

West India Jan – Feb 2013

Gerry Hinchon

This tour of 17 days around the Western part of India – Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Gujarat and Maharashtra – involved three internal flights and some long drives, but the birding was superb and the trip was very enjoyable. Notable birds included seven **Great Indian Bustards**, 26 **Indian Skimmers**, 13 **Crab Plovers**, six **Sykes's Nightjars**, two **Sykes's Larks**, three **Grey Hypocolius**, 36 **Green Avadavats**, three **White-naped Tits**, four **Stoliczka's Bushchats**, two **White-tailed Stonechats**, three **Brook's Leaf-warblers**, one male **Sind Sparrow** and the critically endangered **Forest Owlet**, whose total population is only 25 individuals. Other interesting birds that we found included **Black-necked Storks**, five species of **Vulture**, but all in very low numbers, three **White-eyed Buzzards**, seven species of **Eagle**, **Laggar Falcons**, one **Macqueen's Bustard**, thousands of **Common Cranes** and a few hundred **Demoiselles**, 27 **Sociable** and seven **White-tailed Lapwings**, **Cream-coloured** and **Indian Coursers**, four species of **Sandgrouse**, one **Indian Yellow Tit** and many more.

- 25 January Depart LHR at 2045
- 26 January Arrive Delhi at 1025; drive to Chambal
O/n Chambal Safari Lodge, Chambal
- 27 January Morning at Chambal river and around lodge; drive back to Delhi
O/n Hotel Lohmod, Delhi
- 28 January Sultanpur and Okhla
O/n Hotel Lohmod, Delhi
- 29 January Cement factory area; morning at Sultanpur; fly 1355 arr Jodhpur 1455 arr Sam 2130
O/n Royal Desert Safari Camp, Sam
- 30 January Desert National Park
O/n Royal Desert Safari Camp, Sam
- 31 January Desert National Park
O/n Royal Desert Safari Camp, Sam
- 1 February Lake Gadisar; drive to Rohetgarh; marshes and pools of Luni river
O/n Rohetgarh Palace, Rohetgarh
- 2 February Drive to Mt Abu; birded there late afternoon
O/n The Jaipur House, Mt Abu
- 3 February Early morn Mt Abu; drive to Dasada; Little Rann of Kutch
O/n Rann Riders, Little Rann of Kutch
- 4 February Little Rann of Kutch
O/n Rann Riders, Little Rann of Kutch
- 5 February Drive to Nakhatrana arr 1400; Great Rann of Kutch
O/n CEDO (Jugal Tiwari's Guest House), Great Rann of Kutch
- 6 February Early morning at Fulay; Great Rann of Kutch
O/n CEDO (Jugal Tiwari's Guest House), Great Rann of Kutch
- 7 February Early morning at Fulay; Mandvi Beach; Great Rann of Kutch
O/n CEDO (Jugal Tiwari's Guest House), Great Rann of Kutch
- 8 February Fly Bhuj 0950 Mumbai 1135/1515 arr Nagpur 1640
O/n Hotel Tuli Imperial, Nagpur
- 9 February Drive to Melghat, arrive 1415. Late afternoon forest near Sipna Gate
O/n Semadoh Tourist Complex, Melghat
- 10 February Morning at Melghat; drive to Nagpur; fly 1800 Delhi 1940
O/n Hotel Lohmod, Delhi
- 11 February Fly Delhi 0704 arr LHR 1100

26 January Delhi - Chambal

We arrived at Delhi airport at 10.25 on BA0257. Our driver was waiting outside the airport, holding a placard with my name upon it. It took nearly six hours to drive to Chambal, with only a short stop for a meal and when we arrived it was already dark. Birds seen en route included five **Indian Pond-herons**, six **Black-shouldered Kites**, many **Black Kites**, 60 **Egyptian Vultures**, one **Shikra**, 12 **Red-wattled Lapwings**, a few **Red Collared** and **Spotted Doves**, **Rose-ringed Parakeets**, six **White-throated Kingfishers**, seven **Long-tailed Shrikes**, **House Crows**, **Bank** and **Common Mynas**, two **Asian Pied Starlings** and one **Black Redstart**. After dinner we met Gasendrar Dagar (Gaj), the lodge guide, who seemed to know the whereabouts of all the birds that interested us.

Meals – Lunch en route; dinner at Chambal.

O/n Chambal Safari Lodge (standard room), triple.

