

NORTH-WEST INDIA

THE PUNJAB, RAJASTHAN & GUJARAT

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2013

Tom & Julia Lawson and Peter Watson



Introduction:

Julia and I did the then standard birding circuit of Delhi, Bharatpur, Ranthambore, the Corbett National Park and Nainital in 1984 with a group of friends. We had not been back to India proper in the interim, although we had had two trips to Goa. With an improving infrastructure we decided that it was time for another visit, on this occasion to some of the other well-known wildlife areas in the sub-continent. Peter had never been to India so we persuaded him that this would be an ideal opportunity to sample some of the delights of this wonderful country. In the end as none of us were constrained by time we opted for a four-week customised trip that would include some sightseeing as well as visiting most of the best birding and wildlife areas in the north-west. Suffice to say that in comparison with 1984 there is now a very well-developed tourist infrastructure in most of India. We stayed in everything from maharajahs palaces to luxurious tented camps that would not have been out of place in parts of Africa. We also found the food to be much more to our liking this time around with some of the vegetarian meals in Gujarat being particularly enjoyable. Apart from one of the party having a 24-hour episode of the 'Rajasthan Runs' we had absolutely no other health problems. In the end we had a superb trip, with some amazing scenery and stunning birds and mammals. Perhaps the actual bird densities in early 2013 were slightly lower than usual as the monsoon in the autumn of 2012 had failed to deliver the normal amount of rain so everywhere, particularly in the Kutch, was very dry.

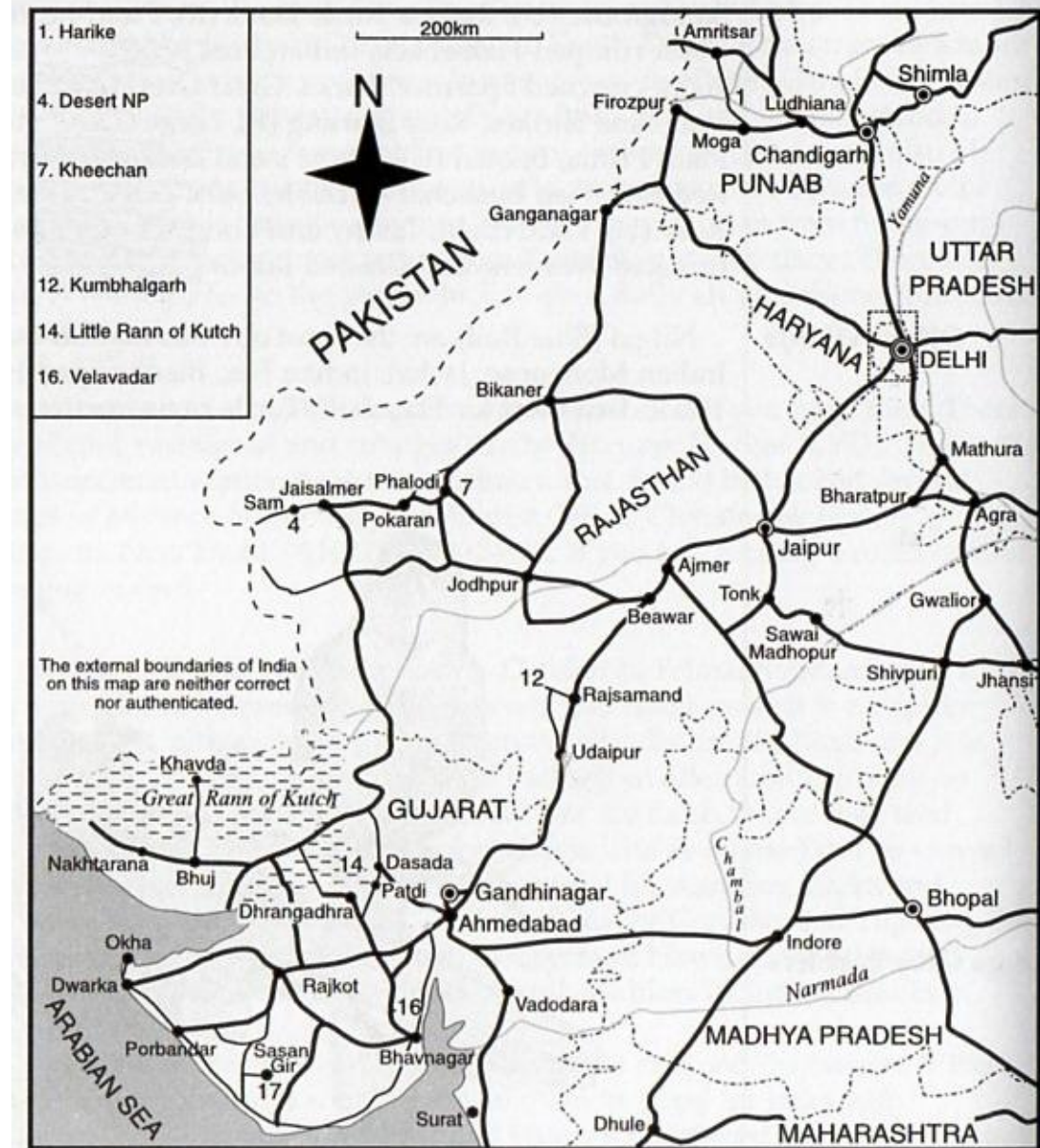
Logistics:

This was a customised trip organised for us personally by Jo Thomas, the owner of Wild About Travel (www.wildabouttravel.co.uk) and she did a superb job at what we considered to be a very reasonable cost. There was not a single hitch in the arrangements. Having done some background research ourselves, with her help we put together what in retrospect we think was an almost ideal trip. Travelling between the various birding sites often involved long journeys on roads that were not necessarily well maintained, were full of slow-moving lorries, and had people and cows wandering everywhere, even on sections of motorway-style carriageway. With no time constraints we were able to break up some of the longer journeys by overnighting en-route. This gave us the opportunity of visiting several interesting towns that we would otherwise have by-passed.

Our bird guide for the whole of the journey was Ranbir Singh from Bharatpur. He was an excellent birder with very sharp eyes, knew the sites and was obviously on friendly terms with most of the staff in the various national parks. His expertise in dealing with hotels, restaurants, jeep drivers and local guides greatly enhanced our enjoyment of the trip.

We had no problems with the weather and no rain. It was quite cold in Amritsar at night and in the early morning. Although sunny during the day a cold wind from the Himalayas kept the temperature down. It was also cold at night in the hills and on the early morning jeep rides but it became increasingly hot during the day as we progressed south.

NORTHWEST INDIA



Outline Itinerary:

- 22nd Jan.: Arrived Delhi after an overnight flight from London on Jet Airways. 5 hour wait at the airport for a 1 hour flight to Amritsar.
Overnight Country Inn Carlson, Amritsar.
- 23rd Jan.: Sightseeing in Amritsar.
Overnight Country Inn Carlson, Amritsar.
- 24th Jan.: Full day at Harike Wetlands south of Amritsar.
Overnight Country Inn Carlson, Amritsar.
- 25th Jan.: Full day at Harike Wetlands south of Amritsar.
Overnight Country Inn Carlson, Amritsar.
- 26th Jan.: Morning at Harike Wetlands. Evening train from Makhu near Harike to Bikaner.

- 27th Jan.: Arrived Bikaner 0330. Breakfast at Lalgarh Palace Hotel. Full day drive to Royal Desert Safari Camp, Sam, near Jaisalmer via Bikaner carcass dump and Keechan.
Overnight Royal Desert Safari Camp, Sam.
- 28th Jan.: Full day in Desert National Park.
Overnight Royal Desert Safari Camp, Sam.
- 29th Jan.: Morning Desert National Park. Afternoon sightseeing visit to Jaisalmer.
Overnight Royal Desert Safari Camp, Sam.
- 30th Jan.: Full day drive to Sardarsamand Lake Palace south of Jodhpur via Jodhpur carcass dump.
Overnight Sardarsamand Lake Palace.
- 31st Jan.: Full day drive to Kumbhalgarh.
Overnight Aodhi Hotel, Kumbhalgarh.
- 1st Feb.: Morning in Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary. Afternoon sightseeing visit to Kumbhalgarh Fort.
- 2nd Feb.: Full day drive to Mt. Abu via Banas Dam at Aruba.
Overnight Udaigarh Hotel, Mt. Abu.
- 3rd Feb.: Early morning birding at M. Abu then full day drive to Rann Riders at Dasada.
Overnight Rann Riders, Dasada.
- 4th Feb.: Morning and afternoon jeep safaris to the Little Rann of Kutch.
Overnight Rann Riders, Dasada.
- 5th Feb.: Morning jeep safari to the Little Rann of Kutch. Afternoon to the Nava Tavalu wetland.
Overnight Rann Riders, Dasada.
- 6th Feb.: Full day drive to Mandvi.
Overnight Mandvi Beach Resort.
- 7th Feb.: Morning on the beach at Modhva. Afternoon drive to CEDO, Moti Virani, Nakhtarana. Overnight CEDO.
- 8th Feb.: Morning jeep safari to the Great Rann of Kutch. Afternoon in surrounding countryside at Fotmahadev.
Overnight CEDO.
- 9th Feb.: Morning and afternoon jeep safaris to the Great Rann of Kutch.
Overnight CEDO.
- 10th Feb.: Morning in countryside at Fotmahadev. Afternoon drive to Gondal.
Overnight Orchard Palace Hotel, Gondal.
- 11th Feb.: Morning drive to Sasson Gir. Afternoon jeep safari to Gir National Park.
Overnight Gir Birding Lodge, Sasson Gir.
- 12th Feb.: Morning and afternoon jeep safaris to Gir National Park.
Overnight Gir Birding Lodge, Sasson Gir.
- 13th Feb.: Morning jeep safari to Gir National Park. Afternoon drive to Palitana.
Overnight Vijay Vilas, Adur, Palitana.
- 14th Feb.: Morning climb to Palitana Temples. Afternoon drive to Black Buck Lodge, Velavadar.
Overnight Black Buck Lodge, Velavadar.
- 15th Feb.: Morning and afternoon jeep safaris to Black Buck National Park.
Overnight Black Buck Lodge, Velavadar.
- 16th Feb.: Morning and afternoon jeep safaris to Black Buck National Park.
Overnight Black Buck Lodge, Velavadar.
- 17th Feb.: Morning birding round Black Buck Lodge. Afternoon drive to Ahmedabad.

Flight from Ahmedabad to Mumbai.

18th Feb.: Overnight flight from Mumbai to London on Jet Airways.

Diary:

Tues 22nd Jan:

After an uneventful overnight flight on Jet Airways from London Heathrow we arrived in Delhi on time to spend about five hours in a very modern airport waiting for our connecting flight north-west to Amritsar. Going through security before this internal flight I had a metal Allen key 2 inches long removed from my hand luggage as it was considered to be a tool. Security were not bothered by the spikes on the feet of my tripod! On arrival at Amritsar we were rapidly transported to our hotel where our bird guide, Ranbir was waiting to greet us and sort out the arrangements for the following day. The Country Inn Carlson was of high standard and we enjoyed our first plate of Indian food in their nice restaurant.

Wed. 23rd Jan.:

Our first full day in India was devoted to sightseeing in Amritsar, with a guided tour of the Golden Temple complex, and a visit to the Jaillianwala Bagh Park, the site of the massacre of some 400 protestors by British troops in 1919. The day finished with a drive to the Indian/Pakistan border at Attari-Wagah to witness the daily border-closing ceremony. However we did start the bird list with a total of 17 species, which included hundreds of Black Kites circling over the city, House Crows everywhere, Rose-ringed and Alexandrine Parakeets in the Golden Temple precincts and Black-winged Stilts on every small patch of stagnant polluted water.

