passed through a village, after climbing the wooden bracket of stairs which were risky to climb with the heavy camera gears, and after about walking another 25 minutes in the mild rain conditions. We could see the **Zoe's Imperial-Pigeon, Varied Triller, Red-capped Flowerpecker, Black Sunbird, Arafura ShrikeThrush, Red-Flanked Lorikeet, Puff-backed Honeyeater, Lesser Black Coucal** and a **Variable ShrikeThrush.** On the way, we saw an Emperor Fairywren playing eye-spy with us. Then we approached the blind, and waited for over 3 hours, but there was simply no luck for the Bowerbird. It seemed that it comes to the bower frequently as the local villager mentioned that there has been change in the arrangements of the decoratives since yesterday. Like the one in the picture on the right, they keep on beautifying the bower to attract females to the bower by adding blue elements. We have been facing a lots of bad luck chances for many many other star species of the country. But as we know, every species has its own time for breeding or whatever other things like courtship, mating, hatching, feeding. Later after discussing this thing with the guide, he told me that the Flame bowerbirds show-up well in the months of May. Similar was the case with the Lesser Bird-of-Paradise, which we tried on the same lek for about 3 times consecutively in the Mount Hagen area. But anyways, this is a part of the game and we must not forget the many positive sides due to just a hand-few of such instances.



Now its time to go back to the last target, that is the King BoP, and the time was 2 pm and we just have a last couple of hours for trying our luck, so we were excited as the guide told that the probability of seeing this bird os 100 percent in the area, where he is gonna take us to. Thie time the ascend from the boat to the flat land on the island was tough and to my bad, I slipped and got myself and my photography gears dipped into the wet mud. I cleaned and we continued to the spot where we were supposed to get to. Ashamed of my clothes, I was walking after the other group members slowly, and then me and my guide saw the **Little Paradise-Kingfisher,** but couldn't even take a record picture of this. Then we had a glimpse of this **King**





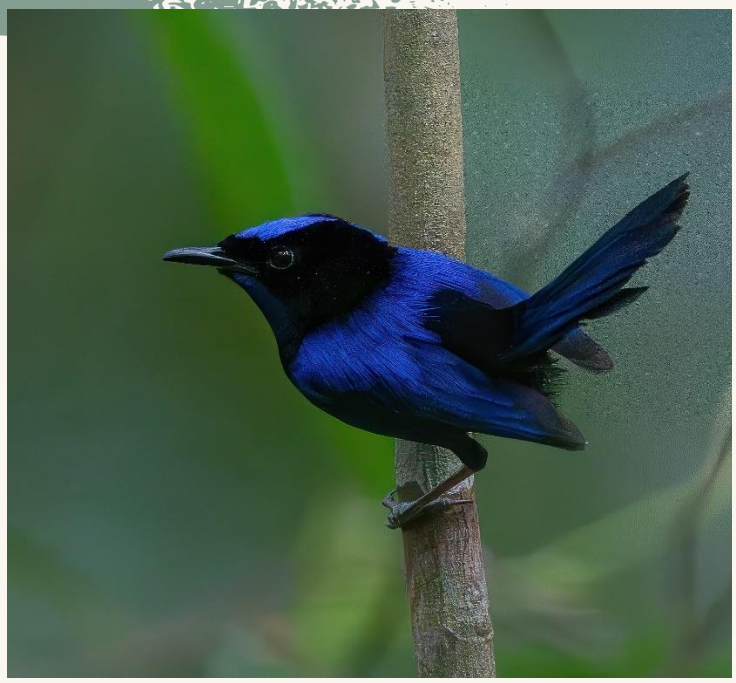
BoP, the smallest of all the Birds of Paradise species, hanging on the highest possible canopy of the tallest tree available in the forest. On seeing this behavior, I was pretty confident that we would not be able to photograph this bird too. But after the playback by our guide, the bird came down the tree at 80% level, still higher, but this time it was photographable. Had a great time shooting this brilliantly red- colored bird with blue legs and those amazing 2 tail wires ending in a metallic green snail-shaped disk. It was such an experience, watching them shaking those 2 tail feathers.