27 January Chambal - Delhi

We drove towards the Chambal river, birding the area within a few kilometres of it – mostly agricultural and eroded mud-ravines. Our morning boat trip on the river was a successful and pleasurable experience and was followed by birding around the lodge until 14.30. Birds noted were three **Black Francolins** (heard only), 12 **Grey Francolins**, 30 **Indian Peafowls**, 120 **Lesser Whistling Ducks**, 166 **Bar-headed Geese**, 35 **Ruddy Shelduck**, various ducks including four **Indian Spot-billed Ducks**, one **Painted Stork**, two **Asian Openbills**, two **Black-headed** and four **Black Ibises**, three **Eurasian Spoonbills**, four **Indian Pond-herons**, ten **Little Cormorants**, one **Osprey**, two **Black-shouldered Kites**, one juvenile **Pallid Harrier**, one **Shikra**, one **Bonelli's Eagle**, one **White-breasted Waterhen**, 26 **Indian Skimmers**, two **Black-bellied** and four **River Terns**, five **Pallas's Gulls**, one **Greater Thick-knee**, **Black-winged Stilts**, 20 **River** and 35 **Red-wattled Lapwings**, four **Little Ringed Plovers**, six **Common Redshanks**, six **Greenshanks**, six **Temminck's Stints**, 16 **Ruff**, **Laughing Doves**, **Rose-ringed** and one **Plum-headed Parakeet**, three **Greater Coucals**, three **Spotted Owlets**, one **Indian Scops-owl**, one **Brown Hawk-owl** (the last two both roosting near the lodge), ten **Indian Rollers**, twelve **White-throated** and four **Pied Kingfishers**, three **Indian Grey Hornbills**, one **Eurasian Wryneck**, two **Long-tailed Minivets**, one **Southern Grey** and four **Long-tailed Shrikes**, many **House** and five **Indian Jungle Crows**, two **Crested Larks**, six **Ashy-crowned Sparrow-larks**, **White-eared** and **Red-vented Bulbuls**, ten **Grey-throated Martins**, one **Brooks's Leaf-warbler**, four **Siberian Chiffchaffs**, one **Green-crowned Warbler** (at the lodge), one **Ashy** and five **Plain Prinias**, one **Common Tailorbird**, 15 **Hume's Lesser Whitethroats**, two **Common**, six **Large Grey**, 20 **Jungle** and two **Yellow-eyed Babblers**, one **Oriental White-eye**, **Bank** and **Common Mynas**, one **Brahminy Starling**, ten **Indian Robins**, one **Black Redstart**, one **Siberian Stonechat**, one *opistoleuca* **Variable Wheatear**, four **Brown Rock-chats**, one **Blue Rock-thrush**, one **Taiga** and one **Verditer Flycatcher**, four **Purple Sunbirds**, **House Sparrows**, 60 **Baya Weavers**, six **Indian Silverbills**, five *personata* **White Wagtails**, four **White-browed Wagtails**, seven **Tawny Pipits**, two **Tree Pipits**, and a female **White-capped Bunting**. There were also muggers and gharials on the river and a jungle cat was seen along the river bank. The drive back to Delhi took five hours.

Meals – Breakfast & lunch at Chambal; dinner in Delhi.

O/n Hotel Lohmod, Delhi (executive room), twin+single.

28 January Sultanpur and Okhla

We met our guide Ghanshyam and driver at hotel reception at 07.00, and drove to Sultanpur Bird Sanctuary. This was found to be locked for the day, so we birded around the outside and saw two **Brook's Leaf-warblers** and 30 **Yellow-footed Green Pigeons** and a few other birds. After 40 minutes we drove to Okhla Bird Sanctuary where we spent most of the day, except for a break for lunch. Birds seen included **Grey Lag** and 16 **Bar-headed Geese**, various **ducks** including 30 **Indian Spot-billed Ducks**, 20 **Greater Flamingos**, six **Painted Storks**, eight **Black-headed**, two **Black** and five **Glossy Ibises**, one **Indian Pond-heron**, ten **Little** and many **Great Cormorants**, four **Oriental Darters**, 24 **Western Marsh Harriers**, one **Shikra**, one **Greater Spotted Eagle**, one

White-breasted Waterhen, Purple Swamphens, Moorhens and Coots, Black-winged Stilts, one Northern, 35 Red-wattled and five White-tailed Lapwings, one Greater Painted Snipe, one Pheasant-tailed and five Bronze-winged Jacanas, one Spotted and five Common Redshanks, six Greenshanks, four Marsh Sandpipers, two Green and eight Wood Sandpipers, two Ruff, two Brown-headed, 40 Black-headed, two Pallas's and two Caspian Gulls, Rose-ringed Parakeets, three Greater Coucals, six Indian Rollers, ten White-throated Kingfishers, five Green Bee-eaters, three Eurasian Hoopoes, six Indian Grey Hornbills, three Coppersmith Barbets, six Long-tailed Minivets, two Long-tailed Shrikes, three Rufous Treepies, many House and five Indian Jungle Crows, six Red-vented Bulbuls, ten Grey-throated Martins, 20 Siberian Chiffchaffs, one Sulphur-bellied Warbler, seven Hume's Leaf-warblers, one Blyth's Reed Warbler, two Graceful, six Yellow-bellied, four Ashy and two Plain Prinias, four Common Tailorbirds, six Hume's and another kind of Lesser Whitethroat, one Striated and many Jungle Babblers, four Oriental White-eyes, Bank and Common Mynas, three Asian Pied Starlings, three Bluethroats, six Oriental Magpie-robins, eight Indian Robins, three Black Redstarts, excellent views of a pair of White-tailed Stonechats in the reeds, three Siberian Stonechats, six Pied Bushchats, three Taiga and four Red-breasted Flycatchers, two Purple Sunbirds, 30 Red Avadavats, 20 Indian Silverbills, six Yellow and 20 Citrine Wagtails and seven Tawny Pipits.