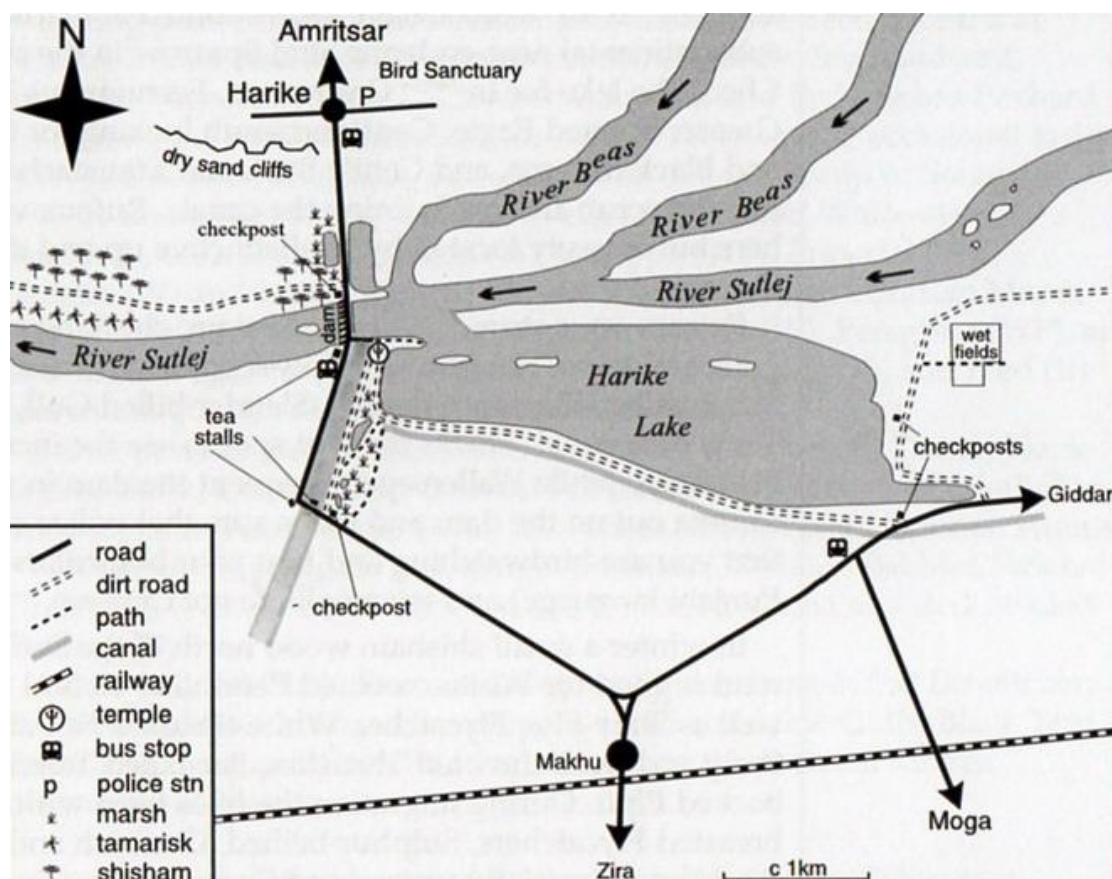


The Golden Temple

Thurs. 24th Jan.:

An early rise to arrive at the Harike Wetlands some 50kms. south of Amritsar just after dawn. However thick fog greeted us there and it didn't clear until well into the morning. The Harike Bird Sanctuary is a huge man-made lake at the confluence of the rivers Sutlej and Beas, and because of its winter concentrations of waterfowl is now designated as a Ramsar site. During the day we explored various riverbanks and the

lake itself. The whole area was heaving with birds. On the lake large numbers of wildfowl were overwhelmed by huge numbers of Coot. Great and Little Cormorants, with smaller numbers of the localised Indian Cormorant and numerous Oriental Darters, were perched on the waterside vegetation or fishing, while Brown-headed Gulls and River Terns cruised over the water. The reed beds and other emergent aquatic vegetation produced amongst other species Cinnamon Bittern, Purple Swampphen, Paddyfield, Clamorous Reed and Blyth's Reed Warblers, Moustached Warbler, Yellow-bellied, Graceful, Ashy and Plain Prinias, and Striated and Jungle Babblers. In slightly drier vegetation near the Sikh Gurdwara we located a small group of Sind Sparrows and several White-crowned Penduline Tits. A small pond surrounded by overgrown vegetation provided mega views of a Ruddy-breasted Crake.



Fri.25th Jan.:

Again an early rise to be at Harike shortly after dawn, but today there was only a slight mist over the lake when we arrived and this rapidly cleared. A walk along the track to the boat landing gave superb views of various small warblers including Hume's Leaf Warbler and Mountain Chiffchaff. One of today's target species was the localised endemic Rufous-vented Prinia and a short playback brought a bird out of the reeds where it obligingly posed for photographs. Later in the morning we were privileged to have a 3 hour boat trip up the Sutlej River and back across Harike Lake which provided us with wonderful close-up views of many waterbirds including Brown Crake, White-tailed Lapwing, and Pied Kingfisher. Roosting on a sandbank near the junction of the Sutlej with the Beas were amongst other species 3 Comb Duck, 50 plus Greater Flamingoes, 4 Little and 20 plus Temminck's Stints, 4 Yellow-legged, 1 Caspian and 6 Pallas's Gulls, 10 plus Whiskered and 30 plus River Terns. On

the way back from the boat landing to the main road we had excellent views of a female Slaty-blue Flycatcher and photographed a Spotted Owlet perched in a tree. An area of woodland west of the main road was swarming with small warblers, mainly Hume's Leaf Warbler and Chiffchaff, and we accidentally disturbed a roost of Fruit Bats. A flock of over 500 Red-crested Pochard in a patch of open water visible from the main road was an impressive sight, and a reflection of the density of wildfowl at Harike.



Rufous-vented Prinia

Sat.26th Jan.:

A third morning at Harike, and another walk along the track to the boat landing revealed a second female Slaty-blue Flycatcher, and further superb views of Rufous-vented Prinia. A Verditer Flycatcher was very obliging, and we also added Plain Leaf Warbler to the bird list. A lunch stop on the lakeside was enlivened by great views of a male Black-rumped Flameback in an adjacent tree. In the afternoon we drove about 10kms.south to the town of Makhu to catch the 3 o'clock train to Bikaner. In the event it was over two and a half hours late, departing as it was getting dark, and we eventually arrived in Bikaner at 0300 on the 27th. Luckily we had our own small compartment with four bunks so were able to lie down and sleep most of the way.

Sun.27th Jan.:

Arriving at the Lalgarh Palace Hotel a huge ex-maharajah's complex in Bikaner at 0330 we managed three hours sleep in palatial suites before breakfast. Then it was onwards south and west to the Desert National Park near Jaisalmer. The first prolonged stop of the morning was at the carcass dump on the outskirts of Bikaner, but not before we had ticked-off and photographed a flock of over 30 Yellow-footed Green Pigeons roosting in a tree in the middle of the town, and several quite large flocks of Yellow-eyed Doves just before we reached the dump. The carcass dump was amazing. Since the problems with the veterinary drug diclorfenac killing off the vultures in India feral dogs have proliferated to take over the role of scavengers, and they were very much in evidence. However at least 100 Griffon and 1 Long-billed Vultures were fighting for the food, mixed in with an excess of a thousand Egyptian Vultures. Amongst the feeding and roosting vultures we estimated that there were at least 1000 Steppe and 30 Greater Spotted Eagles. We managed to pick out a single

juvenile Eastern Imperial Eagle in the crowd. Tearing ourselves away from this astonishing spectacle we drove across the Thar Desert towards Jaisalmer. In the Phalodi area we stopped to photograph 4 Cream-coloured Coursers by the roadside and shortly afterwards a flock of 50 plus Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse flew over. Keechen is the famous village where the locals feed a wintering flock of Demoiselle Cranes which can number in excess of 40,000 birds. The actual feeding frenzy takes place in the morning, but large flocks of birds remain in the vicinity of the village throughout the day and we had superb views of many birds both on the ground and in flight. On through Jaisalmer and we arrived at the Royal Desert Safari Camp at Sam just as it was getting dark. This is one of a series of up-market tented camps, with all mod.cons., strung out along the road going west from Jaisalmer towards the Pakistan border.



Greater Spotted Eagle



Demoiselle Cranes

Mon.28th Jan.:

Another early morning rise to get a quick breakfast before the short journey to the headquarters of the Desert National Park. The target bird here was Great Indian Bustard, and after a two hour search we located a group of 8 birds. The views on the ground and in flight were somewhat distant, but at least they were on the trip list! However the striking birds in the Park were the larks. There were huge flocks of Greater Short-toed Lark wheeling about, with occasional smaller flocks of Bimaculated Lark. Two separate male Stoliczka's Bushchats were located among the various other and quite numerous chats and wheatears. In the late afternoon we had a further search for the Bustards and got much closer views of 5 birds. With dusk approaching, and as we were leaving, 12 Cream-coloured Coursers flew in.



Greater Short-toed and Bimaculated Larks

Tues.29th Jan.:

A second morning in the Desert National Park, but this time our mode of transport was by camel cart rather than car. Not an ideal way to cover a lot of ground, but with better all-round visibility. A distant view of a Red-headed Vulture was our only sighting of the trip. A pair of Rufous-fronted Prinias posed for photographs. As we had already seen our target species we decided that an afternoon sightseeing visit to Jaisalmer was in order. On the way there we stopped at a stony area with some rocky outcrops. This was known to be a site for Red-tailed Wheatear and after a bit of searching we located a somewhat distant female. While trying to get closer we almost fell over a pair of Desert Larks. In Jaisalmer a walk through the narrow lanes of the Fort lined with golden-honeyed sandstone houses and temples was fascinating, and as this was likely to be the last major tourist town we would visit we also indulged in a bit of souvenir shopping. We were back at Sam in time to climb the sand dunes to witness, along with hordes of other people and camels, the sun setting in the west.



Desert Lark

Wed.30th Jan.:

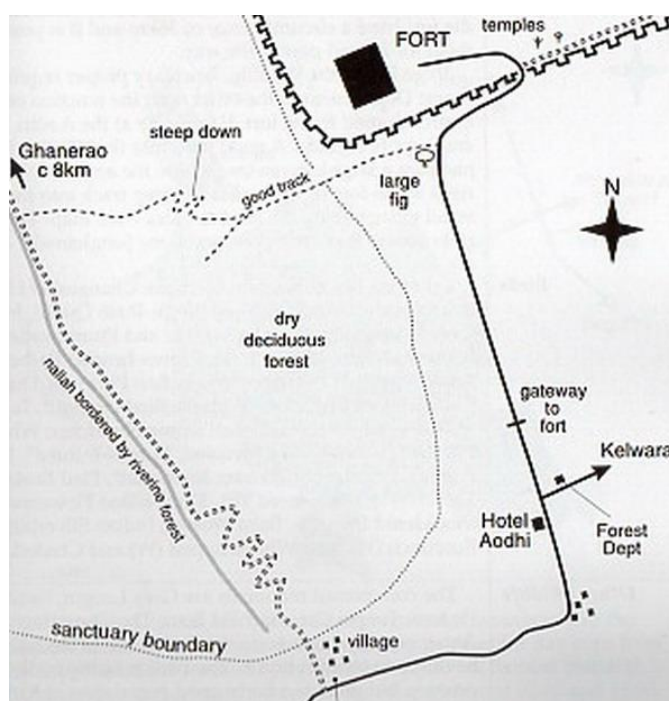
Today we moved on towards the Aravalli Hills and Kumbhalgarh, but broke up the long journey by an overnight stop south of Jodhpur. The morning started with a visit to a rocky area of scrubby desert just to the west of Sam, and a putative search for Indian Eagle Owl. However we did turn up a flock of over 20 Trumpeter Finches and had superb views of up to 4 Desert Warblers. Mixed flocks of Greater Short-toed and Bimaculated Larks were much in evidence. On the way back to Jaisalmer we again stopped at the Red-tailed Wheatear site and on this occasion had very nice views of a male. After a long drive south-east we diverted to a carcass dump near Jodhpur brought to our attention by a kettle of vultures and eagles over it. Huge numbers of Egyptian Vultures were present on the ground along with about 10 Griffons and a single Cinereous, but the eagles were less impressive with only some 100 Steppes and a fly-over Imperial. 50 Black-headed Ibis were scrabbling for food with hundreds of Cattle Egrets and House Crows. A flock of 50 plus Rose-coloured Starlings was a new trip tick. Like Bikaner feral dogs were everywhere. 40 kms. south of Jodhpur down a single track road and apparently in the middle of nowhere we arrived at the Sardarsamand Lake Palace Hotel, the holiday home of the Maharajah of Jodhpur. The actual hotel was in what appeared to be a converted stable block and separate from the enormous 1930's building perched on the edge of a high cliff overlooking a huge lake. We were the only guests and were waited on by liveried retainers. Our suites (huge bedroom, dressing room and huge bathroom) overlooked the lake. Later that evening a calling Indian Eagle Owl was seen on one of the gateposts.