With the challenging canopy and poor light situations, I could manage to take some descent pictures, on the same spot, we heard the call of the **Common Paradise-Kingfisher** (which I had shot earlier in Halmahera islands of the North Maluku province of Indonesia). And immediately after that, the **Buff-breasted Paradise-Kingfisher**. In a quick while after that, our guide spotted a **Hook-Billed Kingfisher**. Therefore getting 4 new kingfishers in just a span of 300 metres. Next was the Emperor Fairywren, a dark blue small and skulky bird. Thereof, we move to a nearby place on the boat to witness some of the nocturnal birds.

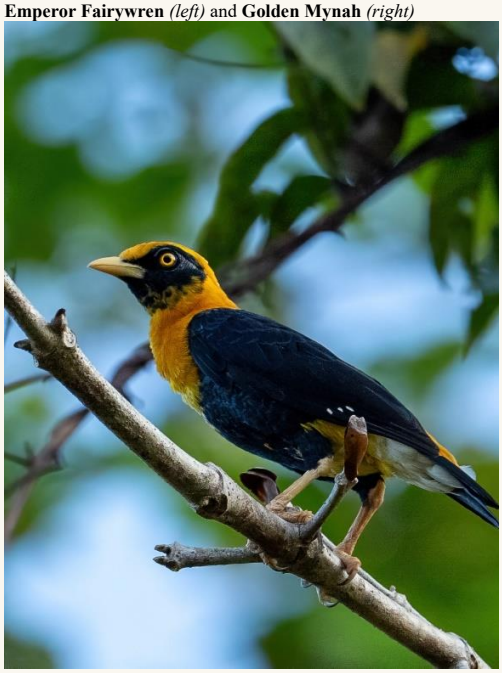
Left to right : **Hook-Billed Kingfisher, Common Paradise Kingfisher & Buff-Breasted Paradise Kingfisher**
Below : **King Bird-of-Paradise**







Emperor Fairywren *(left)* and **Golden Mynah** *(right)*



The dinner was arranged on the boat only as we could have got late due to our night birding session and since it was the last night in Kiunga, we could not miss some of the few star nocturnal species of this region. The nocturnal birding was not so great, we could only see Papuan Nightjar and the Starry Owlet-Nightjar even after a tough climb and walking in the dark. The only good thing we could do on that island was that we could attempt some astro photography there. We could see big bats on the way and a few crocs too. Reached the guest house at 10 PM after starting the day at 4 AM. Next day was the flight day from Kiunga to the capital city, Port Moresby, and is it possible to reach any destination without any hassles in Papua New Guinea.

In the morning, we got notified that the flight is delayed by an hour's time and accordingly we reached airport and got the news that the whole country is short of fuel for airlines. So all the domestic flights stay cancelled till further notice. Again our Indian friend from Port Moresby came out to rescue. Somehow arranged a 10-seater charter flight again from Kiunga to Port Moresby. The carrier didn't have sufficient fuel, therefore it stopped at a picturesque lakeside Moro Airport for refuelling and then an onward journey to Port Moresby via another hault at Mount Hagen. So we finally reached at the capital city after a lots of turbulences (not in flight but due to the unexpected delays).





Milky way shot by Dr. Sanjeeth Peter (left)
Papuan Crocodile (right)

Variarata National Park

Morning drive to the only National Park in the country, the beautiful uphill place had some incredible views of the city and the coastal region, It is situated on the outskirts of the capital city, Port Moresby. The prime target is Raggiana Bird-of-Paradise, which is also the national bird of the Papua New Guinea.



There was a flock of 8-9 birds, all messed up on a tree top among the dense branches, but still managed to take some pictures as the trees were not so tall and we could take advantage of the uphill terrain. It took about an hour's time to get satisfactory coverage of this important bird.