From 17.00 we had a slow drive in thick traffic back to our hotel.

Meals – Packed breakfast; lunch near Okhla; dinner at hotel.

O/n Hotel Lohmod, Delhi (executive room), twin+single.

29 January Sultanpur - Sam

After our breakfast at 06.00 we loaded the car and drove to a cement factory area south of Delhi, where we saw 11 **Indian Stone-curlews** and a single male **Sind Sparrow**. Other birds here were four **Grey Francolins**, one **Spotted Owlet** and one **Crested Lark**. We had a pleasant walk around Sultanpur Bird Sanctuary where we observed two **Indian Peafowls**, **Grey Lag** and three **Bar-headed Geese**, 15 **Knob-billed** and 16 **Ferruginous Ducks** (as well as several other wintering species), 30 **Painted Storks** (which were nesting), four **Black-necked Storks** (two adults with two young in the nest), four **Black Ibis**, two **Purple Herons**, four **Intermediate Egrets**, 10 **Little** and 50 **Great Cormorants**, two **Black-shouldered** and many **Black Kites**, 12 **Western Marsh Harriers**, one **Greater Spotted Eagle**, two **Eastern Imperial Eagles**, ten **Purple Swamphens**, **Sarus Cranes** heard calling, 20 **Red-wattled** and two **White-tailed Plovers**, three **Black-tailed Godwits**, and usual common waders, **Rose-ringed Parakeets**, two **Greater Coucals**, one **Red Collared** and 50 **Laughing Doves**, one **Black-rumped Flameback**, three **Long-tailed Shrikes**, many **House** and three **Indian Jungle Crows**, ten **White-eared** and ten **Red-vented Bulbuls**, two **Streak-throated Swallows**, five **Siberian Chiffchaffs**, one **Hume's Leaf-warbler**, two **Graceful** and two **Plain Prinias**, two **Common Tailorbirds**, one **Hume's Lesser Whitethroat**, 30 **Large Grey** and ten **Jungle Babblers**, **Bank** and **Common Mynas**, three **Common Starlings**, three **Bluethroats**, four **Oriental Magpie-robins**, five **Indian Robins**, four **Black Redstarts**, five **Siberian Stonechats**, four **Pied Bushchats**, three **Taiga Flycatchers** and 18 **Indian Silverbills**. We left at 10.45 to be at the airport for our 13.55 flight to Jodhpur, which arrived at 14.55 and it took nearly six hours to drive to Sam, with a stop of 25 minutes at Dehra Fort. We reached our destination at 21.30 and checked in to our large tent. On the journey some birds were seen between Jodhpur and Jaisalmer. There was one **Black** and ten **Egyptian Vultures**, **Black Kites** and 100 **Steppe Eagles** (all over a large rubbish tip), four **Indian Rollers**, four **Green Bee-eaters**, two **Eurasian Hoopoes**, one **Eurasian Wryneck**, one **Southern Grey Shrike**, one *picata* **Variable Wheatear**, three **Brown Rock-chats**, two **Purple Sunbirds** and two **Chestnut-shouldered Petronias**. We had a great meal at a small local restaurant in Jaisalmer, and then went on to Sam, arriving 21.30 to check in to our large and pleasantly-appointed tent.

Meals – Packed dry breakfast in Delhi; lunch at airport; dinner at Camp.

O/n Royal Desert Safari Camp, Sam (super-deluxe tent), triple.

30 January Desert National Park

Breakfast 06.30, left at 07.00 for birding in Desert National Park. We returned for lunch at 13.00 and went out again at 15.30. In the course of the day we saw four **Grey Francolins**, one **Black-shouldered Kite**, 40 **Egyptian**, one **Griffon**, five **Red-headed** and two **Black Vultures**, two **Shikras**, seven **Long-legged Buzzards**, 10 **Tawny Eagles**, five **Common Kestrels**, four **Laggar Falcons**, six **Great Indian Bustards**, six **Cream-coloured Coursers**, 18 **Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse**, one **Red Collared** and 50 **Laughing Doves**, three **Indian Rollers**, 30 **Green Bee-eaters**, a male **Isabelline** and 20 **Southern Grey Shrikes**, 30 **Black Drongos**, ten '**Punjab**' **Ravens**, 500 **Bimaculated Larks**, 150 **Greater Short-toed Larks**, 30 **Black-crowned Sparrow-larks**, 25 **White-eared** and 25 **Red-vented Bulbuls**, five **Graceful Prinias**, one **Desert Lesser Whitethroat**, one **Asian Desert Warbler**, 70 **Common Babblers**, two **Indian Robins**, four **Stoliczka's Bushchats**, two **Siberian Stonechats**, five **Isabelline**, 20 **Desert** and 50 **Variable** (both *capistrata* and *picata*) **Wheatears**, **House Sparrows** and 15 **Tawny Pipits**.