Desert Warbler

Thurs.31st Jan.:

Eagle Owls were calling intermittently during the night and before breakfast we had seen and photographed three different birds perched on the buildings. The lake had a nice collection of common waterbirds, and several Black-crowned Night and Indian Pond Herons flew past our vantage point on the hotel balcony. Sadly the palace grounds had been abandoned, but in their heyday must have been very impressive. There were Peacocks everywhere, and lots of other scrub and woodland birds to keep us occupied for an hour or two. Leaving Sardarsamand Palace in mid-morning we passed through Pali and stopped briefly at a large pond on the outskirts of Nadol to tick off some 15 Spoonbills and a similar number of Spot-billed Ducks. Two Yellow-wattled Lapwings on rough ground a little further on were our first for the trip. The lunch stop was in a very nice restaurant in the Ranakpur Hill Resort. Then it was a long, twisting, uphill climb to Kumbhalgarh, with small groups of Langur Monkeys lining the road waiting for food handouts from passing motorists. Stops en route produced White-eyed Buzzard, Crested Serpent Eagle, Common Hawk Cuckoo, Black-rumped Flameback, Brown-headed Barbet, Rock Chat and White-bellied Drongo. Shortly before arriving in the early evening at the Aodi Hotel we passed a small reed bed which was obviously a weaver roost, but was also being used by Crested Buntings, with several birds perched on wires above the vegetation before disappearing into it. The evening was rounded off by a sound and light show in Kumbhalgarh Fort.



Fri.1st Feb.:

From the impressively terraced and very comfortable Aodhi Hotel the plan for the morning was to do a circular anti-clockwise walk through the Kumbhalgarh National Park particularly to find White-capped Bunting, Red Spurfowl and Grey Junglefowl. All three turned out to be somewhat elusive! The White-capped Bunting is a ground-loving species and we eventually located several distantly on the slopes below the Fort. After a very long descent down a steep winding path we arrived in a heavily vegetated valley with a small stream running through it. Over the next hour we had

fleeting glimpses of both the Spurfowl and the Junglefowl before climbing up a twisting track to return to the Aodhi Hotel for a late lunch. However in the valley we did come across a bird party and had a male Yellow-crowned Woodpecker and a pair of Black-rumped Flamebacks in the same field of view. In the late afternoon we had a guided tour round the huge Fort which helped to make sense of the sound and light show we had seen the previous evening. A Blue Rock Thrush was perched on the stonework, a Peregrine came swooping through between the buildings and we had superb views of a Bonelli's Eagle in flight.



Bonelli's Eagle

Sat.2nd Feb.:

During the early morning exploration of an area of small fields and scrubby woodland near the Aodi Hotel another Bonelli's Eagle gave excellent views as it flew over. Several White-capped Buntings were also located here and gave much better views than yesterday. Greenish and Sulphur-bellied Warblers were about. A Jungle Prinia was elusive but was eventually seen reasonably well. Then it was off to Mount Abu across a relatively flat plain. A stop to photograph a waterwheel being turned by oxen resulted in the finding of Jungle Owlet, the only one for the trip, sitting in a tree by the side of the road. The lunch stop at Arbuda, on a section of an Indian-style motorway complete with its cows and the odd lorry on the wrong side of the carriageway, was opposite the Banas Dam. The water level in this huge shallow lake seemed to be somewhat low, but like almost all large stretches of water we visited it was heaving with birds. The muddy shores had a nice variety of waders including many Kentish Plovers and Ruff as well as numerous Wood Sandpipers and Spotted Redshanks. Small Pratincoles were hawking for insects along the water's edge. Roosting on a sandbank were over 1500 Great White Pelicans with a few Dalmatian Pelicans mixed in with them. Painted and Woolly-necked Storks, Spoonbills, Black and Black-headed Ibis all added to the throng. Large rafts of wildfowl and Coot were scattered across the water. Reluctantly we moved on as we had a long climb up a very busy road to get to Mt.Abu, the only hill station in Rajasthan and a very popular holiday resort. Having arrived in the late afternoon a quick visit before dark to the stake-out site for the Green Avadavat failed to produce the bird.

Sun.3rd Feb.:

Early morning and we were back at the Green Avadavat site. It didn't take too long to

locate a flock of these little gems feeding in the courtyard of a small farm. Squeezing between the penned livestock, and much to the bewilderment of the locals, this scarce and localised endemic was photographed at almost point-black range. Then it was back down the winding road to the plain avoiding on the blind corners a continual stream of traffic going uphill. Shortly afterwards we crossed into Gujarat, a 'dry' and mainly vegetarian state, and one of the industrial powerhouses of India. Arriving at Rann Riders, Dasada in the late afternoon we had time for a short walk round the surrounding fields, one of them full of Yellow Wagtails of various races. Our accommodation at Rann Riders was in superb en-suite safari-style tents. Sadly the previously reported Scops Owls had deserted the camp.



Green Avadavat

Mon.4th Feb.:

An early morning start for our first jeep safari to the Little Rann of Kutch, about an hour west of Rann Riders. In spite of four hours driving around the very dry, dusty semi-desert we failed to locate any MacQueen's Bustards, but amongst other goodies found 5 Hoopoe Larks, 2 being very photogenic, and near one of the small salt-extraction works at least six Sand Larks. Like the Desert National Park there were numerous large flocks of Greater Short-toed Larks flying about. A large pond next to a village at the entrance to the Rann had a flock of over 50 Demoiselle Cranes, with many Ruff and some 12 Black-tailed Godwits at the water's edge. On a tree opposite the pond an adult Spotted Owlet was feeding a very well-grown youngster. In the late afternoon we went to the Vanod 'wetlands', but as a result of the poor 2012 monsoon these were totally dry! However we did manage to get some very nice views of 2 Short-eared Owls, and both Pallid and Montagu's Harriers were quartering the ground. With the onset of darkness spotlighting revealed at least 6 Syke's Nightjars, several of which could have been caught on the ground, being dazzled by the beam.



Hoopoe Lark

Tues.5th Feb.:

A second attempt to find MacQueen's Bustard in the Little Rann. Thanks to acquiring not one but two punctures while driving around we were forced to wait for a second tyre to arrive from Rann Riders. Walking about while the spare was on the way a distant bird was spotted in the long grass. Once again mobile the bird was relocated and gave good views both on the ground and in flight. Quite sizeable numbers of Asiatic Wild Ass were noted during the morning although none were very approachable. On the way back to Rann Riders we passed a grassy field adjacent to the road with 3 Sarus Cranes, our only sighting of this species. In the late afternoon we again headed for a wetland, this time Nava Talav. This was another lake heaving with birds, but with much less water than usual we were able to drive over hard-baked mud almost to the water's edge to view the avian spectacle. Maybe 6000 Flamingoes, 60% Greater and 40% Lessers, 500 Greater and 50 Dalmatian Pelicans, very large numbers of Shoveler among the wildfowl, and over 100 Avocets associating with various other waders. A truly awesome number of birds!

Wed.6th Feb.:

Perhaps the longest day's driving of the trip, going from Dasada to Mandvi on the coast of the Gulf of Kutch. Much of the journey was through either large industrialised complexes, particularly round Kandia, or huge areas of working salt pans. Our progress round Kandia was particularly slow as a major road-building project to create a motorway was causing chaos. Going through Dharanghadri we stopped by a bridge in the centre of the town to admire a group of Streak-throated Martins, and had wonderful views of a female Asian Koel and a Blyth's Reed Warbler in an adjacent patch of scrub. There were small flocks of waders on many of the salt pans next to the road, Marsh Sandpipers being particularly common. One derelict pan contained at least 70 Reef Herons of both phases, mixed in with Great, Intermediate and Little Egrets and Grey Herons. Every time one of the birds extracted a morsel of food from the mud there was a major fight to deprive the finder of the booty! A brief stop at the bridge over the polluted tidal river in the middle of Mandvi added Grey Plover to the list, and in the late afternoon light other common waders provided great photographic opportunities. The Mandvi Beach Resort was 3 miles west out of town, and consisted of a group of luxurious en-suite tents in the dunes just behind a 5-mile long, glorious, deserted sandy beach.



Herons and Egrets

Thurs. 7th Feb.:

The site for this morning was the beach at Modhva, a wonderful, extensive, empty sandy strand some 5 miles east of Mandvi. We first stopped at the bridge over the river in the centre of Mandvi where we had seen some waders the previous evening. What a change! This large tidal area was now covered in roosting gulls. A rough count revealed in excess of 3000 Brown-headed Gulls. Scanning through the flock we picked out small numbers of Black-headed, Slender-billed, Herring, Caspian, and Heuglin's Gulls. A real gullfest! An hour later most of the birds had disappeared, presumably to forage elsewhere. At Modhva we managed to bog the car down in soft sand. Our plight was totally ignored by some passing locals, but with the aid of bits of driftwood we got it back onto a firm track. A two mile walk along the beach failed to produce the expected Crab Plovers, but we were there at high tide. Three other birders saw 13 birds at low tide the following day. Behind the beach are large areas of permanent brackish water surrounded by mangroves and the birds probably retreat there when not feeding. However we were rewarded with superb views of a gathering of over 100 Pallas's Gulls of all ages and states of plumage, several Lesser Crested, Gull-billed and Little Terns and a flock of over 1000 Greater Flamingoes. Along the beach we also found Greater Thicknees, roosting flocks of Sanderlings, many Sand Plovers and the odd Terek Sandpiper. Then on to CEDO (Centre for Desert and Ocean) at Moti Virani near Nakhtarana. On the way we passed a bare field with 5 Indian Coursers, our only sighting of this species. Just before Nakhtarana at a village called Fotmahadev a rocky, scrubby area held at least 6 Syke's Larks, all very approachable.



Pallas's Gulls

Fri.8th Feb.:

A pre-dawn departure from CEDO to be at the famed Grey Hypocolius site at Fulay hopefully in time to see the roosting birds coming out of the bushes to feed. After a long wait a fly-over male gave very brief views before diving into the vegetation and out of sight. In spite of the help of the local expert we couldn't locate any other birds, and after a somewhat frustrating wander through thick scrub it was on to the Banni Grasslands in the Great Rann of Kutch. While waiting for the Hypocolius there was a regular passage of Pallid and Montagu's Harriers going from their roost in a distant wetland to feed on the Grasslands. We had heard from some other birders that they had seen 27 Sociable Plovers on the Grasslands the day before, but in spite of searching the appropriate area we failed to find them. However Common Cranes were in their thousands, digging into the rock hard earth in search of succulent tubers, each one hardly bigger than a lentil. Incredibly hard work! Like the Little Rann there were huge flocks of Greater Short-toed Larks everywhere. In the late afternoon we returned to the Fotmahadev area. The Syke's Larks were again cooperative and in some thicker scrub we called out several White-naped Tits. Syke's Warblers were also in the bushes. In a more rocky area a Painted Sandgrouse exploded from the ground directly in front of us to give a rear-end view as it rapidly disappeared round the side of a small hill.



