

BIRDS AND WILDLIFE OF THE ANDAMANS & WESTERN GHATS

23th November-12th December 2010

Ann and Andrew Duff

We booked a 20-day tour for four people through Jo Thomas of Wild About Travel (www.wildabouttravel.co.uk) which included: good quality accommodation, breakfast, most lunches and dinners, an air-conditioned 10-seater mini-bus and driver, some park entrance fees and jeep services where necessary and the services of two excellent guides, Vikram Shil on the Andamans and Eldhose KV in Southern India. We were joined on the tour by Steve Lister and Les Colley.

International Flight

We booked our flights through Trailfinders with Jet Airways for £875 each; it was so expensive because we flew into Chennai for our flight to Port Blair and then out of Bangalore for our flight home.

Visas & taxes

A visa is currently required and cost £78.10 for the two of us including special delivery postage. We completed a separate application form for the Andaman Islands permit as this is a restricted area. There was no additional charge and the member of our group who hadn't applied in advance was able to do so on arrival in Port Blair. There was no departure tax.

Currency

£1=68.50 rupees. We exchanged £400 at the airport and this was more than enough to cover additional expenses i.e. tips, beers, soft drinks, camera permits, laundry, e-mails, souvenirs and any park entrance fees, lunches and dinners which were not included.

Overland travel

Road conditions were variable; the A roads were reasonably fast but minor ones were often full of potholes and those to Bodi Ghat and Valparai were very winding - the latter had 40 hair-pin bends!

Accommodation

We stayed in comfortable hotels with A/C at Chennai, Port Blair, Thattakad, Masinaguda, Nagarhole and Mysore; without A/C at Munnar and Ooty where it wasn't needed.

Food

We were delighted to find a wide variety of tasty curries and buffets available wherever we went although they can be very hot and spicy. This probably accounted for one day of minor stomach problems (or it could have been the in-flight meal of lukewarm rice!)

Health

Leeches can be a problem in forested areas although we encountered very few; leech socks are a good idea. Usual inoculations are advisable but not compulsory. We took anti-malarials (Chloroquine and proguanil) as the Andamans are a higher risk area; they were probably not needed in Southern India.

Electricity

230V AC 3-point round pin plugs.

Books and reports

We found the following books, reports and travel guides useful.

Birds: Birds of the Indian Subcontinent - Grimmett, Inskipp & Inskipp (Helm Identification Guides, 1998)

A Field Guide to the Birds of the Indian Subcontinent - Krys Kazmierczak (A. & C. Black, 2000).

Western Ghats Dec. 2009 - report by J. & J. Geeson

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The Western Ghats and Andaman Islands Dec. 2008 - report by Andy Mears & Ollie Wardman

Mammals: *Field Guide to the Mammals of the Indian Subcontinent* - K.K. Gurung & Raj Singh (Academic Press, 1996).

Travel: India - (Lonely Planet).

ITINERARY

November 23rd 21:05 dep. London Heathrow

November 24th 11:25 arrive Mumbai; 15:25 dep. Mumbai; 17:10 arrive Chennai; overnight at Vijay Park Hotel, Chennai.

November 25th 10:00 dep. Chennai; 12:05 arrive Port Blair; birding at Sippighat and Choul Dari

November 26th Full day at Mount Harriet NP

November 27th Marsh near Bamboo Flats; mangrove plantation; Jirkatang a.m.; Chidiya Tapu p.m.

November 28th Sippighat, Burmanalla, Chidiya Tapu and Munda Pahad a.m.; Mount Harriet NP p.m.

November 29th 12:40 dep. Port Blair; 14:50 arrive Chennai; 18:00 dep. Chennai; 19:00 arrive Kochi. Transfer to Thattakad.

November 30th Urulanthany a.m.; Thattakad and Idamalayar p.m.

December 1st Urulanthany, Idamalayar Forest and Dam a.m.; Thattakad and area of rock near Birds Lagoon p.m.

December 2nd Urulanthany a.m.; en route to Munnar; Munnar p.m.

December 3rd Eravikulam NP, Munnar a.m.; Bodi Ghat p.m.

December 4th Munnar to Anamalai birding en route; Banyan Tree Farm p.m.

December 5th Banyan Tree Farm & Topslip a.m.; drive to Ooty p.m.

December 6th Full day Fernhills Palace and Ooty

December 7th Ooty early a.m.; drive to Mudumalai; Mudumalai WLS p.m.

December 8th Mudumalai WLS a.m.; birding en route to Nagarhole NP; Nagarhole NP p.m.

December 9th Full day at Nagarhole NP

December 10th Nagarhole NP a.m.; birding en route to Mysore p.m.

December 11th Mysore to Bangalore birding en route; 21:30 flight to Mumbai

December 12th 02:35 dep. Mumbai; 07:00 arrive London Heathrow

DIARY

November 23rd

We were due to depart at 21:05 but were delayed. As we had a long wait for our connecting flight this didn't matter but as Mumbai Airport is undergoing major restructuring it is necessary to allow a couple of hours to transfer from the international terminal to the domestic terminal - a tedious and frustrating experience and even worse on the homeward bound leg!

November 24th

Arrived late in Mumbai; collected our baggage, queued for an hour to have it screened before handing it over to Jet Airways staff to transport to domestic departures. Transfer bus took another half an hour which left us just enough time to buy a cup of coffee after exchanging pounds into rupees. Security is very tight in Mumbai and Andrew was sent back to the hand-luggage screening because he didn't have a Jet Airways label with the date stamp on it. Again we were late leaving and landed in Chennai at 17:40 where it was already getting dark. A lengthy transfer through slow-moving traffic jams took us to the Vijay Park Hotel where, after a light supper, we sank thankfully into a comfortable bed.

November 25th

07:00 We were down for breakfast (with our luggage) before the restaurant opened. After very sweet tea or coffee (sugar and evaporated milk already added) and an omelette it was time to face the traffic again. Luckily it wasn't as bad as the previous evening and we were in the departure lounge by 08:30. When we arrived in Port Blair at 12:30 we were met by our guide, Vikram Shil, and our driver, Gopal, who soon had us checked into the Emerald View Hotel and off out again to scour the pools around Sippighat for Andaman Teal but none were to be found. Andaman

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Coucal was our first new bird. We tried for the Barn Owl (the very distinctive Andaman endemic ssp. *deroepstorffi*, a potential split) but had no luck.