Meals – Breakfast at Camp; lunch at Camp; dinner at Camp.

O/n Royal Desert Safari Camp, Sam (super-deluxe tent), triple.

31 January Desert National Park

Another day in the Desert National Park, although we returned for lunch and a rest between 13.00 and 15.30. In the afternoon we drove as far as Kuldhara deserted village, birding within the buildings and the agriculture around it. Birds today included 20 **Indian Peafowls**, two **Black-shouldered Kites**, 15 **Egyptian**, one **White-rumped**, two **Griffon** and one **Black Vulture**, two male **Montagu's Harriers**, three **Shikras**, one **White-eyed Buzzard**, seven **Long-legged Buzzards**, one **Greater Spotted** and five **Tawny Eagles**, three **Common Kestrels**, three **Cream-coloured Coursers**, 22 **Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse**, two **Red Collared** and many **Laughing Doves**, eight **House Swifts**, three **Indian Rollers**, two **White-throated Kingfishers**, 30 **Green Bee-eaters**, one **Common Woodshrike**, 30 **Southern Grey Shrikes**, one **White-browed Fantail**, four '**Punjab**' **Ravens**, 80 **Bimaculated**, five **Desert**, 60 **Greater Short-toed** and two **Crested Larks**, 50 **Black-crowned Sparrow-larks**, 20 **White-eared** and 20 **Red-vented Bulbuls**, one **Siberian Chiffchaff**, four **Rufous-fronted** and two **Graceful Prinias**, 20 **Desert Lesser Whitethroats**, one male **Orphean Warbler**, two **Asian Desert Warblers**, 40 **Common Babblers**, one **Indian Robin**, three **Black Redstarts**, one **Red-tailed**, ten **Desert** and 60 (mostly *picata*) **Variable Wheatears**, five **Purple Sunbirds**, two **Chestnut-throated Petronias**, two **Indian Silverbills**, one **Yellow** and four *alba* **White Wagtails**, one **Long-billed** and 15 **Tawny Pipits** and one **Striolated Bunting**.

Meals – Breakfast at Camp; lunch at Camp; dinner at Camp.

O/n Royal Desert Safari Camp, Sam (super-deluxe tent), triple.

1 February Lake Gadisar - Rohetgarh; marshes and pools of Luni river

As all the main target species had been seen, we departed at 07.00 for Rohetgarh. We stopped for one hour at Lake Gadisar, where we saw four **Northern Shoveler**, one **Imperial Eagle**, two **Temminck's Stints**, six **Streak-throated Swallows**, five **Common Babblers** and two **Black Redstarts**. En route we stopped near a large rubbish tip near Jodhpur where we saw one **Tawny** and 100 **Steppe Eagles**, many **Black Kites**, one **Black** and 20 **Egyptian Vultures**, three **Long-legged Buzzards**, one **Common Kestrel** and one **Rufous-fronted Prinia**, two **Indian Rollers**, two **White-throated** and two **Common Kingfishers**, 30 **Green Bee-eaters**, five **Southern Grey Shrikes**, 50 **Greater Short-toed Larks**, one female **Orphean Warbler**, 20 **Bank Mynas** and ten **Variable Wheatears**. After 5.5 hours drive we reached Rohetgarh and after checking in we spent the rest of the day birding the pools and marshes of the nearby Luni river. The area was very productive and we saw three **Gadwall**, three **Eurasian Wigeon**, six **Indian Spot-billed Ducks**, two **Northern Shovelers**, 40 **Eurasian Teal**, 30 **Common Pochard**, one **Tufted Duck**, five **Little Grebes**, eight **Black-crowned Night-herons**, four **Intermediate** and two **Little Egrets**, six **Western Marsh Harriers**, a male **Pallid Harrier**, three **Shikras**, one **Booted Eagle**, one **Red-necked Falcon**, one

White-breasted Waterhen, 12 Purple Swamphens, 50 Moorhens, Coots, 15 Red-wattled Lapwings, one Jack Snipe, two Redshanks, one Green, two Wood and two Common Sandpipers, 170 Ruff, 50 White-eared Bulbuls, 30 Grey-throated Martins, 45 Barn and two Wire-tailed Swallows, one Dusky Crag Martin, one Siberian Chiffchaff, two Clamorous Reed, three Paddyfield, one Moustached (excellent views) and a few Blyth's Reed Warblers (heard only), one Rufous-fronted Prinia, two Desert Lesser Whitethroats, one Asian Pied and ten Brahminy Starlings, two Bluethroats, one Indian Robin, five Purple Sunbirds, one Baya Weaver, ten Indian Silverbills, five Tree Pipits, 350 Yellow, 15 Citrine and four Grey Wagtails.
Meals – Breakfast at Camp; lunch en route; dinner at Rohetgarh.
O/n Rohetgarh Palace (superior room), triple.