Sykes's Lark

Sat.9th Feb.:

Another post-dawn vigil at the Grey Hypocolius site, but on this occasion not a whisper of a bird. However an adult Sirkeer Malkoha perched up on a bush in the early morning light was very photogenic. A long search of the Banni Grasslands again failed to find any Sociable Plovers. On the way back to CEDO for lunch we stopped at some small polluted pools next to a village to photograph at almost point blank range a Jack Snipe and a Green Sandpiper. After a siesta we were out on the Banni Grasslands for the third time but again no Sociable Plovers (14 were seen at the site the following day!). However we counted in excess of 80 Greater and Lesser Sand Plovers in a loose flock which had not been there earlier in the day. A quite large rocky hill in the middle of the flat plain provided some very nice views of Red-tailed and Desert Wheatears and a male Blue Rock Thrush. As sunset approached there was a regular passage of harriers and high in the sky numerous large flocks of Common Cranes, bugling away, passed over, all on their way to roost in a wetland somewhere to the east.



Red-tailed Wheatear



Desert Wheatear

Sun.10th Feb.:

On an early morning return visit to the Fotmahadev area we disturbed what was probably the same Painted Sandgrouse that we had seen two days earlier, but the view was no better on this occasion. Grey-necked Buntings and Marshall's Ioras were much in evidence and we had nice views of a further two White-naped Tits. After an early lunch it was on the road to Gondal. This took us round the top end of the Gulf of Kutch and past areas of working salt pans as far as the eye could see, all well populated with waders, herons and storks. A stop at a level crossing on the outskirts of Morbi was enlivened by a flock in excess of 300 Rose-coloured Starlings sitting on the adjacent telephone wires. It was dark by the time we arrived in Gondal and we eventually found the Orchard Palace Hotel, again a conversion of part of a maharajah's huge residence.



White-naped Tit

Mon.11th Feb.:

After a leisurely breakfast and a visit to the Maharajah's large classic car collection, mainly 1930's and 1940's American models, we visited a Hindu Temple complex in the middle of Gondal. Then it was a fairly short drive to Sassan Gir to check in at the Gir Birding Lodge in time for lunch. The Gir National Park is the last refuge of the Asiatic Lion and is a major tourist destination, with a whole raft of hotels in Sassan Gir offering jeep safaris to view the animals. However the jeep safaris are very tightly controlled by the park authorities, with only certain designated routes and defined times. Ranbir made sure that the jeep drivers were aware that we were seriously interested in the birds as well as the mammals, and that we wanted to stop if we saw anything interesting. As a result we overstayed our time in the park and caused some problems for the drivers! Our first visit in the late afternoon added several Tickell's Blue and Asian Paradise Flycatchers to the list. Coming round a corner of this forested hilly sanctuary we were greeted by the sight of 14 jeeps full of noisy Indians looking at two female Asiatic Lions asleep by the trackside! Eventually the jeeps moved on leaving us on our own. The lionesses then decided to go for a walk and literally passed within touching distance of the side of our jeep. Driving around we encountered large numbers of Spotted Deer, Sambar and Nilgai, so there is certainly no shortage of food for the lions.



Asiatic Lion

Tues.12th Feb.:

The second of our Gir safaris, this time in the early morning. Paradise and Tickell's Flycatchers were again in evidence as well as Red-breasted Flycatchers, Common Ioras and Chestnut-shouldered Petronias. An Indian Thickknee by the side of the track stood and looked at us as it had its photograph taken. Back at the Birding Lodge sky-watching from the balcony in the heat of the day added Woolly-necked Stork, Greater Spotted Eagle, an Indian Vulture and 4 Oriental Honey Buzzards to the daily log. The afternoon jeep safari took a different route, passing a very large partly dried-out dam. Dalmatian Pelicans were on the water, various waders were feeding along the water's edge carefully avoiding the hauled-out Mugger Crocodiles, and Pallas's Gulls were sitting on the exposed sandbanks. One of the park rangers had found a lioness half asleep next to her kill, a Spotted Deer, so we joined the queue to view the sight at close range. Once again last out of the park we passed two Greater Coucals in full view in the middle of a bare field.



Tickell's Blue Flycatcher

Wed.13th Feb:

Our final jeep safari. We managed a total of 8 Oriental Honey Buzzards during the morning and also came across a single Common Buzzard. We did, however, miss the two Painted Sandgrouse seen by some friends of ours on a rubbish tip near one of the small farmhouses that are scattered throughout the park. In the late morning we set off for the drive to Palitana, arriving at Vijay Vilas just outside the town in the late afternoon. This small palace was built in 1906, and is now run as a hotel by the granddaughter of the original owner. Full of the original furniture there is a photograph and a letter from Lord Louis Mountbatten dated 1947, proudly displayed, thanking her Father for teaching him how to play polo. Vijay Vilas sits in beautiful countryside beneath the western end of the 500m high Shatrunjaya Hill, one of Jainism's holiest pilgrimage sites.

Thurs.14th Feb.:

Another sightseeing day, with a climb to the temples on top of Shatrunjaya. We opted for the longer, some 3500 steps, but easier route up from Palitana. Arriving at the base of the steps we were besieged by both men and women trying to sell us a 'dholi'. This is a chair, carried on poles by two or four people depending on the weight of the occupant, to take you up to the temples if you can't or don't want to walk. We decided to walk and it took us nearly three hours, but this was partly because there were bird-feeding trays well provided with food hung from trees all the way up. These were attracting lots of Prinias as well as Babblers, Parakeets and Petronias. After pursuing a Jungle Prinia through the vegetation at Khumbalgarh these were common here and out in the open all along the stairway! The temples were heaving both with adherents, dressed appropriately as a major religious festival was taking place, and with ordinary Indian tourists, a quite bizarre mix. We returned to Vijay Vilas by the shorter but steeper route, only 2700 steps, on the other side of the hill. Then it was off north to Black Buck Lodge at Velavadar, our final destination, in time for a very late lunch. Black Buck Lodge is a delightful spot with luxurious stone-built marble-floored chalets surrounding a small pond and a large restaurant. It is sited across the road from the entrance to the Black Buck National Park. Rain Quail flushed from the long grass between the buildings, and Rufous-tailed Larks were running along the paths. The Park is said to have the largest Harrier roost in the world, and in the evening there was a steady stream of both Pallid and Montagu's Harriers flying over

the buildings in the direction of the Park. As elsewhere everything seemed very dry, and the harrier numbers here generally seemed to be quite low in comparison with what we had expected. Presumably this year many of the birds were wintering where food was more readily available.



Rufous-fronted Prinia

Fri.15th Feb.:

Like Gir access to the Black Buck National Park is very strictly controlled although there are many less visitors than at Gir. This very large area of custard-coloured grassland stretching between two seasonal rivers is famous for its Blackbuck, beautifully patterned antelopes, and you can't miss them driving around the Park. As well as these abundant, striking mammals we also saw numerous Nilgai, parties of Wild Boar, an Indian Hare, a Golden Jackal and 2 Wolves on our morning jeep safari. We eventually caught-up with Indian Spotted Eagle, and had a very close Short-toed Snake Eagle. On a second late afternoon safari we found 2 Indian Spotted Eagles, and a dark-phased Booted Eagle. Both Pallid and Montagu's Harriers were about, but not in particularly large numbers in spite of the claim of a huge Harrier roost. However the sight of the afternoon was a Wolf that crossed the road in front of us and then sat down for several minutes about 20 yards from the track while it looked at us before finally walking off into the bush.



Grey Wolf

Sat. 16th Feb.:

Further jeep safaris to the Park in the early morning and late afternoon didn't add any new species to the bird list, but we couldn't resist taking further photos of the stunning and abundant Blackbuck.



Blackbuck

Sun. 17th Feb.:

We were definitely winding down after a long and highly successful trip. In the early afternoon we set off from Velavadar to Ahmedabad to catch the flight to Mumbai and onwards back to London. A mile up the road from Black Buck Lodge we had a nice sighting of a Striped Hyena in the adjacent National Park, a species we had missed on our various jeep safaris there. Driving through the sprawling city of Ahmedabad we were impressed with the huge number of Black Kites circling over the buildings, and with the flocks of Rose-coloured Starlings wherever there was open space. Logistically the only downside to the whole trip was the scrum to get through immigration at Mumbai airport. We were trying to leave the country but had to queue for over an hour to be allowed to go through to the departure lounge! Jet Airways left on time and we arrived in London to be greeted by a freezing, cloudy morning, a shock after the fine mainly hot weather we had experienced in India.

Species List:

Painted Francolin. *Frankolinus pictus*.

Excellent views of a single bird by the side of a pond on the road between Kumbhalgarh and Arbuda on the 2nd Feb.

Grey Francolin. *Frankolinus pondicerianus*:

Common and widespread from the Punjab to Gujarat, with numerous sightings on most days.

Rain Quail. *Coturnix coromandelica*.

Up to four birds flushed from long grass between the chalets at Black Buck Lodge on the 14th and 17th Feb. Almost all were seen in flight.

Red Spurfowl. *Galloperdix spadicea*.

Very brief views of at least 4 birds in the valley in the Kumbhalgarh National Park on the 1st Feb.

Grey Junglefowl. *Gallus sonneratii*.

Very brief views of at least 5 birds in the valley in the Kumbhalgarh National Park on the 1st Feb.

Indian Peafowl. *Pavo cristatus*.

Widespread in Rajasthan and Gujarat being particularly locally

common at Sardarsamand Palace and at Khumbalgarh, with more than 20 birds in a small field there on the 1st Feb.

Greylag Goose.*Anser anser*.

Common at Harike and on lakes/ponds in the Little Rann of Kutch.

Bar-headed Goose.*Anser indicus*.

Less numerous at Harike than Greylag Goose, but substantial numbers at Banas Dam on the 2nd Feb. and at Nava Talav on the 5th Feb.

Comb Duck.*Sarkidiornis melanotos*.

3 at Harike on the 25th Jan. and 4 at Banas Dam on the 2nd Feb.

Ruddy Shelduck.*Tadorna ferruginous*.

Up to 50 birds at Harike and Banas Dam. Single figures on lakes/ponds in the Little Rann of Kutch.

Gadwall.*Anas strepera*.

Common at Harike, and present in variable numbers on all wetlands in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Eurasian Wigeon.*Anas Penelope*.

Common at Harike and present in small numbers on most wetlands in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Mallard.*Anas platyrhynchos*.

3 at Harike on the 25th Jan. was the only sighting.

Indian Spot-billed Duck.*Anas poecilorhyncha*.

Common at Harike. Present in variable numbers on most lakes and ponds in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Northern Shoveler.*Anas clypeata*.

Common at Harike and present in variable numbers on most large lakes in Rajasthan and Gujarat. Very large numbers ?500 plus on Nava Talav on the 5th Feb.

Northern Pintail.*Anas acuta*.

Variable small numbers at Harike and on most wetlands in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Garganey.*Anas querquedula*.

A single female at Harike on the 24th Jan. was the only sighting.

Eurasian Teal.*Anas crecca*.

Variable numbers at Harike and on most wetlands in Rajasthan and Gujarat. 200 plus at Banas Dam on the 2nd Feb.

Red-crested Pochard.*Netta rufina*.

Large numbers at Harike, with a flock of over 500 birds in a side-channel on the 25th Jan. Not recorded elsewhere.

Common Pochard.*Aythya farina*.

Small numbers at Harike, and on most large lakes in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Ferruginous Duck.*Aythya nyroca*.

Small numbers at Harike. Not recorded elsewhere.

Tufted Duck.*Aythya fuligula*.

Small numbers at Harike. Not recorded elsewhere.

Little Grebe.*Tachybaptus ruficollis*.