November 26th

04:30 A misunderstanding with the restaurant manager meant our packed breakfasts weren't ready but the guy on the desk quickly rustled some up for us. We took the first ferry from Chatham to Bamboo Flats and headed for Mount Harriet NP where we birded along the road before the entrance to the park. Andaman endemics came thick and fast: Andaman Treepie, Andaman Drongo, Andaman Wood-Pigeon, (Andaman) White-rumped Shama, Andaman Bulbul, and Andaman Serpent-Eagle. In the middle of the day we drove up to the Forest Guest House where Vikram was able to persuade the caretaker and his staff to provide us with omelettes and coffee.

We had excellent views of (Andaman) Long-tailed Parakeet and, nicely refreshed, we set off to search for Andaman Crake which did not give in easily but eventually we had reasonable views as one scurried up a sunny bank. Plain (Andaman) Flowerpeckers and White-headed Starlings were seen at the Forest checkpoint and Andaman Woodpecker as we walked along the road. Just before dusk (c.17:00) we headed back to the Forest Guest House area where an Andaman Hawk-Owl was very responsive. A short distance down the road we enjoyed good views of Andaman Scops-Owl. By this time we were rather tired and resisted Vikram's offer to try again for the Barn Owl. Dinner in the Emerald View restaurant was good but the service left a lot to be desired!

November 27th

04:30 Breakfast of sandwiches and boiled eggs were ready for us this morning as we set off again for the first ferry. We searched an area of marsh we had seen from the top of Mount Harriet in the hope of finding the elusive Andaman Teal and although the area was full of waterbirds there were no teal. We drove back towards Port Blair stopping at an area of mangroves, then a walk along the road near Jirkatang where we had excellent views of another Andaman Serpent-Eagle and Andaman Woodpecker. We checked all the lagoons and pools around Sippighat but still no Teal.

After a slow lunch at the hotel and a brief rest we travelled south to Chidiya Tapu (also written as Chiriya Tapu) stopping en route for Pale-footed Bush-Warbler which took some time and a lot of patience but showed well in the end. Our luck held and at Chidiya Tapu we had good views of Oriental Scops-Owl, (Hume's) Brown Hawk-Owl and Andaman Nightjar as well as Andaman Fruit-bat. Another great day's birding and even the refusal of the Barn Owl to put in an appearance could not dim our pleasure.

We decided to eat out at the New Lighthouse restaurant (recommended in the Lonely Planet guide) and took tuk-tuks to Aberdeen Jetty as we weren't sure of the distance and the cost was next to nothing - about 50-75p depending on a) the time of night and b) the driver! The food was very spicy but good; the only drawback was the lack of a liquor license so no beer to temper the heat of the curry.

November 28th

04:45 We had decided that an early morning visit to Sippighat might result in finding the teal but we were forced to the conclusion that they were just not there so sadly we gave up on them and drove south to the coast for a few padders and in search of Beach Thick-knee. We found a Pacific Reef-Heron but no thick-knees. Then began a fruitless search for the one major outstanding endemic - the Andaman Cuckoo-Dove - and although we walked a fair distance along the road at Chidiya Tapu we only saw Andaman Coucals. Despondently we went back for lunch though not in the restaurant; we discovered that room service was very quick and got our orders right!

When we met Vikram after lunch Andrew suggested that we should go back to Mount Harriet as we had heard an Andaman Cuckoo-Dove there. We tried a side track but the only thing of interest was a beautiful white orchid. So then we tried the main road again and there was an immediate response but the bird was some distance away and took a while before we could see it. This time there was no doubt; we had our Andaman Cuckoo-Dove.



Steve, Vikram and sunbeams on Mount Harriet, South Andaman 28/11/2010

As it was now getting towards dusk we headed back to Port Blair for a final attempt for the Barn Owl which we did at least hear but it would not show itself! Dined at the Lighthouse Residency, a supposedly more upmarket sister to the New Lighthouse, but we didn't think it was as good although it did have a bar.

November 29th

We had been told that our check-out time was 07:00, the same time that breakfast started! Steve did some negotiating and had this adjusted to a more sensible 09:30 as our flight wasn't till 12:40. Security was again stringent and Les had to open his case to show his alarm clock and speakers. Somehow his padlock key got locked inside in his case but by the time he'd realised the security men had replaced the padlock! (Luckily it turned out to be relatively easy to pick once we got to Birds Lagoon!). We arrived at Kochi at approx. 19:00 after uneventful flights via Chennai. We had a meal at a nearby hotel and then were driven to Birds Lagoon at Thattakad (also written as Thattekad) by Sadeesh who would be our patient and reliable driver for the rest of the trip.

November 30th

Eldhose arrived as we were enjoying our breakfast omelettes at 06:10 and we arranged to pick him up at the entrance to the Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary soon after 06:30. In fact it was a 20-minute drive from Birds Lagoon to the sanctuary so we realised we would need to leave earlier on subsequent days, especially as it then took another half an hour to get to Urulanthany. We paid our fee and walked the trail as far as an enormous black granite outcrop from which we had a great view of the surrounding forest. The walk began with close-up views of a roosting Ceylon Frogmouth and was followed by Blue-throated Flycatcher and a glimpse of a possible White-bellied Blue-Flycatcher. Highlights included: Rusty-tailed Flycatcher, Dark-fronted Babbler, Long-billed Sunbird, Malabar Parakeet, Crimson-backed Sunbird, White-rumped Needletail, White-cheeked Barbet and an Indian Giant Squirrel.



Steve, Eldhose and Ann at Urulanthany, Thattakad, 30/11/2010

We returned to the hotel for lunch and a rest during the hottest part of the day before visiting various sites in the afternoon. First we stopped at the Bird Sanctuary for a pair of Brown Hawk-Owls then an area of degraded forest for Mottled Wood-Owl which unfortunately flew before any of us other than Eldhose got onto it. We drove up towards Idamalayar Dam to Eldhose's site for White-bellied Treepie, stopping en route for (Malabar) Chestnut-tailed Starling, Rufous Babbler (poor views), Orange-headed Thrush and untickable views of Thick-billed Warbler. The White-bellied Treepies performed well and we spent quite some time enjoying their antics.

December 1st

After yesterday's lazy start we were up at 04:00, picked up our packed breakfast and met Eldhose before entering the Urulanthany section of forest again. It was still dark but we needed to be so early to listen for the Oriental Bay-Owl which Eldhose would then try to locate as it settled down to roost for the day. At one point we heard it quite close by which raised our hopes but we failed to find it. As it began to get light Eldhose went off and spent over half an hour searching for it but all he found was quite a few leeches. Meanwhile we had been occupied with Malabar Grey Hornbill, Black-crested Bulbul, Grey Junglefowl, Pompadour Pigeon and a treeful of Bonnet Macaques. At 08:30 we left for Idamalayar, this time going as far as the dam for Dusky Crag-Martin, stopping for better views of Rufous Babbler on the way but with little else of note. While at the dam it began to drizzle and this turned into quite heavy rain with low cloud and mist descending in the afternoon which ruled out a return to Idamalayar Forest. Instead we searched without success for Mottled Wood-Owl and then went to an open area of scree and rock close to Birds Lagoon to wait in the rain for nightjars. Savannah and Jerdon's Nightjars were both seen, rescuing what had been a frustrating day. Because of the uncertain weather we decided to keep our options open for the following day. Steve volunteered to get up at 03:30 and if it had stopped raining we would try again for the Bay-Owl.