2 February Rohetgarh – Mt Abu

Breakfast 07.00. We drove to Mount Abu, birding on the way at a reservoir by the roadside. Here we found one Great, 50 Little and 150 Indian Cormorants, two Black-shouldered Kites, one Shikra, 30 Black-winged Stilts, two River Terns, ten Red-wattled Lapwings, two Pied Kingfishers, 20 Green Bee-eaters, six Wire-tailed and six Red-rumped Swallows, two Jungle Prinias, one Common Tailorbird, one Lesser Whitethroat, six Indian Robins, two Black Redstarts, six Brown Rock-chats, three Blue Rock-thrushes and five White-capped Buntings. At Mount Abu we saw one Shikra, one Steppe Buzzard, one Common Kestrel, one Plum-headed and ten Rose-ringed Parakeets, six House Swifts, three Indian Rollers, two White-throated Kingfishers, one Brown-capped Woodpecker, two Long-tailed Shrikes, four White-bellied Drongos, four White-spotted Fantails, six Indian Jungle Crows, one Indian Yellow Tit, one Great Tit, six Dusky Crag Martins, six Red-rumped Swallows, one Sulphur-bellied Warbler, six Hume's Leaf-warblers, six Grey-breasted and four Ashy Prinias, one Common Tailorbird, two Lesser Whitethroats, one Tawny-bellied Babbler, 20 Jungle and five Yellow-eyed Babblers, two Oriental White-eyes, two Indian Robins, two Black Redstarts, one Taiga Flycatcher, Purple Sunbirds, ten Indian Silverbills, four Chestnut-shouldered Petronias, two Grey Wagtails, one Tree Pipit, one White-capped and four Crested Buntings.
Meals – Breakfast at Rohetgarh; lunch en route; dinner at The Jaipur House.
O/n The Jaipur House, twin+single.

3 February Mt Abu - Dasada; Little Rann of Kutch

After our 07.00 breakfast we found our target – a flock of 36 Green Avadavats and observed this scarce endemic for some time. Nearby we saw two Indian Peafowl, one Plum-headed and 30 Rose-ringed Parakeets, one Eurasian Wryneck, six Brahminy Starlings, two Chestnut-shouldered Petronias, ten Indian Silverbills, two Scaly-breasted Munias and two Crested Buntings. In the Sanctuary we found six Oriental Honey-buzzards, one White-eyed Buzzard, one Booted Eagle, one Common Kestrel, one Oriental Turtle Dove, one Rufous Treepie, four Indian Jungle Crows, one Siberian Chiffchaff, four Hume's Leaf-warblers, two Grey-breasted Prinias, one Common Tailorbird, two Lesser Whitethroats, many Jungle and two Yellow-eyed Babblers, four Indian Robins, two Black Redstarts, two Purple Sunbirds and two Chestnut-shouldered Petronias. An Indian Scimitar-babbler was only heard. Later we left for Dasada, on the eastern edge of the Little Rann of Kutch, a journey of five hours, but with stops for lunch and roadside birding it took over six hours. After checking in at the safari lodge we stopped briefly to scan a field and an Indian Courser was soon spotted. We drove to the north, where we birded along a large river. Here we saw 100 Grey Lag Geese, two Ruddy Shelduck, two Indian Spot-billed Ducks, five Northern Pintail, two Common Pochard, ten Painted Storks, one Glossy and two Black-headed Ibises, 15 Indian Pond-herons, one Purple Heron, five Intermediate Egrets, one Great White Pelican, 100 Little Cormorants, four Black-shouldered and 20 Black Kites, one Montagu's, one Pallid and three Western Marsh Harriers, five Shikras, many Common Cranes, one Indian Stone-curlew, five Black-winged Stilts, ten Red-wattled Lapwings, one Green and three Common Sandpipers, one Gull-billed Tern, 20 Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, 15 House

Swifts, three **Indian Rollers**, six **White-throated** and two **Pied Kingfishers**, 40 **Green Bee-eaters**, one male **Isabelline**, one **Southern Grey** and eight **Long-tailed Shrikes**, 100 **Greater Short-toed Larks**, ten **Ashy-crowned Sparrow-larks**, two **Dusky Crag-martins**, one **Paddyfield** (excellent views) and one **Sykes's Warbler** (poor views), one **Zitting Cisticola**, two **Plain Prinias**, one **Siberian Stonechat**, one **Taiga Flycatcher**, two **Desert** and two **Variable Wheatears** and one **Tawny Pipit**. We went out after dark looking for night birds, but little was seen.

Meals – Breakfast at The Jaipur House; packed lunch en route; dinner at Rann Riders.

O/n Rann Riders (AC room), triple.