Common at Harike and widespread on lakes and ponds elsewhere in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Great Crested Grebe.*Podiceps cristatus*.

A single bird at Harike on the 26th Jan. was the only sighting.

Greater Flamingo.*Phoenicopterus roseus*.

A flock of 50 plus birds, all juveniles, on a sandbank at Harike on the 25th Jan. 4000 plus adults at Nava Talav on the 5th Feb. and 1500 plus adults on the beach at Modhvi on the 7th Feb. Small numbers were noted on salt pans and wetlands elsewhere in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Lesser Flamingo.*Phoenicopterus minor*.

2000 plus adults at Nava Talav on the 5th Feb. Small numbers were noted with Greater Flamingoes on a dam near Morbi on the 10th Feb.

Painted Stork.*Mycteria leucocephala*.

A single bird at Sardarsamand Palace on the 31st Jan. At least 6 at Banas Dam on the 2nd Feb. Scattered birds were present on salt pans and wetlands throughout Gujarat.

Asian Openbill.*Anastomus oscitans*.

1 on a pond at the entrance to the Little Rann of Kutch on the 4th Feb, and almost certainly the same bird there on the 5th Feb.

Woolly-necked Stork.*Ciconia episcopus*.

1 near Pali on the 31st Jan. 2 at Banas Dam on the 2nd Feb, and 1 at Nava Talav on the 5th Feb.

Black-necked Stork.*Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*.

1 male on Mandvi Beach on the 6th Feb was the only sighting.

Black-headed Ibis.*Threskiornis melanocephalis*.

50 plus birds at the carcass dump at Jodhpur fighting for food with vultures, eagles and egrets. Varying numbers on most large wetlands elsewhere in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Red-naped Ibis.*Pseudibis papillosa*.

Slightly less common than Black-headed Ibis, but varying numbers around most wetlands in Rajasthan and Gujarat, and also seen feeding in cultivated fields.

Glossy Ibis.*Plegadis falcinellus*.

Small numbers at Harike, and odd birds at various wetlands in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Eurasian Spoonbill.*Platalea leucorodia*.

Only one bird recorded at Harike. Flocks of up to 20 birds on many wetland sites in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Cinnamon Bittern.*Ixobrychus cinnamonus*.

Nice views of a single bird in flight and in a water-lily patch at Harike on the 24th Jan.

Black-crowned Night Heron.*Nycticorax nycticorax*.

Quite numerous at Harike, roosting in full view in waterside vegetation. Several birds in flight over the lake at Sardarsamand Palace on the 31st Jan. Odd birds in flight at Mandvi.

Indian Pond Heron.*Ardeola gdayii*.

Quite common in and around all wetlands, lakes and ponds. Absent from desert areas.

Eastern Cattle Egret.*Bubulcus ibis*.

Seen in quite large numbers around wetlands, and associated

with cattle, on most days of the trip. On the 30th Jan. at the Jodhpur carcass dump there were at least 200 birds fighting with the vultures and eagles for food.

Grey Heron.*Ardea cinerea*.

Quite common at Harike and at various large wetlands in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Purple Heron.*Ardea purpurea*.

20 plus birds at Harike. Several in reedbeds on the way to Ahmedabad on the 17th Feb..

Great Egret.*Ardea alba*.

Quite common at Harike, and scattered birds in most wetland areas in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Intermediate Egret.*Egretta intermedia*.

Less common than Great Egret, but in the same wetland areas.

Little Egret.*Egretta garzetta*.

Similar numbers and in the same wetlands as Intermediate Egret.

Western Reef Egret.*Egretta gularis*.

First recorded at disused salt pans on the way to Mandvi on the 6th Feb with a flock of at least 70 birds of both phases scrabbling for food. Small numbers were recorded on many other salt pans and on the beaches at both Mandvi and Modhva.

Great White Pelican.*Pelecanus onocrotalus*.

A flock of over 1500 birds at Banas Dam on the 2nd Feb. At least 500 on Nava Talav on the 5th Feb. A flock of over 50 birds flew over Rann Riders on the evening of the 3rd Feb. A filthy roadside pond on the way to Ahmedabad had a flock of over 100 birds swimming around.

Dalmatian Pelican.*Pelecanus crispus*.

At least 20 birds mixed in with Great Whites at Banas Dam on the 2nd Feb and a few mixed in with other flocks of Great Whites. A flock of at least 40 birds was on the dam in the Gir National Park on the 12th Feb.

Little Cormorant.*Microcarba niger*.

Abundant at Harike, and common in many of the other wetland areas visited. The commonest of the cormorant species.

Indian Cormorant.*Phalacrocorax fuscicollis*.

Common at Harike. Variable numbers on most other sizeable wetlands in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Great Cormorant.*Phalacrocorax carbo*.

Very common at Harike. Variable numbers at most other sizeable wetlands in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Oriental Darter.*Anhinga melanogaster*.

Small numbers at Harike. Otherwise only recorded at the dam in the Gir National Park with some 20 birds scattered around the site.

Western Osprey.*Pandion haliaetus*.

Single birds at Harike on the 24th Jan. Sardarsamand Palace on the 31st Jan, Banas Dam on the 2nd Feb and the dam in the Gir National Park on the 12th Feb.

Crested Honey-Buzzard.*Pernis ptilorhynchus*.

Only recorded in Gujarat with scattered birds on various days. A maximum of 6 in the Gir National Park on the

12th Feb.

Black-winged Kite.*Elanus caeruleus*.

Regularly seen throughout the trip, often perched on roadside poles or wires, and hunting over fields.

Black Kite.*Milvus migrans*.

Abundant over many of the towns and cities visited, particularly at Amritsar and Ahmedabad. Rarely seen in the countryside.

Egyptian Vulture.*Neophron percnopterus*.

Astonishing numbers at the carcass dumps in Bikaner on the 27th and Jodhpur on the 30th, with maybe 1000 plus at the former and 500 plus at the latter. Scattered birds seen elsewhere in Rajasthan.

Indian Vulture.*Gyps indicus*.

Singles at Bikaner carcass dump on the 27th Jan, Kumbhalgarh on the 1st Feb and at Sasson Gir on the 12th Feb.

Griffon Vulture.*Gyps fulvus*.

About 100 birds at the Bikaner carcass dump on the 27th Jan. Some 20 birds in a kettle over the Desert National Park on the 28th Jan and a few more over the Park on the 29th. 10 plus birds at the Jodhpur carcass dump on the 30th Jan. 3 at Sasson Gir on the 11th Feb.

Red-headed Vulture.*Sarcogyps calvus*.

The only sighting was of a single bird in the Desert National Park on the 29th Jan.

Cinereous Vulture.*Aegyplus monachus*.

One near Pokaran and a second at the Jodhpur carcass dump on the 30th Jan.

Short-toed Eagle.*Circaetus gallicus*.

Seen only in Gujarat with 1 over the Vanod 'wetlands' on the 4th Feb. 1 over the Gir National Park on the 11th Feb and 2 on both days in the Black Buck National Park.

Crested Serpent Eagle.*Spilornis cheela*.

One by the roadside on the way up to Kumbhalgarh on the 31st Jan, a second over the valley at Kumbhalgarh on the 1st Feb and a third at Palitana on the 14th Feb.

Western Marsh Harrier.*Circus aeruginosus*.

Quite numerous at Harike and several birds over most large wetland areas in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Pallid Harrier.*Circus macrourus*.

Numerous birds flying over the Banni Grasslands and Black Buck National Park in the mornings and evenings. The numbers seen at Black Buck did not match up to the large roost said to be in the Park. Odd birds were seen hunting elsewhere.

Montagu's Harrier.*Circus pygargus*.

Similar numbers and distribution to Pallid Harrier.

Shikra.*Accipiter badius*.

Up to 4 birds seen on most days.

White-eyed Buzzard.*Butastur teesa*.

1 near Jodhpur on the 30th Jan, and several at Kumbhalgarh.

1 near Velavadar on the 17th Feb.

Steppe Buzzard.*Buteo buteo vulpine*.

Singles at Sam on the 28th Jan, the Little Rann on the 5th Feb. and Gir

National Park on the 13th Feb.

Long Legged Buzzard.*Buteo rufinus*.

Quite common around the Desert National Park at Sam with up to 10 birds recorded on both days. Not seen in Gujarat.

Indian Spotted Eagle.*Aquila hastate*.

Two different birds on both days in the Black Buck National Park.

Greater Spotted Eagle.*Aquila clanga*.

In excess of 30 birds at the Bikaner carcass dump on the 27th Feb. 4 in the Gir National Park on the 12th Feb. Odd birds were seen in flight on several other days.

Tawny Eagle.*Aquila rapax*.

Up to 4 birds in the Desert National Park including superb views of one on the ground behind the Park headquarters feeding on a dead mammal.

Steppe Eagle.*Aquila nipalensis*.

An astonishing number, probably over 1000 birds, at the Bikaner carcass dump on the 27th Feb. Many less, maybe 100 plus, at the Jodhpur carcass dump on the 30th Jan. Odd birds were noted on several other days.

Eastern Imperial Eagle.*Aquila heliaca*.

A single juvenile was picked out from the mass of eagles at the Bikaner carcass dump on the 27th Feb and gave superb views both perched and in flight. Another single in flight over the carcass dump at Jodhpur on the 30th Jan.

Bonelli's Eagle.*Aquila fasciatus*.

Single birds in flight on both days at Kumbhalgarh, At CEDO on the 7th Feb and at Palitana on the 14th Feb.

Booted Eagle.*Heiraaetus pennatus*.

A dark-phase being mobbed by a Black-winged Kite near Kandia on the 6th Feb, a superb pale-phase at Gir Birding Lodge on the 13th, and another dark-phase at Black Buck National Park on the 16th Feb.

Crested Hawk Eagle.*Nisaetus cirrhatus*.

Brief views of a single bird in the Gir National Park on the 13th Feb.

Common Kestrel.*Falcon tinnunculus*.

Up to 5 birds on most days of the trip.

Merlin.*Falco columbarius*.

Superb views of a bird in flight in the Little Rann on the 5th Feb.

Laggar Falcon.*Falco jugger*.

Only recorded in the Desert National Park, with up to 3 birds.

Peregrine Falcon.*Falco peregrinus*.

The only record was of a bird hunting at Kumbhalgarh Fort on the 1st Feb.

Great Indian Bustard.*Ardeotis nigriceps*.

One of the target birds of the trip, and a day was devoted to successfully finding this species in the Desert National Park.

In the morning 8 distant birds were located and were then subsequently seen well in flight. In a different area of the Park in the late afternoon 5 birds were found feeding, and gave much much closer views without being disturbed.

Macqueen's Bustard.*Chlamydotis macqueenii*.