December 2nd

03:30 and a ring at our doorbell had us staggering out of bed. We picked Eldhose up at 04:30 and drove to Urulanthany. As it had rained hard during the night there were considerably more leeches around as most of the group discovered as we sat waiting. The Bay-Owl was very vocal but Eldhose was unable to locate it so eventually we gave up and left for the spurfowl feeding station. Usually grain was put out at 07:00 but this was delayed to give us time to get there. We arrived at

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07:30 and had good views of Grey Junglefowl but the Red Spurfowl did not appear; it was too late. We then had a fruitless search for Mottled Wood-Owl around Eldhose's house, and as we were driving out of his estate two of us were fortunate to see Red Spurfowl crossing the track - unfortunately not the two who needed it! We returned to Birds Lagoon for breakfast and then checked out.

The distance to Munnar is not great - about 90km - but it is very winding and quite narrow in places. Often oncoming vehicles would be on the wrong side of the road as they attempted to avoid the potholes or overtake, even on blind bends! We arrived in Munnar in mid-afternoon and had a brilliant couple of hours birding before checking into the Shamrock Hotel outside of town. Nilgiri Flycatcher, Black-and-rufous Flycatcher, Nilgiri Wood-Pigeon, Plain (Nilgiri) Flowerpecker and Grey-breasted Laughingthrush were all seen before we drove up through a quiet tea plantation. We were all thinking 'Why are we here' in what appeared to be a bird-free zone when a couple of warblers were spotted. We got out to investigate and had just ticked Tytler's Leaf-Warbler when Eldhose shouted 'Shortwing'! He played his recording and within minutes a White-bellied Shortwing hopped into full view only a few feet away under the tea bushes. Wow! After yesterday's disappointments we were all elated.

Munnar is a very busy tourist town with lots of pilgrims so we were pleased that the Shamrock Hotel was some distance out of town although it did mean delays getting through the chaotic town centre.

December 3rd

Munnar was quite chilly after Thattakad and we were glad of the blanket on our bed. From our balcony we could see Blue Rock-Thrush and Malabar Whistling-Thrush - a good start to the day. After a late breakfast (06:30) we picked Eldhose up in the centre of Munnar and drove to Eravikulam NP where a few people were already queuing waiting for the ticket office to open (220 rupees per person + 25 rupees for cameras). It was quite chilly and drizzling and, as we took the first bus up, the swirling mist grew denser. This did not augur well for the special birds at this higher altitude. However at the first bend up from the bus-stop we were treated to close views of Grey-breasted Laughingthrush, White-bellied Shortwing and in response to Andrew's pishing a Painted Bush-Quail jumped up onto the low wall, ran along it and posed nicely before jumping back down on the far side. Two fine male Nilgiri Tahrs were seen traversing a rock face and then a family group of females with young came down the road right past us! We could hear Broad-tailed Grassbird and Nilgiri Pipit but they were some distance away and the mist made it very difficult. During times when the mist cleared we were able to see the pipit but not the grassbird. As it got warmer we had close views of Nilgiri Pipit, a close female Black-and-rufous Flycatcher and a Pallid Harrier drifted past. We decided not to waste any more time on the grassbird but to head for Bodi Ghat as it would be a long drive and by 10:00 the number of visitors had begun to grow.

Once over the pass the mist was even denser than before and it was slow going. When we reached the lay-by which is the stake-out for Yellow-throated Bulbul we could see no further than the first stand of trees. Luckily the one we could see was a fruiting tree and we settled down to eat our packed lunches and watch and wait. We were becoming a bit disconsolate when suddenly Eldhose called 'There it is!' Unfortunately not all the group saw it so we waited in the hope it would reappear. Eventually the decision was taken that those who had seen it would continue down to the lowlands for a few potentially new birds. This new area had been largely cleared since Eldhose had last been there but we saw new birds for some of us including Bay-backed Shrike and Jungle Bush-Quail. On returning to the lay-by our driver seemed to have forgotten that we had to pick up Les and was about to drive past him when we all yelled for him to stop! The mist had lifted so the journey back in the dark didn't take quite so long although it was disconcerting to see the state of the road! We arrived back in Munnar at 19:00 to a huge and varied meal which we couldn't do justice to.

December 4th

We had another long drive ahead of us as Andrew and I had asked to go to Valparai to try for Lion-tailed Macaque. This involved a tortuous journey through tea plantations and round 40 hairpin bends. About 6km from Valparai Eldhose was delighted to spot an old man at the side of the road and we all followed him out of the vehicle. This chap was a forest ranger who was 'minding' a small group of about

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eight Lion-tailed Macaques to prevent them from wandering onto the road and being killed. We were able to watch the troop feeding at close quarters until they moved away from the roadside. We thanked and tipped the ranger and resumed birding to the relief of the non-mammal orientated member of the group. We stopped en route for Rufous Babblers and then amazingly Eldhose heard a Yellow-throated Bulbul calling as we were negotiating those horrendous hairpin bends. We tumbled out of the vehicle and all managed excellent views of a solitary bird.

After a lunch stop of coffee and biscuits (where the staff asked to see English currency and were intrigued by our 20p which they wanted to buy - we were happy to give it to them and were rewarded with big smiles and lots of waving when we left) we drove alongside the canal which would eventually take us to our next hotel, Banyan Tree Farm. We walked part of this track finding Blue-faced Malkoha, White-browed Bulbul, Common Woodshrike and Jerdon's Bushlark.

At dusk we waited hopefully for the resident Mottled Wood-Owl to fly over but only saw Spotted Owlet, Peregrine Falcon (Shaheen), Alpine Swift and Brown-backed Needletail plus lots of mosquitoes. Our evening meal was amazing - Indian haute-cuisine presented to us by the owner of the Banyan Tree who explained each dish and how it should be eaten. Absolutely delicious!

December 5th

At approx. 05:20 Andrew woke me to ask if I would like to get up to try for the Mottled Wood-Owl as it had been calling not far away. We roused the other two and searched the grounds but again failed to find it. Was this to be our bogey bird? Happily no, because when Eldhose joined us at 06:30 he led us into the coconut plantation where it was perched up on a palm frond. At last!