Thereafter we took a short drive to a nearby place to explore more birds like **Crinkle-Collared Manucode BoP, Pink-spotted Fruit-Dove, Barking Owls Orange-bellied Fruit-Dove, Rufous-bellied Kookaburra, Black-Backed Butcherbird, Green-backed Gerygone, White-crowned Cuckoo, Torresian Imperial-Pigeon, Papuan Dwarf-Kingfisher, Painted Quail-thrush** and **Growling Riflebird** (heard only). Brown-headed Paradise-Kingfisher was the bird which I was very desperate to photograph, but unfortunately, we could only see it, no photographs.

So it was time to bid goodbye to my other groupmates, as I shortened my tour by 1 day, it was really nice to be birding with all of them, our tour leader had been very cooperative and so do our local guides. The odyssey yielded some very fruitful results inspite of so many disturbances in the travel schedule, and of course, some disappointments in regards to the birds which we could not find or photograph. So this would be the end of the tour, and this short write-up.

Would like to thank CBC for encouraging me to compose this small blog. Thank you all for reading. Any queries regarding the trip or further planning, can mail me at **karrry@gmail.com**.







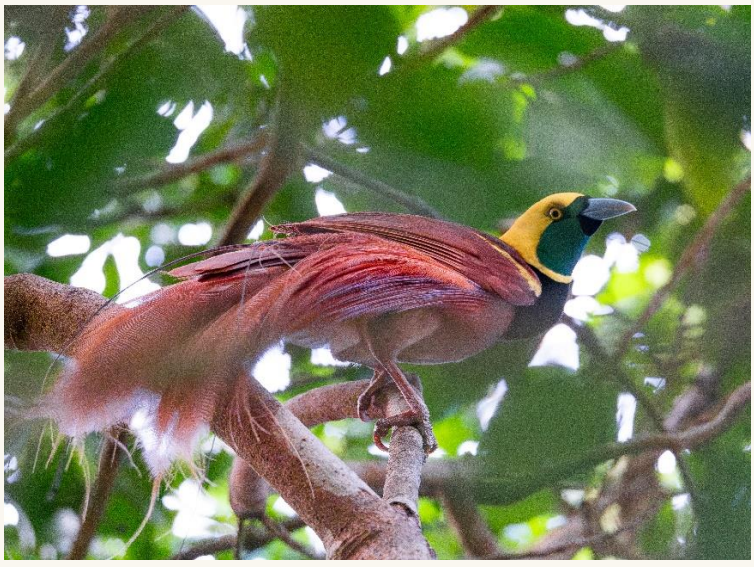
Crinkle-Collared BOP
Rufous-bellied Kookaburra
Papuan Dwarf Kingfisher



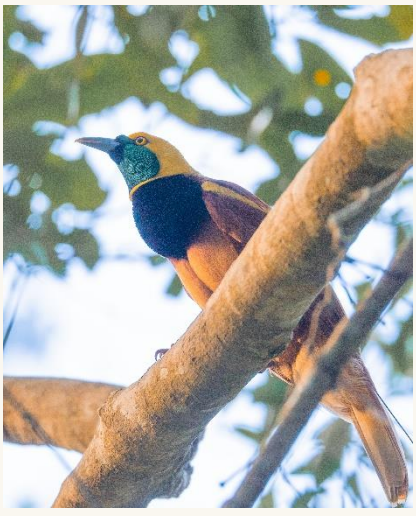




Pink-Spotted Fruit-Dove
Orange-bellied Fruit-Dove
Barking Owl



Raggiana Bird-of-Paradise (male & female)