On the Little Rann one was located after a long search and gave

- reasonable views both on the ground and in flight.
- Brown Crake.*Amaurornis akool*.
Excellent views of a single bird at Harike on the 25th Jan.
- Ruddy-breasted Crake.*Porzana fusca*.
Superb views of a single individual on an overgrown muddy pond at Harike on the 24th Jan.
- White-breasted Waterhen.*Amaurornis phoenicurus*.
Small numbers at Harike. Not recorded elsewhere.
- Purple Swamphen.*Porphyrio porphyrio*.
Small numbers at Harike.
- Common Moorhen.*Gallinula chloropus*.
Very common at Harike. Small numbers present on most other wetlands in Rajasthan and Gujarat.
- Eurasian Coot.*Fulica atra*.
Abundant at Harike and quite common on open water in most wetlands of Rajasthan and Gujarat.
- Sarus Crane.*Grus antigone*.
The only record was of 3 adult birds in a roadside field near Rann Riders on the 5th Feb.
- Demoiselle Crane.*Grus virgo*.
We missed the feeding frenzy at Keechen on the 27th Feb, but there were large flocks of birds circling over the village and roosting on adjacent small ponds. Large flocks were also noted on the Little Rann, usually around the wetlands.
- Common Crane.*Grus grus*.
Large flocks in the Little Rann, but thousands on the Banni Grasslands looking for food and fighting morning and evening to a distant wetland. Sizeable flocks were also noted around Velavadar.
- Barred Buttonquail.*Turnix suscitator*.
1 flushed from a field adjacent to Rann Riders on the 3rd Feb and another in the Banni Grasslands on the 8th Feb.
- Indian Stone-Curlew.*Burhinus indicus*.
A single bird in the Gir National Park on the 12th Feb.
- Great Stone-Curlew.*Esacus recurvirostris*.
1 at Banas Dam on the 2nd Feb. At least 12 birds along the beach at Modhva on the 7th Feb. 2 on the dam in the Gir National Park on the 12th Feb.
- Eurasian Oystercatcher.*Haematopus outrageous*.
Up to 12 birds along the beaches at Mandvi and Modhva on the 6th and 7th Feb.
- Black-winged Stilt.*Himantopus bimanous*.
A very common wader with birds around all wetland areas and on any small pond or pool of brackish water even in the middle of towns and villages.
- Pied Avocet.*Recurvirostra avosetta*.
100 plus birds at Nava Talav on the 5th Feb and a small flock flying over Black Buck Lodge on the 14th Feb.
- Yellow-wattled Lapwing.*Vanellus malabaricus*.
Small numbers on dry areas, often by the roadside, on most days from the 31st Jan, with at least 15 birds on waste ground in the outskirts of Nakhtarana on the 10th Feb.

Red-wattled Lapwing. *Vanellus indicus*.

Like Black-winged Stilt a common wader everywhere, but also found on dry ground and in parks and gardens.

Grey Plover. *Pluvialis equatorial*.

Several birds on the river at Mandvi on the 6th Feb and along the beach at Modhva on the 7th Feb.

Little Ringed Plover. *Charadrius dubious*.

A single bird at Harike on the 25th Jan. At least 4 at Banas Dam on the 3rd Feb. Further single birds were seen near Modhva on the 3rd Feb and on the Little Rann on the 4th Feb.

Kentish Plover. *Charadrius alexandrinus*.

Large numbers at Banas Dam on the 2nd Feb and at Nava Talav on 5th Feb.

Lesser Sand Plover. *Charadrius mongolus*.

In excess of 20 birds at Nava Talav on 5th Feb. Many scattered birds on the beaches at Mandvi and Modhva. On the 9th Feb there were many in a mixed flock of Sand Plovers on the Banni Grasslands.

Greater Sand Plover. *Charadrius leschenaultii*.

Less common than the Lesser, but mixed in with them at the same sites. Nice comparison possible at Modhva beach.

Jack Snipe. *Lymnocyrtus minimus*.

A single bird at point-blank range on a muddy puddle by the side of the road near CEDO on the 9th Feb.

Common Snipe. *Gallinago gallinago*.

1 at Banas Dam on the 2nd Feb. 1 on Mandvi River on the 6th Feb and 2 on a small pond at Black Buck Lodge on the 14th Feb.

Black-tailed Godwit. *Limosa limosa*.

At least 12 round a village pond in the Little Rann on the 4th and 5th Feb. Scattered birds on Mandvi River on the 6th and 7th Feb. At least 6 round the dam in the Gir National Park on the 12th Feb.

Whimbrel. *Numenius phaeopus*.

Up to 4 birds on the beaches at Mandvi and Modhva on the 6th and 7th Feb.

A single in the Black Buck National Park on the 15th Feb.

Eurasian Curlew. *Numenius arquata*.

In excess of 10 birds on the beaches at Mandvi and Modhva on the 6th and 7th Feb.

Spotted Redshank. *Tringa erythropus*.

10 plus at Banas Dam on the 2nd Feb and similar numbers at Mandvi on the 6th and 7th Feb.

Common Redshank. *Tringa tetanus*.

20 plus on the beaches at Mandvi and Modhva on the 6th and 7th of Feb.

Marsh Sandpiper. *Tringa stagnatilis*.

Large flocks, some numbering over 100 birds, on salt pans between Dasada and Mandvi on the 6th Feb.

Common Greenshank. *Tringa nebularia*.

Single scattered birds on salt pans between Dasada and Mandvi on the 6th Feb.

Green Sandpiper.*Tringa ochropus*.

Scattered birds in wetland areas on a number of days.

Wood Sandpiper.*Tringa glareola*.

20 plus at Banas Dam on the 2nd Feb. Scattered birds on wetlands elsewhere in Gujarat with at least 4 at Mandvi River on the 6th Feb.

Terek Sandpiper.*Xenus cinereus*.

4 plus on the beach at Modhva on the 7th Feb.

Common Sandpiper.*Actitis hypoleucos*.

A single bird at Harike on the 27th Feb. Ones and twos at most wetland sites in Gujarat.

Ruddy Turnstone.*Arenaria interpres*.

At least 4 on the beach at Modhva on the 7th Feb.

Little Stint.*Calidris minuta*.

A few on a sandbank at Harike on the 25th Jan. Small numbers at Banas Dam on the 2nd Feb, round a pond in the Little Rann on the 4th and 5th Feb and at the Dam in the Gir National Park on the 12th Feb.

Temminck's Stint.*Calidris temminckii*.

At the same sites as Little Stint, but in greater numbers.

Sanderling.*Calidris alba*.

Several flocks of up to 50 birds roosting on rocks at Modhva beach on the 7th Feb.

Dunlin.*Calidris alpina*.

6 on the beach at Modhva on the 7th Feb.

Ruff.*Philomachus pugnax*.

Up to 100 on a pond in the Little Rann on the 4th and 5th Feb. Several males were moulting into summer plumage.

Cream-coloured Courser.*Cursorius cursor*.

At the Desert National Park a flock of 7 were seen on the 27th Jan and a further 12 arrived as we were watching the Bustards late on the evening of the 28th Jan.

Indian Courser.*Cursorius coromandelicus*.

The only sighting was of a group of 5 birds on a bare roadside field on the way to CEDO from Mandvi on the 7th Feb.

Small Pratincole.*Glareola lacteal*.

20 plus at Banas Dam on the 2nd Feb and slightly fewer at Nava Talav on the 4th Feb.

Slender-billed Gull.*Larus genei*.

Only recorded at Mandvi and Modhva with at least 20 birds in the gull flock on Mandvi River on the morning of the 7th Feb. Odd single birds were present on the beaches at both sites.

Brown-headed Gull.*Larus brunnicephalus*.

Common at Harike. On the 7th Feb there were over 3000 birds roosting on Mandvi River in the early morning but the flock slowly dispersed over the next hour. A few were moulting into summer plumage.

Black-headed Gull.*Larus ridibundus*.

A few birds were identified amongst the huge flock of Brown-headed Gulls on Mandvi River on the 7th Feb.

Pallas's Gull.*Ichthyaetus ichthyaetus*.

10 plus birds at Harike on all three days. 3 at Banas Dam on the 2nd Feb. 100 plus in a flock on the beach at Modhva on the 7th Feb. There were

birds in every state of plumage from 1st years to full summer adults.
Large Larus Gulls.*Larus cachinnans/heuglini/barabensis*.

There were a number of large Larus gulls with the huge flock of Brown-headed Gulls on Mandvi River in the early morning of the 7th Feb. Several adults were identified as either *cachinnans* or *heuglini* but many of the birds were juveniles of various ages. Several Yellow-legged and Caspian-type Gulls were present at Harike.

Gull-billed Tern.*Gelochelidon nilotica*.

Scattered birds on all three days at Harike, 30 plus at Nava Talav on the 5th Feb, 10 plus on the saltpans between Dasada and Mandvi on the 6th and scattered individuals at Mandvi and Modhva on both the 6th and 7th Feb. Quite common on saltpans and wetland areas adjacent to the road between Velavadar and Ahmedabad on the 17th Feb.

Caspian Tern.*Sterna caspia*.

1 on Modhva beach on the 7th Feb and another on the dam in Gir National Park on the 12th Feb. Both birds were in breeding plumage.

Lesser Crested Tern.*Sterna benghalensis*.

2 roosting on the beach at Modhva on the 7th Feb.

Little Tern.*Sterna albifrons*.

4 on the beach at Modhva on the 7th Feb.

River Tern.*Sterna aurantia*.

Quite common at Harike. A few scattered birds on the large wetland areas in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Whiskered Tern.*Chidonias hybrida*.

Small numbers at Harike and on most large wetlands in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse.*Pterocles exustus*.

Flocks of up to 50 birds at the Desert National Park, the Little Rann and Black Buck National Park. Mostly seen in flight.

Painted Sandgrouse.*Pterocles indicus*.

Probably the same bird flushed on the 8th and 10th Feb from a rocky area near Fotmahadev. Less than ideal views of a rapidly-disappearing bird!

Common(Rock) Pigeon.*Columbia livia*.

Abundant everywhere, even out in the countryside and in wetland areas.

Yellow-eyed Pigeon.*Columba eversmanni*.

Several large flocks each numbering over 100 birds on the way to the carcass dump at Bikaner on the 27th Jan.

Eurasian Collared Dove.*Streptopelia decaocto*.

Common everywhere, but not nearly as numerous as Rock Pigeon and usually around habitation.

Red Turtle Dove.*Streptopelia tranquibarica*.

A few birds at Bikaner on the 27th Jan, Pali on the 31st Jan and Rann Riders on the 3rd Feb.

Spotted Dove.*Spilopelia chinensis*.

1 in Khumbhalgarh National Park on the 1st Feb then up to 6 birds in the Gir National Park on the 11th, 12th and 13th Feb.

Laughing Dove.*Spilopelia senegalensis*.

Very common and more numerous than Collared Dove.

Yellow-footed Green Pigeon.*Treron phoenicopterus*.

A flock of 30 plus birds were roosting in a bare tree in the middle of Bikaner on the 27th Jan. 2 in a tree in the Gir National Park on the 12th Feb.

Alexandrine Parakeet.*Psittacula eupatria*.

Small numbers at Harike on all three days and recorded at Khumbhalgarh on the 31st Jan. Far less common than Rose-ringed Parakeet.

Rose-ringed Parakeet.*Psittacula krameri*.

By far the commonest of the three Parakeets seen on the trip, with substantial numbers recorded on most days.

Plum-headed Parakeet.*Psittacula cynocephali*.

Unrecorded until Kumbhalgarh and Mt. Abu where quite common. Not seen in either the Little or Great Ranns, but encountered again quite commonly in the Gir National Park.

Great Coucal.*Centropus sinensis*.

Relatively common at Harike with a total of six birds on the 24th Jan. Thereafter several each day in vegetated areas.

Sirkeer Malkoha.*Taccocua leschenaultii*.

2 at the 'hypocolius' site at Fulay on the 9th Feb.

Asian Koel.*Eudynamys scolopaceus*.

A female at point-blank range in a scrubby bush in the middle of Dharangadri on the 5th Feb. A male was present in the grounds of the Orchard Palace Hotel at Gondal on the 11th Feb and a further male at Palitana on the 14th Feb.

Changeable Hawk Cuckoo.*Hierococcyx varius*.

1 was seen very briefly flying over the road on the way up to Khumbhalgarh on the 31st Jan.

Indian Eagle Owl.*Bubo bengalensis*.

At least 3 and possibly 4 birds around the Sardarsamand Palace Hotel on the morning of the 31st Jan.

Jungle Owlet.*Glaucidium radiatum*.

A single bird sitting in a tree by the roadside near Khumbhalgarh on the 2nd Feb.

Spotted Owlet.*Athene brama*.

A single bird seen on the 25th and 26th Jan. at Harike.

An adult feeding a well-grown youngster in a tree by the side of the road at the entrance to the Little Rann on the 4th Feb.

Short-eared Owl.*Asio flammeus*.

2 birds giving excellent views both on the ground and in flight at the Vanod 'wetlands' on the 4th Feb.

Sykes's Nightjar.*Caprimulgus mahrattensis*.