We left for Topslip up yet another bumpy, zigzag road, arriving at 07:45 only to be kept waiting for an hour while a) various forms were filled in, even though Eldhose had already applied in advance for permits, and b) for our obligatory guide who didn't show up until 08:45. We were not happy. With so much prime birding time lost it was hardly surprising that we failed to find our main target, Wynaad Laughingthrush. Our best birds there were White-bellied Blue-Flycatcher, White-cheeked Barbet and White-bellied Treepie. The worst thing there was the quite recently dead baby elephant which we found as we scrambled through the dense stands of bamboo.

Back at the Banyan Tree by 11:50, we were treated to another exquisite repast laid out on banana leaves with lots of 'taster' dishes unlike any Indian food we had tried before. Reluctantly we left for the hill town of Ooty (Udhagamandalam or Ootacamund) hoping to do a detour for another site for Wynaad Laughingthrush and Grey-headed Bulbul. However the Sunday traffic slowed us down and we were unable to do it, arriving in chilly Ooty at 19:00 after a slow uphill grind. Ooty is a popular tourist spot both with Indians and foreigners so it was lively and a bit brash. Our hotel was close to the centre with two cafes and a restaurant, all vegetarian which was a bit of a blow to us carnivores. The pizzeria on the sidewalk was the best option but very slow as was the cafe for breakfast even though we only wanted toast and jam as there were no omelettes.

December 6th

Three layers of clothes this morning as it was distinctly chilly first thing. We drove first to Dodda Betta where we had great views of Nilgiri Laughingthrush, Indian Robin and Tickell's Leaf-Warbler. Next, to Fernhills Palace (a former maharaja's palace but now a hotel) for the obligatory drink - the hot chocolate is recommended before traipsing round the grounds. Unfortunately the Kashmir Flycatcher which Eldhose had seen there a week earlier had moved on but we enjoyed fabulous prolonged views of Black-and-rufous Flycatchers, Indian Blue Robin and Spot-breasted Fantail.

After lunch we birded around the Fernhills area again and were delighted to find a Nilgiri Blue Robin which sat up nicely right next to us. We drove out of town on the Kotagiri road to try for Brown Wood-Owl but there was no response and it was getting cold again so we returned to Ooty for more pizza.

December 7th

A 06:30 start to look for (Nilgiri) Scaly Thrush but we were unsuccessful and returned to Ooty for breakfast then travelled on to Masinagudi and Mudumalai NP. First we searched for Grey-headed Bulbul with a local guide who told us he had seen two earlier that day where we were looking - not much consolation for those of us who needed it! However Eldhose took us to a site for White-bellied Minivet and after a short walk we were treated to good views of a male and two females and then two more females. In the same area we found Hume's Whitethroat, Brahminy Starling, Jerdon's Bushlark, Ashy-crowned Sparrow-lark, Eastern Orphean Warbler and Indian Silverbill.

We drove back to town and picked up our local guide again to go to a stakeout for Brown Fish-Owl. The owner of the land assured us that the owl was in the very tall dense tree in the middle of the field in front of his house but no amount of scanning could find it. The guide went off along the river to see if he could locate it and we stood around watching a few common birds. Eventually we decided to leave and headed back towards the minibus. Eldhose was last and just as we reached the edge of the field he yelled for us to stop. As we turned the owl flew in to the clearing and we all enjoyed good scope views.

December 8th

One last try for Grey-headed Bulbul for the two of us who needed it whilst the other two tried for Scaly Thrush. The bulbul was only heard but we glimpsed a Painted Spurfowl much to the annoyance of the other two, and Steve had been harangued by five uniformed men who told him he should not have been walking alongside the road. We left Masinagudi at 08:30 for Kabini River Lodge at Nagarhole NP, stopping several times en route at various lakes and rivers. These added a number of species to the trip list including Black-headed Ibis, Painted Stork, Oriental Honey-Buzzard, Asian Openbill, Red-naped Ibis, Streak-throated Swallow and Malabar Lark.

After a buffet lunch at the lodge we had time to relax or explore the grounds before our late afternoon safari. The park wasn't too busy and our guide managed to find Brown Fish-Owl, Heart-spotted Woodpecker, Osprey, Malabar Pied-Hornbill and Spotted Owlet along with some good mammals: Stripe-necked and Ruddy Mongooses, Asian Elephant and Smooth-coated Otter.

December 9th

Coffee was delivered to our cottage door at 06:00 to prepare us for a second jeep safari. Because the verges are cut well back from the tracks there was really not much chance of seeing spurfowls or quail and there was the added disadvantage of low-lying mist. So very few birds seen, just White-bellied Woodpecker, White-naped Flameback, Shikra and Grey Junglefowl. However we did see a magnificent male Leopard which Andrew spotted crossing the track ahead of us.

After breakfast we went out in our minibus and birded the fields around the lodge seeing Malabar Lark, Rufous-tailed Lark and a Short-toed Eagle on the ground devouring, head first, a decent-sized snake. By 11:45 it was very hot so we headed back to the lodge only stopping to acquire a large root of ginger from some workers who were harvesting it.

In the heat of the day it was pleasant to sit on the balcony of our cottage overlooking the man-made lake while Andrew sifted through leaf litter searching for beetles. After a buffet lunch we had a slow boat 'safari' round the lake which added a few new birds to the list, notably: Grey-headed Fish-Eagle, River Tern, and Indian and Great Cormorants. Before dinner that evening we watched a very hard-hitting film about tiger conservation which was quite damning about the complacent attitude of the Indian Government.

December 10th

After our early morning coffee we went for a last stroll through the extensive grounds seeing Brown Fish-Owl, Yellow-footed Pigeon and Oriental Turtle-Dove. We left for Mysore after an early breakfast, arriving at The Green Hotel at approx. 10:15. At 13:00 we drove out of Mysore to try to find a deep cutting with a canal running through it where Eldhose had been told there was a Rock Eagle-Owl. We went quite a long way before Eldhose decided we had gone too far so we headed back. I think we were quite dubious about finding this stakeout so when we stopped to explore a suitable looking cutting we were a bit half-hearted. First we walked

along one bank then Eldhose rushed ahead to explore the opposite bank. His whoop of delight had us all hurrying to his side and it took a few seconds before we could spot the Eagle-Owl tucked into a crevice in the rocks, perfectly camouflaged. We admired and photographed the bird for some time before returning to Mysore and the Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary for a boat trip to add a few more birds to the list. I would personally have preferred a trip to the Mysore Palace especially as the entrance fees and hire of the rowing boat with boatman came to 950 rupees. That bought us half an hour on the lake to see pelicans and egrets up close so there were good photo opportunities and we saw our only Black-crowned Night-Herons and Great Thick-knees of the trip. We left the park and drove a short distance to a canal alongside fields of sugar cane and coconut plantations where we found Indian Grey Hornbill, Wire-tailed Swallow and a Grey Mongoose.