Parental love
Parveen Nain
PHOTOGRAPHY

THE NEXT GENERATION

JUVENILES

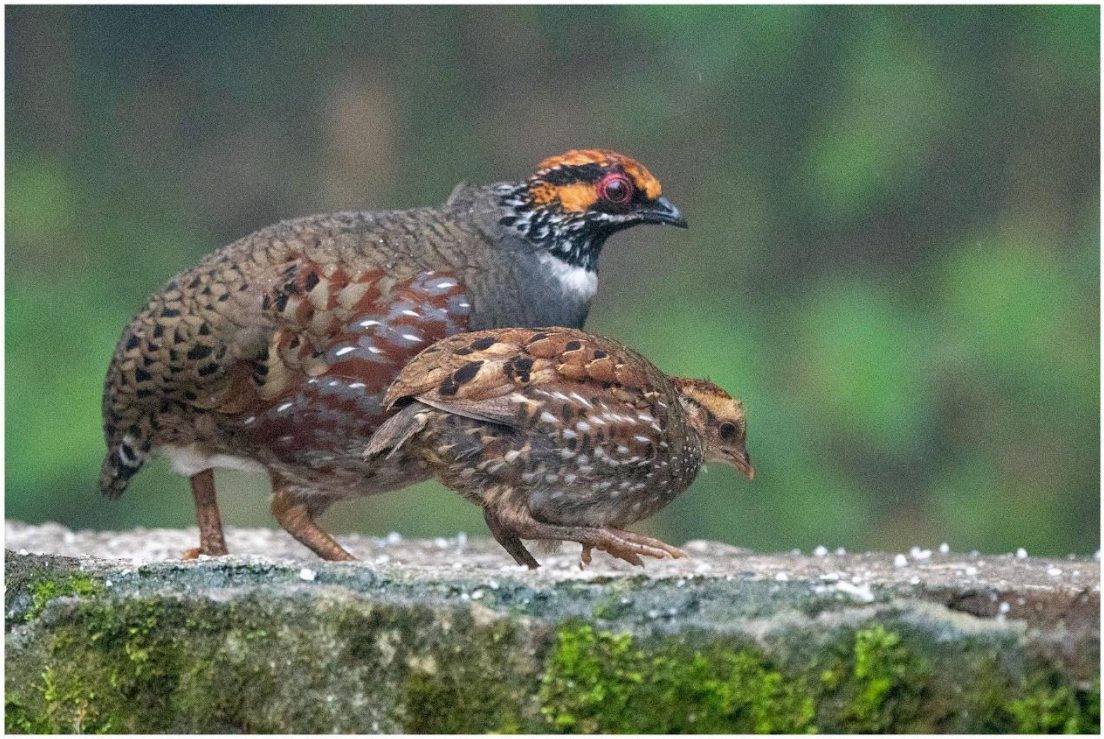
Parental love



Purple Sunbird *Alpana N P Singh*



Red-wattled Lapwing *Gurbaksh Sandhu*



Hill Partridge *Simmi Waraich*



Brown Dipper *Gurjit Virk*



Jacobin Cuckoo *Simmi Waraich*



Indian Roller Lalit Bansal



Blue-capped Rockthrush *Gurjit Virk*



Jungle Babblers *Sanjeev Kumar*



Lemon-rumped Warbler *Simmi Waraich*



Black-throated Bushtit Rima Dhillon

Photo Feature:

Yellow-wattled Lapwings



THE FAMILY – YELLOW-WATTLED LAPWING ON 4 MAY 2024



THE SAME FAMILY – YELLOW-WATTLED LAPWING ON 18 MAY 2024



THE SAME FAMILY OF YELLOW-WATTLEDLAPWING ON 25 MAY 2024.



FLEDGLING OF YELLOW-WATTLED LAPWING (25 may 2025)

Gurdip Bopara


Parveen Nain
PHOTOGRAPHY



A white throated kingfisher with a rare atch of a juvenile chequered keelback snake.

Photo credit: Anuj Jain

CHANDIGARH®

BIRD CLUB

Chandigarh Bird Club® is a registered organisation formed by a group of local birdwatchers. The idea is to record the local avi fauna, its habitats and help make the residents of Tri-City aware of birds in our region and protect them.

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 related to this activity.

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Vice President :- Narbir Singh Kahlon
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