At least six birds picked up in vehicle headlights on the Vanod 'wetlands' on the 4th Feb. Several of these just sat on the ground. Superb viewing.

Indian Nightjar.*Caprimulgus asiaticus*.

1 on the road at dusk on the way back to CEDO from the Banni Grasslands on the 9th Feb. Excellent view.

Crested Tree Swift.*Hemiprocne coronate*.

A single bird seen briefly in the Gir National Park on the 13th Feb.

Alpine Swift.*Tachymarptis melba*.

A very different bird from the species of this name in the Western Palearctic. Quite sizeable flocks over the 'hypocolius' site at Fulay on the 8th Feb and over the Banni Grasslands on the 9th Feb.

Little Swift.*Apus affinis*.

Small numbers over Khumbhalgarh on the 8th and 9th Feb and over the Gir National Park on the 11th Feb.

Indian Roller.*Coracias benghalensis*.

Commonly seen on roadside poles and wires throughout the Punjab, Rajasthan and Gujarat.

White-throated Kingfisher.*Halcyon smyrnensis*.

Another common bird on roadside poles and wires as well as around lakes and ponds, but not as frequent as Indian Roller.

Common Kingfisher.*Alcedo atthis*.

Several around the wetlands at Harike. 1 on a small pond near Khumbhalgarh on the 2nd Feb.

Pied Kingfisher.*Ceryle rudis*.

Several at Harike and odd birds around most large lakes and ponds including one regularly fishing in the small pond at Black Buck Lodge.

Green Bee-eater.*Merops orientalis*.

Unrecorded at Harike, but from then on very common, with many birds perched on poles and wires along the roads as well hawking over the countryside.

Eurasian Hoopoe.*Upupa epops*.

Scattered birds seen on most days of the trip.

Indian Grey Hornbill.*Ocyrceros birostris*.

2 at Harike on the 24th Jan, a single bird in a tree by the side of the station at Makhu on the 26th Jan and another single at Mt. Abu on the 2nd Feb.

Brown-headed Barbet.*Megalaima zeylanica*.

Single birds at Kumbhalgarh on the 31st Jan and 1st Feb, and 2 at Mt. Abu on the 2nd Feb.

Coppersmith Barbet.*Megalaima haemacephala*.

Several birds at Harike, 1 at Kumbhalgarh and 5 plus in the Gir National Park on the 12th Feb.

Eurasian Wryneck.*Jynx torquilla*.

A single at Mt. Abu on the 3rd Feb.

Brown-capped Woodpecker.*Dendrocopus nanus*.

A single in the valley at Kumbhalgarh National Park on the 1st Feb.

Yellow-crowned Woodpecker.*Dendrocopus mahratensis*.

A pair in the valley at Kumbhalgarh National Park on the 1st Feb. A male at Fotomahadev on the 8th Feb.

A male in the Gir National Park on the 12th Feb.

Black-rumped Flameback.*Dinopium benghalense*.

Small numbers at Harike, at Kumbhalgarh and in the Gir National Park. Surprisingly common for a stunning

woodpecker.

Common Woodshrike.*Tephrodornis pondicerianous*.

Small numbers in wooded, scrubby areas.

Comon Iora..*Aegithina tiphla*.

Small numbers in wooded, scrubby areas at Kumbhalgarh and in Gujarat.

Marshall's Iora.*Aegithina nigrolutea*.

Only recorded in Gujarat with odd birds in the middle of the town of Dharangadhura on the 6th Feb and at the 'hypocolius' site at Fulay on the 8th Feb. Relatively common at Nahktarana and Fotomahadev in scrub.

Large Cuckoo-shrike.*Coracina macei*.

1 at Mt.Abu on the morning of the 3rd Feb.

Small Minivet.*Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*.

Small numbers at Kumbhalgarh, at Nahktarana, and in the Gir National Park.

Brown Shrike.*Lanius cristatus*.

1 in the Gir National Park on the 16th Feb.

Isabelline Shrike.*Lanius isabellinus*.

Small numbers in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Bay-backed Shrike.*Lanius vittatus*.

Only seen in Gujarat with small numbers in both the Little and Great Ranns often sitting by the roadside or in areas of scrub.

Long-tailed Shrike.*Lanius schach*.

Widespread in small numbers, often perched on roadside posts and wires.

Southern Grey Shrike.*Lanius meridionalis*.

Again widespread in small numbers, often perched on roadside posts and wires.

Black Drongo.*Dicrurus microcercus*.

Seen on every day of the trip and quite common.

Ashy Drongo.*Dicrurus leucophaeus*.

Only seen in the Gir National Park with several birds noted.

White-bellied Drongo.*Dicrurus caerulescens*.

Small numbers at Kumbhalgarh and Mt Abu.

White-spotted Fantail.*Rhipidura albogularis*.

Small numbers at Kumbhalgarh and Mt.Abu.

White-browed Fantail.*Rhipidura aureola*.

1 at Khumbhalgarh on the 31st and several on each visit to the Black Buck National Park.

Rufous Treepie.*Dendrocitta vagabunda*.

Scattered birds on most days in vegetated areas, but not recorded in the Desert National Park or in desert areas of the Ranns.

House Crow.*Corvus splendens*.

Abundant throughout. Large numbers competing with the vultures and eagles for food at the carcass dumps at Bikaner and Jodhpur.

Indian Jungle Crow.*Corvus culminatus*.

Only recorded at the Black Buck National Park where several birds were seen on each visit.

Northern Raven.*Corvus corvus*.

Small numbers at Sam and at the Sardarsamand Palace Hotel.

Grey Hypocolius.*Hypocolius ampelinus*.

A single fly-over male seen briefly before diving into the scrubby vegetation at the stake-out site at Fulay on the 8th Feb could not be relocated, and no birds were seen at the site the following day in spite of an intensive search. Much agricultural activity going on around the site possibly to the detriment of the birds.

Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher.*Culicicapa ceylonsis*.

Singles at Kumbhalgarh on the 31st Jan and 1st Feb.

Cinereous Tit.*Parus cinereus*.

Small numbers at Kumbhalgarh, Mt Abu and the Gir National Park.

White-crowned Penduline Tit.*Remiz coronatus*.

Only recorded at Harike with a pair on the 24th Jan and a flock of at least 10 birds on the 26th Jan.

White-naped Tit.*Parus nuchalis*.

At least 4 birds in the Fotmahadev area on the 8th and 10th of Feb. Responsive to tape and some excellent views.

Indian Black-lored Tit.*Parus aplonotus*.

Up to 4 birds at Kumbhalgarh on the 31st Jan. and 1st Feb.

A single at Mt Abu on the 3rd Feb.

Indian Bushlark.*Mirafra erythroptera*.

Only recorded in the Fotmahadev area with 4 plus on the 7th Feb and at least two on the 8th Feb.

Greater Hoope Lark.*Alaemon alaudipes*.

Superb views of 5 birds in a relatively small area of the Little Rann on the 4th Feb.

Bimaculated Lark.*Melanocorypha bimaculata*.

Small flocks and individual birds mixed in with flocks of Short-toed Larks at the Desert National Park. Not recorded elsewhere but probably overlooked in the huge lark flocks in other desert areas.

Rufous-tailed Lark.*Ammomanes phoenicura*.

Small numbers in the Little Rann and at Black Buck Lodge.

Desert Lark.*Ammomanes deserti*.

Several birds in rocky areas between Sam and Jaisalmer.

Greater Short-toed Lark.*Calandrella brachydactyla*.

Extraordinary numbers in loose flocks in the Desert National Park, at Bikaner carcass dump, in the Ranns and the Black Buck National Park.

Sand Lark.*Calandrella raytal*.

Up to 6 birds in a localised area in the Little Rann on the 4th Feb.

Excellent views and photographs.

Crested Lark.*Galerida cristata*.

Small numbers in both Ranns and in the Black Buck National Park.

Sykes's Lark.*Galerida deva*.

6 plus in the Fotmahadev area on the 7th and 8th Feb. Excellent views and very photogenic.

Black-crowned Sparrow-lark.*Eremopterix nigriceps*.

Common in the Desert National Park, the Ranns and Black Buck National Park.

Ashy-crowned Sparrow-lark.*Eremopterix griseous*.

- Common in the Ranns, the Gir National Park and the Black Buck National Park.
- Red-whiskered Bulbul.*Pycnonotus jocosus*.
The only record was of 2 birds at Mt.Abu on the morning of the 3rd Feb.
- White-eared Bulbul.*Pycnonotus luecotis*.
Not recorded at Harike, but otherwise common throughout the trip.
- Red-vented Bulbul.*Pycnonotus cafer*.
Very common throughout the trip.
- Grey-throated Martin.*Riparia chinensis*.
Small numbers at Harike, but not recorded elsewhere.
- Barn Swallow.*Hirundo rustica*.
The only record at Harike was a single on the 26th Jan. Otherwise locally common in the Ranns and in Gujarat.
- Wire-tailed Swallow.*Hirundo smithii*.
Not recorded at Harike, but otherwise small numbers in Rajasthan and Gujarat.
- Dusky Crag-martin.*Ptyonoprogne concolor*.
Quite common at Sardarsamand Palace, Kumbhalgarh and Mt.Abu and again in the Gir National Park.
- Red-rumped Swallow.*Cecropis daurica*.
Small numbers at Kumbhalgarh, en route to CEDO on the 7th Feb and in the Black Buck National Park.
- Streak-throated Swallow.*Petrochelidon fluviicola*.
2 in the centre of Dhrangadhra on the 6th Feb.
- Chiffchaff.*Phylloscopus tristis*.
Common at Harike. Scattered birds at Kumbhalgarh.
- Mountain Chiffchaff.*Phylloscopus sindianus*.
2 well seen at Harike on the 25th Jan.
- Plain Leaf Warbler.*Phylloscopus neglectus*.
Small numbers at Harike and a single at Sardarsamand Palace on the 31st Jan.
- Sulphur-bellied Warbler.*Phylloscopus griseolus*.
This rock-loving warbler was quite common at Kumbhalgarh and Mt.Abu.
- Hume's Leaf Warbler.*Phylloscopus humei*.
Small numbers at Harike. A single at Kumbhalgarh on the 1st Feb and another single at the Gir National Park on the 12th Feb.
- Green Warbler.*Phylloscopus nitidus*.
A single at Kumbhalgarh on the 1st Feb.
- Greenish Warbler.*Phylloscopus trochiloides*.
Small numbers at Harike. Single birds at Kumbhalgarh on the 2nd Feb and another single at Fotmahadev on the 7th Feb.
- Clamorous Reed Warbler.*Acrocephalus brunnescens*.
A single at Harike on the 24th Jan and another single at Black Buck Lodge, Velavadar on the 17th Feb.
- Paddyfield Warbler.*Acrocephalus agricola*.
Small numbers at Harike.
- Blyth's Reed Warbler.*Acrocephalus dumetorum*.

A single at Harike on the 24th Jan and another single giving mega views in the centre of Dhrangadhra on the 6th Feb.

Sykes's Warbler.*Hippolais rama*.
Small numbers, mainly in scrubby areas, in the Great Rann and at Velavadar.

Zitting Cisticola.*Cisticola juncidis*.
2 birds in the Desert National Park on the 29th Jan. A single in the Gir National Park on the 11th Feb and several at Velavadar.

Rufous-fronted Prinia.*Prinia buchanan*.
Quite common in the Desert National Park, the Ranns, and at Velavadar.

Rufous-vented Prinia.*Prinia burnesii*.
2 birds gave superb views at Harike on the 25th and 26th Jan.

Grey-breasted Prinia.*Prinia hodgsonii*.
Small numbers at Kumbhalgarh, Mt. Abu, the Great Rann, Gir National Park and Velavadar.

Graceful Prinia.*Prinia gracillis*.
Small numbers at Harike and in the Desert National Park.

Yellow-bellied Prinia.*Prinia flaviventris*.
Quite common at Harike.