December 11th

An early start with a packed breakfast as we had a long drive to Bangalore ahead of us, plus we needed to be at Eldhose's vulture site before they took to the sky. On the way we stopped so that Eldhose and Sadeesh could have breakfast whilst we had coffee, arriving at the site in good time. The Indian Vultures - a critically endangered species - were loafing high on the ledges of this sacred Hindu rock and there were several nests. We watched as it got warm enough for them to take off seeing eleven birds in total. Ironically Steve found another Rock Eagle-Owl perched in a hole on the cliff-face. Also there were Rufous-tailed Larks and our only Common Babblers of the trip. (This was one of the few areas where we encountered persistent beggars, mainly children, but Eldhose was adamant that we should give them nothing, not even some of our packed breakfast. As he rightly pointed out there was a large shanty settlement close by and once the inhabitants had received something they would pester everyone who visited the site but it was still difficult to refuse).



Steve, Andrew, Eldhose, Sadeesh and Les, Nandi Hills, 11/12/2010

Bangalore was a nightmare! It took two hours to struggle through the Saturday shoppers and Sadeesh was amazingly patient. Our objective was to get to the old Indian fort at Nandi Hills as we had several hours before our flight home and there was a chance of seeing Ultramarine Flycatcher. Of course, being Saturday Nandi Hills was very busy but most people were only interested in climbing to the top for the view so we were able to scan the trees with minimal disruption. Other than Alpine Swifts and Dusky Crag-Martins there were not many birds and we had just about given up when Steve spied our quarry, a superb male bird, up in the canopy. It did not stay for long but we were satisfied to have seen it at all.

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Time to head for the airport for our 21:30 flight to Mumbai and to say a reluctant goodbye to our excellent guide and driver. We arrived in Mumbai at approx. 23:20 and then had to wait nearly an hour for a transit bus from the domestic terminal to the international departures. We were amazed when this bus took us out of the airport altogether, took ages to cross a dense traffic jam, and deposited us outside departures where there was a huge queue. We fully understand the need for tight security, especially in Mumbai, but the system leaves much to be desired. As we had only hand luggage the first guard on duty outside waved us through when we showed our boarding passes much to the annoyance of the large crowd. The second guard wanted to see our passports and flight details as well as our boarding passes. In theory we had three hours between flights and we certainly needed that.

December 12th

We arrived at Heathrow on time at 07:00 to ice and the remains of the previous week's snow. Brrr!

Summary

It's quite expensive to visit the Andaman Islands (most goods are double what they would cost on the mainland) but we felt it was well worthwhile to combine it with the Western Ghats. Apart from Andaman Teal and (Andaman) Barn-Owl - the latter not yet a split - we saw all the endemic birds and potential splits. We had four-and-a-half days which was just about right. Tourism is, as yet, underdeveloped and we were not hassled at all.

Twelve days for the Western Ghats was barely long enough given the time taken to get around. The distance between sites isn't great but the state of the higher altitude roads makes for slow journeys. Kerala was delightful with its lush greenery and friendly people but we did miss out on some birding due to rain and mist. We won't forget the charming young boys who greeted us with formal handshakes at dawn; they were on their way to school and we were waiting for the Oriental Bay-Owl. Tamil Nadu was more arid with less vegetation and many cattle and goats. In Karnataka there appeared to be more poverty and it was the only state where we encountered begging. Notable dips were Wynaad Laughing-Thrush, Oriental Bay-Owl (heard only) and (Nilgiri) Scaly Thrush which is a potential split.

In total we saw or heard 316 species of which 51 were new for us with an additional 14 potential splits. Our guides and drivers were highly skilled and we would thoroughly recommend them. To escape the British winter for a couple of weeks and for some great birding then this trip is ideal.

SYSTEMATIC LIST - BIRDS

Nomenclature and classification follow Clements' *Birds of the World: a checklist* 6th edition (2007), including updates as taken from the Cornell University Press updates page (<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/clementschecklist/corrections>) to 18 December 2009. Indian endemic species and forms are marked **(E)**.

Lesser Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna javanica*
Seen daily on the Andamans.

Cotton Pygmy-goose *Nettapus coromandelianus*
3 between Mudumalai NP and Nagarhole NP on 8th Dec.

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*
3 between Mudumalai NP and Nagarhole NP on 8th Dec.

Indian Spot-billed Duck *Anas poecilorhyncha*
Seen at suitable wetlands 8th, 9th & 10th Dec.

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*
2 between Mudumalai NP and Nagarhole NP on 8th Dec.

Garganey *Anas querquedula*
Seen on 8th Dec. between Mudumalai and Nagarhole and on 10th Dec. between Nagarhole and Mysore.

Grey Francolin *Francolinus pondicerianus*
2 on 7th Dec. Mudumalai NP; 2 on 9th Dec. Nagarhole NP; 2 on 10th Dec. near Mysore.

Jungle Bush-Quail *Perdicula asiatica*
5 on 3rd Dec. near Bodi.

Painted Bush-Quail *Perdicula erythrorhyncha* **(E)**
1 on 3rd Dec. Eravikulam NP.

Red Spurfowl *Galloperdix spadicea* **(E)**
2 on 2nd Dec. Urulanthany.

Painted Spurfowl *Galloperdix lunulata* **(E)**
1 (brief views) on 8th Dec. Mudumalai NP.

Grey Junglefowl *Gallus sonneratii* **(E)**
Seen almost daily in Southern India.

Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus*
A few seen in the lowlands.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*
Several on 8th Dec. between Mudumalai NP and Nagarhole NP.

Spot-billed Pelican *Pelecanus philippensis*
1 on 5th Dec. en route to Topslip; several on 10th Dec. Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary.

Indian Cormorant (Shag) *Phalacrocorax fuscicollis*
2 on 9th Dec. Nagarhole NP; several on 10th Dec. Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*
Several on 9th Dec. Nagarhole NP.

Little Cormorant *Phalacrocorax niger*
Seen almost daily in Southern India.

Darter *Anhinga melanogaster*
1 on 1st Dec. Birds Lagoon; seen at suitable wetlands 8th, 9th & 10th Dec.

Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis*
5 on 27th Nov. South Andaman; 1 on 10th Dec. en route to Mysore.