4 February Little Rann of Kutch

Breakfast at 06.30, then we boarded an open jeep and drove into the Little Rann and birded until 12.30. On the way back we stopped at a large lake. After our siestas we went back out at 16.30 and returned at 20.00. Birds seen today included six **Grey Francolins**, one **Northern Shoveler**, one **Asian Openbill**, two **Black** and two **Black-headed Ibises**, one **Great Egret**, two **Black-shouldered Kites**, one **Northern Goshawk**, three **Montagu's**, five **Pallid** and two **Western Marsh Harriers**, two **Shikras**, one **Red-necked Falcon**, one male **Merlin**, one **Macqueen's Bustard**, many **Common** and 200 **Demoiselle Cranes**, 50 **Red-wattled Lapwings**, two **Little Ringed Plovers**, one **Lesser Sandplover**, eight **Black-tailed Godwits**, three **Eurasian Curlew**, one **Spotted Redshank**, one **Marsh** and two **Common Sandpipers**, five **Temminck's Stints**, 60 **Ruff**, five **Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse**, one **Red Collared Dove**, ten **Rose-ringed Parakeets**, one **Spotted Owllet**, two **Short-eared Owls**, four **Sykes's Nightjars** (one seen incredibly well), two **Indian Rollers**, 20 **Green Bee-eaters**, one **Bay-backed**, one **Southern Grey** and one **Long-tailed Shrike**, one **Greater Hoopoe-lark**, three **Rufous-tailed**, four **Sand**, two **Crested** and many **Greater Short-toed Larks**, five **Ashy-crowned Sparrow-larks**, 30 **Barn Swallows**, two **Lesser Whitethroats**, two **Common Babblers**, two **Indian Robins**, five **Siberian Stonechats**, one **Pied Bushchat**, ten **Desert** and one **Variable Wheatear**, one **Taiga Flycatcher**, four **Purple Sunbirds**, two **Chestnut-shouldered Petronias**, ten **Indian Silverbills** and two **White Wagtails**. We also saw the rare Asiatic Wild Ass (Onager).

Meals – Breakfast, lunch & dinner at Rann Riders.

O/n Rann Riders (AC room or AC huts), triple.

5 February Dasada - Nakhatrana; Great Rann of Kutch

After an early breakfast we drove to Nakhatrana, which took 6.5 hours. We stopped for 40 minutes at a large reservoir between the Little and Great Ranns. We found 20 **Eurasian Wigeon**, 20 **Northern Shoveler**, one **Northern Pintail**, three **Greater Flamingos**, 20 **Painted Storks**, three **Black-headed Ibises**, 200 **Eurasian Spoonbills**, three **Intermediate Egrets**, one **Western Reef Egret**, four **Dalmatian** and 200 **Great White Pelicans**, four **Little** and 30 **Great Cormorants**, one **Oriental Honey-buzzard**, two **Black-shouldered Kites**, three **Western Marsh Harriers**, one **Shikra**, one **Black Eagle**, four **Booted Eagles**, many **Coot**, 50 **Common Cranes**, ten **Black-winged Stilts**, 20 **Red-wattled Lapwings**, four **Black-tailed Godwits**, one **Redshank**, two **Greenshanks**, one **Common Sandpiper**, one second year **Caspian Gull**, two **Gull-billed Terns**, 150 **Rose-ringed Parakeets**, one **Asian Koel**, four **Indian Rollers**, two **White-throated Kingfishers**, 30 **Green Bee-eaters**, ten **Common Babblers**, one **Eurasian Hoopoe**, and two **Indian Robins**. At 14.00 we checked in at CEDO and after a meal we went out birding at 15.30. With local knowledge we easily found four **Sykes's Larks**, one **Indian Bushlark** and three **White-naped Tits**. Other species here were one **Yellow-crowned Woodpecker**, (only seen briefly), one **Common Woodshrike**, four **Marshall's Ioras**, eight **Small Minivets**, one male **Isabelline** and three **Bay-backed Shrikes**, 50 **Greater Short-toed Larks**, 25 **Ashy-crowned Sparrow-larks**, 15 **Red-vented Bulbuls**, 25 **Barn**, two **Red-rumped** and two **Wire-tailed Swallows**, four **Dusky Crag Martins**, one **Plain** and four **Rufous-fronted Prinias**, six **Desert Lesser Whitethroats**, 30 **Common Babblers**, four **Indian Robins**, three *picata* **Variable Wheatears**, three **Purple Sunbirds**, 20 **Baya Weavers**, 20 **Indian Silverbills**, five **Yellow Wagtails** and two **Tawny Pipits**.