Jungle Prinia.*Prinia sylvatica*.
A single at Kumbhalgarh on the 2nd Feb. Quite common on the hillside at Palitana on the 14th Feb.

Ashy Prinia.*Prinia socialis*.
Quite common at Harike, Kumbhalgarh and Mt Abu, with scattered birds in the Gir National Park.

Plain Prinia.*Prinia inornata*.
Small numbers at Harike, Kumbhalgarh, Mt. Abu and the Ranns. A little more common at Velavadar.

Common Tailorbird.*Orthotomus sutorius*.
Widespread in small numbers.

Lesser Whitethroat.*Sylvia curruca*.
Small numbers at Harike and at Kumbhalgarh.

Desert Whitethroat.*Sylvia minula*.
Scattered birds in the Ranns and at Velavadar.

Eastern Orphean Warbler.*Sylvia crassirostris*.
3 sightings during the three days based at CEDO.

Asian Desert Warbler.*Sylvia nana*.
Small numbers in the Desert National Park and in the Ranns.

Tawny-bellied Babbler.*Dumetia hyperthya*.
A flock of at least 10 birds at Kumbhalgarh on the 1st Feb was the only sighting.

Common Babbler.*Turdoides caudata*.
Not recorded at Harike, but quite common in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Striated Babbler.*Turdoides earlei*.
Several small flocks at Harike.

Large Grey Babbler.*Turdoides malcolmi*.
Small numbers at Kumbhalgarh and in the Gir National Park.
Quite common on the hillsides at Palitana.

Jungle Babbler.*Turdoides striata*.

By far and away the commonest Babbler, particularly in woodland and scrub, but not recorded in the Ranns.

Yellow-eyed Babbler.*Chrysomma sinense*.
Small numbers at Harike and at Kumbhalgarh.

Oriental White-eye.*Zosterops palpeb*.
Small numbers at Harike, in the hills at Kumbhalgarh and Mt.Abu and in the Gir National Park.

Bank Myna.*Acridotheres ginginianus*.
Scattered small flocks at Makhu Station on the 26th Jan, at Rann Riders and at Palitana.

Common Myna.*Acridotheres tristis*.
Numerous and widespread throughout the trip.

Asian Pied Starling.*Gracupica contra*.
Small numbers at Harike.

Brahminy Starling.*Sturna pagodarum*
Scattered records of small numbers at Kumbhalgarh, Rann Riders and the Gir National Park.

Rosy Starling.*Sturnus roseus*.
Flocks numbering up to 300 birds were encountered on a number of days during the trip.

Common Starling.*Sturnus vulgaris*.
Scattered small flocks at Harike. Not recorded elsewhere.

Bluethroat.*Luscinia svecica*.
Small numbers at Harike and at Fulay.

Oriental Magpie-robin.*Copsychus saularis*.
Scattered birds recorded at Harike, Kumbhalgarh, Mt.Abu, and in the Gir National Park.

Indian Robin.*Saxicoloides fulicatus*.
Widespread and common throughout the trip.

Black Redstart.*Phoenicurus ochrurus*.
Small numbers seen on most days of the trip, usually around buildings.

Stolickza's Bush Chat.*Saxicola macrorhynchus*.
Nice views of 2 males in the Desert National Park on the 28th Jan.

Siberian Stonechat.*Saxicola maura*.
Quite common in the Desert National Park, the Ranns and at Velvadar.

White-tailed Stonechat.*Saxicola leucura*.
Single males seen in the Desert National Park on the 25th and 26th Jan.

Pied Bushchat.*Saxicola caprata*.
Scattered birds noted at Kumbhalgarh and Mt.Abu.

Isabelline Wheatear.*Oenanthe isabellina*.
Small numbers in the Desert National Park and in the Little Rann.

Red-tailed Wheatear.*Oenanthe chrysopygia*.
A bird of rocky outcrops. At least one pair on a rocky outcrop just off the road between Sam and Jaisalmer on both visits.
A pair giving superb views on a rocky outcrop at the entrance to the Banni Grasslands from CEDO on the 9th Feb.

Desert Wheatear.*Oenanthe deserti*.

Quite common in the Desert National Park, the Ranns and Velavadar.

Variable Wheatear.*Oenanthe picata*.

Quite common in the Desert National Park. Scattered birds seen on most days during the rest of the trip.

Brown Rock-chat.*Cercomela fusca*.

Often associated with buildings. A pair in the grounds of Lalgah Palace Hotel, Bikaner on the 27th Jan. Quite common at Kumbhalgarh and Mt.Abu. Also recorded at CEDO and at Palitana.

Blue Rock-thrush.*Monticola solitarius*.

A male on Kumbhalgarh Fort on the 1st Feb. A pair on a rocky outcrop at the entrance to the Banni Grasslands from CEDO on the 9th Feb.

Red-breasted Flycatcher.*Ficedula parva*.

Small numbers at Harike, Kumbhalgarh and Mt.Abu, with odd birds in the Gir National Park.

Verditer Flycatcher.*Ficedula thalassinus*.

A stunning male at Harike on the 26th Jan.

Tickell's Blue Flycatcher.*Cyornis tickelliae*.

At least 2 at Kumbhalgarh on the 1st Feb..Several on the safaris in the Gir National Park on the 11th and 12th Feb.

Thick-billed Flowerpecker.*Dicaeum agile*.

A single at Kumbhalgarh on the 1st Feb. Several on the safaris in the Gir National Park on the 12th and 13th Feb.

Purple Sunbird.*Nectarinia asiaticus*.

Not recorded at Harike. Quite common on most days during the rest of the trip, but sparse in the very dry parts of the Ranns.

House Sparrow.*Passer domesticus*.

Abundant everywhere other than in the wetland areas at Harike.

Sind Sparrow.*Passer pyrrhonotus*.

Two males and three females together in a reedbed at Harike on the 24th Jan.

Yellow-throated Petronia.*Petronia xanthocollis*.

Quite common at Kumbhalgarh,Mt.Abu,the Gir National Park and Palitana.

Black-breasted Weaver.*Ploceus benghalensis*.

A flock in excess of 50 birds in a reedbed at Harike on the 25th Jan.

Baya Weaver.*Ploceus phillippinus*.

Small flocks at Harike, Mt.Abu and the Great Rann.

Red Avadavat.*Amandava amandava*.

A flock of some 20 birds near the Gurdwara at Harike on the 24th Jan was the only sighting.

Green Avadavat.*Amandava formosa*.

Stunning views and photographs of a flock in excess of 40 birds feeding in the yard of a farmhouse at Mt.Abu on the morning of the 3rd Feb.

Indian Silverbill.*Euodice malabarica*.

Not recorded at Harike, but otherwise common on most days of the rest of the trip.

Scaly-breasted Munia.*Lonchura malacca*.

Small numbers at Kumbhalgarh and Mt.Abu.

Yellow Wagtail.*Motacilla flava*.

A flock in excess of 30 birds in a cultivated field near Rann Riders on the evening of the 3rd Feb. Most of these could not be assigned to any specific race. Scattered birds were noted on the salt pans on the way to Mandvi on the 6th Feb.

Citrine Wagtail.*Motacilla citreola*.

A male at Nava Talav on the 5th Feb, and another male in the grounds of Black Buck Lodge, Velavadar on all three days.

Grey Wagtail.*Motacilla cinerea*.

Several birds at Kumbhalgarh and Mt Abu.

White Wagtail.*Motacilla alba*.

The commonest wagtail of the trip and small numbers seen on most days away from very dry areas.

White-browed Wagtail.*Motacilla maderaspatensis*.

2 at Harike on the 24th Jan and a single by a small pond on the way from Kumbhalgarh to Mt.Abu on the 2nd Feb.

Paddyfield Pipit.*Anthus rufulus*.

Single birds in the Little Rann on the 4th and 5th Feb.

Tawny Pipit.*Anthus campestris*.

Small numbers in the Desert National Park, in the relatively dry cultivated areas on the way to Mt.Abu on the 2nd Feb and in the Great Rann.

Long-billed Pipit.*Anthus similis*.

Quite common in the Desert National Park and in the Black Buck National Park, Velavadar.

Tree Pipit.*Anthus trivialis*.

Scattered birds at Kumbhalgarh and Mt.Abu. Also noted on the hillsides at Palitana.

Trumpeter Finch.*Bucanetes githagineus*.

A flock in excess of 20 birds in a scrubby/rocky area near Sam on the 30th Jan.

Common Rosefinch.*Carpodacus erythrinus*.

A pair at Kumbhalgarh on the 31st Jan.

Crested Bunting.*Emberiza lathami*.

Common at Kumbhalgarh but not seen anywhere else.

White-capped Bunting.*Emberiza stewarti*.

Again apparently locally common at Kumbhalgarh, with sightings of at least 10 birds over two days.

Grey-necked Bunting.*Emberiza buchanani*.

Small numbers at Rann Riders on the 4th Feb and at Fotamahadev on the 10th Feb.

Mammals:

Common (Hanuman) Langur.*Presbytis entellus*.

Very common around Kumbhalgarh and Mt.Abu. Seen elsewhere in small numbers on most days of the trip.

Rhesus Macaque.*Macaca mulatta*.

Noted at Harike.

Spotted Deer.*Axis axis*.

Large herds in the Gir National Park.

Sambar.*Cervus unicolor*.
Quite common in the Gir National Park, but much less abundant here than Spotted Deer.

Blackbuck.*Antelope cervicapra*.
Abundant in the Black Buck National Park, Velavadar.

4-Horned Antelope.*Tetracerus quadricornis*.
A party of 6 animals working their way through the bush in the Gir National Park on the 12th Feb.

Indian Gazelle(Chinkara).*Gazella bennettii*.
Widely distributed with numerous sightings throughout the trip both in the national parks and in the countryside.

Nilgai.*Boselaphus tragocamelus*.
Quite common in the national parks, but also seen on most days in farmland.

Asiatic Wild Ass.*Equus onager*.
Numerous animals in small herds in the Little Rann.

Wild Boar.*Sus scrofa*.
Small herds in the Gir National Park and the Black Buck National Park.

Golden Jackal.*Canis aureus*.
Two near Sam on the morning of the 30th Jan, a single in the Great Rann on the 7th Feb and another in the Black Buck National Park on the 15th Feb.

Wolf.*Canis lupus*.
3 sightings in the Black Buck National Park, with one animal sitting by the side of the road for several minutes watching us before moving off into the surrounding scrub.

Striped Hyena.*Hyaena hyaena*.
A single animal seen in the Black Buck National Park from the main road as we were leaving Velavadar on the 17th Feb.

Red Fox.*Vulpes vulpes*.
At least six animals in the Desert National Park on the 28th Jan.

Indian Fox.*Vulpes bengalensis*.
At least four animals in the Desert National Park on the 28th Jan.

Asiatic Lion.*Panthera leo*.
Only found in the Gir National Park, with 2 females on the 11th Feb and another female on a kill on the 12th Feb.

Jungle Cat.*Felix chaus*.
One in the grounds of the Black Buck Lodge, Velavadar.

Desert Cat.*Felix sylvestris*.
2 different animals in the Desert National Park on the 28th Jan.

Grey Mongoose.*Herpestes edwardii*.
2 in the grounds of Sardarsamand Palace on the 30th Jan and another near CEDO on the 7th Feb.

Indian Hare.*Lepus nigricollis*.
Odd animals seen in the Ranns and in the Black Buck National Park.

Five-striped Palm Squirrel.*Funambulus pennantii*.
Abundant and by far and away the commonest mammal of the trip occurring everywhere other than the very dry desert areas. Particularly common in the Jaillianwala Bagh Park in Amritsar.

Indian Desert Jird.*Meriones hurrianae*.

Noted in small numbers in the Desert National Park.

Indian Flying Fox(Fruit Bat).*Pteropus giganteus*.

Two large colonies noted, one at Harike and a second at
Sasson Gir.