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Cinnamon Bittern *Ixobrychus cinnamomeus*
1 on 28th Nov. South Andaman.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*
1 on 27th Nov. South Andaman.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*
4 on 10th Dec. en route from Nagarhole to Mysore.

Great Egret *Ardea alba*
Seen daily South Andaman; Nagarhole NP; Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary.

Intermediate Egret *Mesophoyx intermedia*
Several on 27th & 28th Nov. South Andaman; 1 on 4th Dec. en route to Anamalai NP; 1 on 8th & 9th Nagarhole NP; several on 10th Dec. Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*
Seen regularly.

Pacific Reef-Heron *Egretta sacra*
1 on 28th Nov. Burmanalla, South Andaman.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*
Common throughout.

Indian Pond-Heron *Ardeola grayii*
Seen daily.

Striated (Little) Heron *Butorides striata*
Seen 25th, 27th & 28th Nov. South Andaman.

Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*
Several on 10th Dec. Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary.

Black-headed Ibis *Threskiornis melanocephalus*
Seen at suitable wetlands 8th, 9th 10th Dec.

Red-naped (Black) Ibis *Pseudibis papilosa*
Seen at suitable wetlands 8th, 9th 10th Dec.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*
10 on 10th Dec. Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary.

Asian Openbill *Anastomus oscitans*
Seen at suitable wetlands 8th, 9th 10th Dec.

Painted Stork *Mycteria leucocephala*
2 on 8th Dec. en route to Nagarhole; 5+ on 9th Dec. Kabini River Lodge, Nagarhole NP.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*
1 on 8th and 2 on 9th Dec., Kabini River Lodge, Nagarhole NP.

Oriental Honey-buzzard *Pernis ptilorhyncus*
1 on 30th Nov. Urulanthany; 1 on 1st Dec. nr Thattakad; 1 on 3rd Dec. en route to Bodi Ghat; 1 on 8th Dec. Nagarhole NP; 2 on 9th Dec. Kabini River Lodge area, Nagarhole.

Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus*
Seen regularly from 3rd Dec. onwards.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*
Daily from 5th Dec.

Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus*
Seen from the ferry on South Andaman and at Nagarhole NP.

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White-bellied Sea-Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster*
Good numbers seen daily on South Andaman.

Grey-headed Fish-Eagle *Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus*
3 on 9th Dec. Nagarhole NP.

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*
2 on 8th Dec. en route to Nagarhole; 3 on 11th Dec. Ramanagara Hills, en route to Bangalore.

Indian Vulture *Gyps indicus*
11 on 11th Dec. Ramanagara Hills, en route to Bangalore.

Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*
1 on 9th Dec. Nagarhole NP, eating a large snake.

Crested Serpent-Eagle *Spilornis cheela*
2 on 30th Nov. and 1 on 1st Dec. Thattakad; 1 on 8th Dec. Nagarhole NP.

Andaman Serpent-Eagle *Spilornis elgini* (E)
1 on 26th Nov. Mount Harriet; 1 on 27th Nov. Jirkatang; 3 on 28th Nov. Chidiya Tapu and Munda Pahad, South Andaman.



Andaman Serpent-Eagle

Eurasian Marsh-Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*
1 on 8th Dec. en route to Nagarhole.

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*
1 'ringtail' on 3rd Dec. Eravikulam NP.

Shikra *Accipiter badius*
2 on 30th Nov. Urulanthany; 3 on 1st Dec. Thattakad.

Besra *Accipiter virgatus*
1 on 27th Nov. nr Bamboo Flats, South Andaman; 1 on 3rd Dec. en route to Bodi Ghat.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*
2 on 6th Dec. Ooty.

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Bonelli's Eagle *Aquila fasciata*
1 on 10th Dec. (SL)

Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus*
1 on 3rd Dec. Bodi Ghat.

Rufous-bellied Eagle *Lophotrioichis kienerii*
1 on 4th Dec. en route to Anamalai NP.

Changeable Hawk-Eagle *Nisaetus cirrhatus*
Seen almost daily on South Andaman; single birds on 1st Dec. at Thattakad and on 7th Dec. at Mudumalai NP.

Eurasian Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*
Seen regularly on the mainland.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*
(one of the migratory spp.): 1 on 27th Nov. South Andaman; 1 on 9th Dec. Nagarhole NP.

(Shaheen) Peregrine Falcon *Falco p. peregrinator* **(E)**
1 on 4th Dec. Banyan Tree Farm; 1 on 11th Dec. Ramanagara Hills.

Andaman Crane *Rallina canningi* **(E)**
Good views of 1 on 26th Nov. Mount Harriet NP, South Andaman.

White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus*
Common on wetlands on the mainland.

Purple Swampfen *Porphyrio porphyrio*
Common on wetlands on South Andaman and the mainland.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*
Common on wetlands on South Andaman.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*
Common on wetlands on the mainland.

Great Thick-knee *Burhinus recurvirostris*
6 on 10th Dec. Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary.



Great Thick-knee (*Les Colley*)

Yellow-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus malabaricus*
4 on 7th Dec. Mudumalai NP.

Red-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus*
Common on wetlands on the mainland.

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Pacific Golden-Plover *Pluvialis fulva*

Seen on 25th, 27th & 28th Nov. at Choul Dari.

Lesser Sand-Plover *Charadrius mongolus*

1 on 28th Nov. at Sippighat.

Greater Sand-Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*

2 on 27th Nov. nr Bamboo Flats, South Andaman.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

2 on 8th Dec. en route to Nagarhole NP.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

1 at Nagarhole NP on 8th-9th Dec. (SL)

Pheasant-tailed Jacana *Hydrophasianus chirurgus*

Common on wetlands on South Andaman, and around Nagarhole NP on the mainland.

Bronze-winged Jacana *Metopidius indicus*

Several on a wetland between Mudumalai NP and Nagarhole NP on 8th Dec.; 1 on 10th Dec. between Nagarhole and Mysore.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Seen regularly on wetlands.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Singles on 2nd Dec. Munnar; 9th Dec. Nagarhole NP.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

1 on 28th Nov. Sippighat.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*

1 on 27th Nov. Sippighat.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Several on 25th, 27th & 28th Dec. at Sippighat.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*

Several on 25th, 27th & 28th Dec. at Sippighat.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

1 on 25th, 27th & 28th Dec. at Sippighat,

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*

1 on 25th Nov. Sippighat.

Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta*

8 on 28th Nov. Sippighat.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

1 on 25th Nov. and 8 on 28th Nov. (SL) Sippighat.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

Several on 25th, 27th & 28th Dec. at Sippighat.