*Meals – Breakfast at Rann Riders; lunch & dinner at CEDO.
O/n CEDO (Jugal Tiwari's Guest House), twin+single.*

6 February Great Rann of Kutch

We departed before dawn, fuelled with tea and biscuits and carrying packed breakfast and lunch and drove for 30 minutes to reach Fulay, the only known wintering site in India for **Grey Hypocolius**. Just after it became light an **Oriental Honey-buzzard** flew low overhead and 20 **Montagu's Harriers** flew by in ones and twos, as if leaving their communal roost. Suddenly a **Grey Hypocolius** flew over and landed in the open. It was a good, but short view. Later views were not very good so we decided to return the next day. We then explored the Banni grasslands. Other birds today included 20 **Grey Francolins**, two **Black Ibises**, one **Black-shouldered Kite**, one **Short-toed Snake-eagle**, three **Montagu's**, one **Pallid** and four **Western Marsh Harriers**, one **Shikra**, four **Common Kestrels**, two **Indian Stone-curlews**, 15 **Red-wattled Lapwings**, ten **Green Bee-eaters**, six **Isabelline Shrikes**, three **Rufous-tailed**, five **Crested** and 250 **Greater Short-toed Larks**, 50 **White-eared** and 30 **Red-vented Bulbuls**, 15 **Barn** and two **Red-rumped Swallows**, four **Dusky Crag Martins**, one **Siberian Chiffchaff**, seven **Sykes's Warblers** (all seen very well), eight **Grey-breasted Prinias**, 15 **Desert Lesser Whitethroats**, one **Eastern Orphean Warbler**, 50 **Common Babblers**, three **Bluethroats**, 15 **Siberian Stonechats**, two **Red-tailed**, 15 **Desert** and three *picata* **Variable Wheatears**, six **Purple Sunbirds**, and eight **Tawny Pipits**. At a small stream where livestock came to drink we found a **Jack Snipe** and a **Green Sandpiper**. In a large area of short grass we located a few **Sociable Lapwings**, and by careful scanning managed to find 27 birds. Gradually they came closer to us, but suddenly, for no obvious reason, they sprung into the air and flew off in a very fast, tight group. In the last hour of light we stopped in a vast open area and watched and listened to the **Common Cranes** streaming over. They came from so far away that we could not see the beginning and we could not see the end of the line either. We counted about 8000 in 30 minutes and it was marvellous to listen to their bugling calls. When it was dark we drove around a huge flat, scantily-vegetated area with a spotlight and after about 20 minutes found a **Sykes's Nightjar** and later an **Indian Eagle Owl** and had great views of it settled and in flight.

*Meals – Packed breakfast; packed lunch; dinner at CEDO.
O/n CEDO, twin+single.*

7 February Great Rann of Kutch

We left early and saw a **Sykes's Nightjar** quite well on the road while it was still dark. We returned to Fulay to be there at first light, as we wanted better and more prolonged views of the **Grey Hypocolius** and when satisfied we left at 09.00. In this area we also saw 35 **Black Ibises**, three **Oriental Honey-buzzards**, two **Black-shouldered Kites**, one **Short-toed Snake-eagle**, 25 **Montagu's**, two **Pallid** and two **Western Marsh Harriers**, one **Shikra**, two **Booted Eagles**, one **Common Kestrel**, one **Green** and one **Wood Sandpiper**, 1000 **Common** and 30 **Demiselle Cranes**, ten **Rose-ringed Parakeets**, ten **Green Bee-eaters**, 50 **White-eared** and 30 **Red-vented Bulbuls**, five **Wire-tailed** and two **Red-rumped Swallows**, four **Dusky Crag Martins**, three **Sykes's Warblers**, five **Grey-breasted Prinias**, six **Desert Lesser Whitethroats**, two **Eastern Orphean Warblers**, one **Yellow-eyed** and 60 **Common Babblers**, two **Bluethroats**, two **Indian Robins**, one **Black Redstart**, one **Siberian Stonechat**, six **Desert** and two **Variable Wheatears**, one **Blue Rock-thrush** three **Purple Sunbirds**, ten **Indian Silverbills**, one **Citrine Wagtail** and two **Striolated Buntings**. We checked dry wadis and dry fields, where we found four **Indian Coursers**, two **Small Minivets**, one **Southern Grey** and two **Isabelline Shrikes**, four **Indian Bushlarks**, four **Rufous-tailed** and 50 **Greater Short-toed Larks**, and at another stop we saw ten **Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse** flying by. On and around some small rocky hills we found 13 **Painted Sandgrouse** and had excellent views of them on the ground, as well as flushing a roosting **Indian Eagle Owl** and seeing four **Grey-necked Buntings**. Overhead there were ten **House** and 350 **Alpine Swifts**. By the road a **Sirkeer Malkoha** was spotted, but I only saw it poorly. After lunch we drove to Mandvi beach where we saw 12 **Eurasian Oystercatchers**, 13 **Crab Plovers**,

ten **Terek Sandpipers**, one **Pacific Golden**, three **Grey** and 30 **Kentish Plovers**, 35 **Lesser Sandpipers**, five **Black-tailed** and seven **Bar-tailed Godwits**, five **Eurasian Curlew**, 12 **Ruddy Turnstones**, nine **Sanderlings**, 20 **Slender-billed**, 35 **Pallas's**, **Brown-headed**, **Black-headed** and 25 **Heuglin's Gulls**, 30 **Gull-billed**, one **Caspian**, six **Lesser-crested**, and 20 **Little/Saunders' Terns**. On pools a little inland from the beach we saw ten **Indian Spot-billed Ducks**, ten **Northern Shovelers**, 300 **Greater Flamingos**, six **Painted Storks**, ten **Eurasian Spoonbills**, ten **Intermediate Egrets**, 20 **Great White** and 40 **Dalmatian Pelicans**, 20 **Black-winged Stilts**, 50 **Red-wattled** and two **Yellow-wattled Lapwings**.