Pin-tailed Snipe *Gallinago stenura*

3 on 30th Nov. and 1 on 1st Dec. Thattakad.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*

1 on 26th Nov. Sippighat; 8 on 30th Nov. Periyar River, Thattakad.

River Tern *Sterna aurantia*

c10 on 9th Dec. Nagarhole NP; 3+ on 10th Dec. Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary.

Rock Pigeon *Columba livia*

Common.

Nilgiri Wood-Pigeon *Columba elphinstonii* (E)

3 on 2nd Dec. Munnar.

Andaman Wood-Pigeon *Columba palumboides* (E)

2 (flight views only) on 26th Dec. Mount Harriet NP, South Andaman.

Oriental Turtle-Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*

3 on 10th Dec. Nagarhole NP.

Eurasian Collared-Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

1 on 3rd Dec. between Bodi Ghat and Munnar; 2 on 8th Dec. en route to Nagarhole NP.

Red Collared-Dove *Streptopelia tranquebarica*

Seen on 25th, 27th & 28th Nov. South Andaman.

Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis*

Seen regularly on the mainland.

Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis*

1 on 3rd Dec. nr Bodi; singles on 9th & 10th Dec. Nagarhole NP

Andaman Cuckoo-Dove *Macropygia rufipennis* (E)

1 seen briefly on 28th Nov. Mount Harriet NP, South Andaman.

Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps indica*

1 at Chidiya Tapu on South Andaman on 28th Nov. (SL). A single on 1st Dec. Thattakad.

Pompadour Green-Pigeon *Treron p. pompadora*

Seen on 30th Nov., 1st & 2nd Dec. Thattakad.

(Andaman) Pompadour Green-Pigeon *Treron p. chloropterus* (E)

2 on 27th & 28th Nov. Mount Harriet NP, South Andaman.

Yellow-footed Pigeon *Treron phoenicopterus*

1 on 8th and 5 on 10th Dec. Nagarhole NP.

Green Imperial-Pigeon *Ducula aenea*

Seen on 26th, 27th & 28th South Andaman; 2 on 1st Dec. Urulanthany; 1 on 9th Dec. Nagarhole NP.

Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria*

27th Nov. Jirkatang and 28th Nov. Chidiya Tapu, South Andaman.

Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*

3 on 3rd Dec. nr Bodi; on 10th Dec. Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary.

Plum-headed Parakeet *Psittacula cyanocephala*

Seen regularly in wooded areas.

Malabar Parakeet *Psittacula columboides* (E)

3 on 30th Nov. & 1st Dec. Thattakad.

Red-breasted Parakeet *Psittacula alexandri*

4 on 27th Nov. Jirkatang, South Andaman.

(Andaman) Long-tailed Parakeet *Psittacula longicauda tytleri* (E)

1 on 26th Nov. Mount Harriet NP; 1 on 27th Nov. Jirkatang, South Andaman.

Vernal Hanging-Parrot *Loriculus vernalis*

Seen daily on South Andaman, also at Thattakad and Topslip.



Vernal Hanging-Parrot

Pied Cuckoo *Clamator jacobinus*

1 on 3rd Dec. nr Bodi.

Common Hawk-Cuckoo *Cuculus varius*

Heard on several occasions.

Banded Bay Cuckoo *Cacomantis sonneratii*

Heard at Thattakad.

Asian Koel *Eudynamys scolopaceus*

1 on 3rd Dec. nr Bodi; 1 on 8th & 10th Dec. Nagarhole NP.

Blue-faced Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus viridirostris*

2 on 4th Dec. Anamalai NP.

Greater Coucal *Centropus sinensis*

7th, 8th & 10th Dec. Nagarhole NP.

Andaman (Brown) Coucal *Centropus andamanensis* (E)

Seen daily on South Andaman.

(Andaman) Barn Owl *Tyto alba deroepstorffi* (E)

Heard on 28th. Nov, Port Blair, South Andaman.

Oriental Bay-Owl *Phodilus badius*

Heard on 1st & 2nd Dec. Urulanthany.

Andaman Scops-Owl *Otus balli* (E)

1 on 26th Nov. Mount Harriet NP, South Andaman.

Indian (Collared) Scops-Owl *Otus bakkamoena*

Heard on 1st Dec. Urulanthany & 9th Dec. Nagarhole NP.

Oriental Scops-Owl *Otus sunia*

1 on 27th Nov. Chidiya Tapu, South Andaman. 1 heard on 30th Nov. Thattakad (SL).

Rock (Eurasian) Eagle-Owl *Bubo bengalensis*

1 on 10th Dec. nr Mysore; 1 on 11th Dec. Ramanagara Hills, en route to Bangalore.



Rock Eagle-Owl

Brown Fish-Owl *Ketupa zeylonensis*

1 on 7th Dec. Mudumalai NP; 1 on 8th Dec. Nagarhole NP; 1 on 11th Dec. Kabini River Lodge, Nagarhole NP.

Jungle Owlet *Glaucidium radiatum*

2 at Birds Lagoon on 30th Nov. (SL). Heard on 1st & 9th Dec.

Spotted Owlet *Athene brama*

1 on 4th Dec. Banyan Tree Farm; 1 on 8th Dec. Kabini River Lodge, Nagarhole NP.

Mottled Wood-Owl *Strix ocellata* (E)

1 on 5th Dec. Banyan Tree Farm.

Andaman Hawk-Owl *Ninox affinis* (E)

1 on 26th Nov. Mount Harriet NP, South Andaman.

Brown Hawk-Owl *Ninox scutulata*

2 on 30th Nov. Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary, Thattakad.

(Hume's) Brown Hawk-Owl *Ninox s. obscura* (E)

2 on 27th Nov. Chidiya Tapu, South Andaman.

Ceylon Frogmouth *Batrachostomus moniliger*

1 seen at very close range at roost on 30th Nov. Urulanthany.



Ceylon Frogmouth

Andaman Nightjar *Caprimulgus andamanicus* (E)

2 on 27th Nov. Chidiya Tapu, South Andaman.

Jerdon's Nightjar *Caprimulgus atripennis*

3 on 1st Dec. nr Birds Lagoon, Thattakad.

Savanna Nightjar *Caprimulgus affinis*

1 on 1st Dec. nr Birds Lagoon, Thattakad.

White-rumped Needletail *Zoonavena sylvatica*

2 on 30th Nov. Urulanthany.

Brown-backed Needletail *Hirundapus giganteus*

c10 on 26th Nov. 5 on 28th Nov. Mount Harriet NP, South Andaman; several on 4th Dec. Anamalai NP.

Glossy Swiftlet *Collocalia esculenta*

Thousands seen leaving their roost under the jetty at Chatham Wharf, South Andaman.