Meals – Packed breakfast; packed lunch; dinner at CEDO.

O/n CEDO, twin+single.

8 February Nakhatrana - Bhuj - Mumbai - Nagpur

After breakfast we transferred to Bhuj airport for our 09.50 flight to Mumbai, arriving at 11.35. We then took the 15.15 to Nagpur and arrived there at 16.40. Not much was seen today as we spent most of our day travelling, but birds seen in Bhuj included 30 **Indian Spot-billed Ducks**, four **Painted Storks**, four **Intermediate Egrets**, three **Black Kites**, ten **Black-winged Stilts**, a large flock of **Ruff**, 30 **River** and ten **Whiskered Terns**, 25 **Rose-ringed Parakeets**, ten **Green Bee-eaters**, ten **Barn Swallows**, 24 **Dusky Crag Martins** and ten **Asian Pied Starlings**.

Meals – Breakfast at CEDO; dinner at Tuli Imperial.

O/n Hotel Tuli Imperial, Nagpur (standard room), triple.

9 February Nagpur - Melghat

After an early and sumptuous breakfast we drove for six hours to Melghat Wildlife Sanctuary and checked in at 14.15 and had a simple but excellent lunch. Not many species were seen and we spent nearly 40 minutes trying to locate a **Forest Owllet**. Fortunately it is a diurnal owl so our chances were good and it was seen well. We also saw one **Shikra**, one **White-eyed Buzzard**, one **Peregrine**, two **Spotted Doves**, 25 **Rose-ringed Parakeets**, six **Alpine Swifts**, three **White-throated Kingfishers**, six **Green Bee-eaters**, two **White-naped Woodpeckers**, one **Black-hooded Oriole**, one **White-bellied Drongo**, five **Rufous Treepies**, one **Great** and one **Indian Yellow Tit**, one **Common Tailorbird**, 20 **Large Grey** and 40 **Jungle Babblers**, ten **Asian Pied Starlings**, one **Taiga Flycatcher**, two **Purple Sunbirds**, two *alba* **White Wagtails**, ten **Tree** and ten **Olive-backed Pipits**. Unfortunately we only had poor views of a female **Ultramarine Flycatcher** high in the trees near to our chalets.

Meals – Breakfast at Tuli; lunch & dinner at Melghat.

O/n Semadoh Tourist Complex, Melghat (basic room - standard) twin+single.

10 February Melghat – Nagpur - Delhi

We were up at 06.30 to bird in woodland and along a broad stony riverbed and back at 10.30. We had lunch early, at 11.10 and left at 11.45. Birds seen today were six **Ruddy Shelducks**, five **Black-shouldered Kites**, one **Long-legged Buzzard**, two **Common Kestrels**, two **Little Ringed Plovers** with three chicks, one **Common** and two **Green Sandpipers**, six **Spotted** and ten **Laughing Doves**, 35 **Rose-ringed** and four **Plum-headed Parakeets**, six **Crested Treeswifts**, five **Alpine Swifts**, seven **Indian Rollers**, two **White-throated**, one **Pied** and three **Common Kingfishers**, ten **Green Bee-eaters**, one **Indian Grey Hornbill**, one **Black-rumped Flameback** (heard only), one **White-naped Woodpecker** (seen very well), one **Long-tailed Shrike**, one **Greater Racket-tailed Drongo**, four **Barn** and two **Wire-tailed Swallows**, six **House Martins**, ten **Dusky Crag Martins**, 40 **Jungle Babblers**, ten **Asian Pied Starlings**, one **Black Redstart**, four **Taiga Flycatchers**, one male **Tickell's Blue Flycatcher**, two **Purple Sunbirds**, three **Grey** and two **White-browed Wagtails**, three **Tree** and ten **Olive-backed Pipits**. We drove for 4.5 hours to Nagpur for our 18.00 flight to Delhi, which arrived at 19.40. A driver was waiting to take us to our hotel, which was only ten minutes away.

Meals – Breakfast & lunch at Melghat; dinner in Delhi.

O/n Hotel Lohmod, twin+single.

11 February Delhi airport

The driver took us to Delhi airport at 04.20 for our 07.04 flight to UK on BA0256.

Meal – Small packed Breakfast.