Indian Swiftlet *Aerodramus unicolor*

Seen daily around Thattakad.

Edible-nest Swiftlet *Aerodramus fuciphagus*

A few seen on South Andaman.

Alpine Swift *Apus melba*

A few seen on travel days and 1 on 4th Dec. Banyan Tree Farm.

House Swift *Apus nipalensis*

2 on 1st Dec. Idamalar Dam; 2 on 8th Dec. Nagarhole NP; on 10th Dec. en route to Bangalore.

Asian Palm-Swift *Cypsiurus balasiensis*

Seen on 4th & 5th Dec. Anamalai NP.

Crested Treeswift *Hemiprocne coronata*

Seen on 30th Nov. and 1st Dec. around Thattakad.

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

Seen almost daily.

Stork-billed Kingfisher *Pelargopsis capensis*

3 on 25th Nov. Sippighat; 1 on 27th Nov. nr Bamboo Flats, South Andaman; 1 on 10th Dec. Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary.

White-throated Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis*

Seen almost daily.

Black-capped Kingfisher *Halcyon pileata*

1 on 27th Nov. en route to Chidiya Tapu, South Andaman.

Collared Kingfisher *Todiramphus chloris*

Seen on 27th & 28th Nov. South Andaman.

Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis*

1 on 30th Nov. Periyar River, Thattakad.

Green Bee-eater *Merops orientalis*

Seen almost daily on the mainland.

Blue-tailed Bee-eater *Merops philippinus*

Seen daily on South Andaman; 2 on 10th Dec. nr Mysore.

Chestnut-headed Bee-eater *Merops leschenaulti*

4 on 30th Nov. Urulanthany; 4th Dec. Anamalai NP.

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Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis*
Seen regularly on mainland.

Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis*
2 on 1st Dec. Idamalayar, Thattakad.

Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops*
1 on 4th Dec. Anamalai NP; 2 on 7th Dec. Mudumalai NP.

Malabar Grey Hornbill *Ocyceros griseus* (E)
3 on 1st Dec. & 2 on 2nd Dec. Urulanthany.

Indian Grey Hornbill *Ocyceros birostris*
2 on 10th Dec. nr Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary.

Malabar Pied-Hornbill *Anthracoceros coronatus*
4 on 8th Dec. and 2 on 9th Dec. Nagarhole NP.

White-cheeked Barbet *Megalaima viridis* (E)
Seen almost daily on the mainland.

Crimson-fronted Barbet *Megalaima rubricapillus*
1 on 30th Nov. and 1st Dec. Urulanthany.

Coppersmith Barbet *Megalaima haemacephala*
2 on 3rd Dec. nr Bodi.

Brown-capped Woodpecker *Dendrocopos moluccensis*
1 on 4th Dec. Anamalai NP.

(Andaman) Fulvous-breasted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos macei andamanensis* (E)
26th and 27th Mount Harriet NP, South Andaman.



Fulvous-breasted Woodpecker

Yellow-crowned Woodpecker *Dendrocopos mahrattensis*
1 on 4th Dec. en route to Valparai.

Rufous Woodpecker *Celeus brachyurus*
Heard on 8th Dec. at Mudumalai NP.

White-bellied Woodpecker *Dryocopus javensis*
1 on 30th Nov and 2 on 1st Dec. Urulanthany.

Andaman Woodpecker *Dryocopus hodgei* (E)
26th & 28th Nov. Mount Harriet NP; 27th Nov. Jirkatang, South Andaman.

Lesser Yellownape *Picus chlorolophus*
1 on 30th Nov. Thattakad.

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Black-rumped Flameback *Dinopium benghalense*

1 on 1st Dec. Thattakad.

Greater Flameback *Chrysocolaptes lucidus*

2 on 30th Nov. Urulanthany.

White-naped Woodpecker *Chrysocolaptes festivus*

1 on 9th Dec. Nagarhole NP.

Heart-spotted Woodpecker *Hemicircus canente*

1 on 30th Nov. Idamalayar; 1 on 1st Dec. nr Birds Lagoon; 1 on 8th Dec. Nagarhole NP.

Indian Pitta *Pitta brachyura*

1 on 7th Dec. Mudumalai NP.

(Malabar) Large Woodshrike *Tephrodornis gularis sylvicola* **(E)**

2 on 2nd Dec. Urulanthany; 2 on 5th Dec. Topslip.

Common Woodshrike *Tephrodornis pondicerianus*

1 on 4th Dec. Anamalai NP; 1 on 7th Dec. Mudumalai NP.

Ashy Woodswallow *Artamus fuscus*

1 on 30th Nov. Idamalayar; several on 2nd Dec. Urulanthany; several on 4th Dec. Anamalai NP.

Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia*

2 on 3rd Dec. nr Bodi; 1 on 4th Dec. Anamalai NP; 2 on 7th Dec. Mudumalai NP.

(Andaman) Large Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina macei andamana* **(E)**

2 on 26th Nov. Mount Harriet NP; 1 on 28th Nov. Munda Pahad, South Andaman.

(Andaman) Bar-bellied Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina striata dobsoni* **(E)**

3 on 26th Nov. Mount Harriet NP. South Andaman.

Black-headed Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina melanoptera*

1 on 30th Nov. Urulanthany; 2 on 4th Dec. Anamalai NP.

Small Minivet *Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*

2 on 27th Nov. Jirkatang, South Andaman; 2 on 8th Dec. Mudumalai NP.

White-bellied Minivet *Pericrocotus erythropygius*

5 on 7th Dec. Mudumalai NP.



White-bellied Minivet

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Scarlet (Orange) Minivet *Pericrocotus flammeus flammeus*
Seen regularly on the mainland.

(Andaman) Scarlet Minivet *Pericrocotus flammeus andamanensis*
Seen regularly on South Andaman.

Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike *Hemipus picatus*
1 on 2nd Dec. Munnar; several seen 5th, 6th & 7th Dec. Ooty.

Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*
Seen regularly on the Andamans and the mainland. Some of the Andaman birds showed characters of ssp. *lucionensis* which breeds from eastern China to the Philippines.

Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach*
Common in the lowlands on the mainland.

Bay-backed Shrike *Lanius vittatus*
4 on 3rd Dec. nr Bodi; 2 on 7th Dec. Mudumalai NP.



Bay-backed Shrike

(Indian) Eurasian Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus kundoo*
2 on 30th Nov and 1st Dec. Urulanthany; 1 on 3rd Dec. nr Bodi; 1 on 10th Dec. Nagarhole NP.

Black-naped Oriole *Oriolus chinensis*
Seen on South Andaman on 26th, 27th & 28th Nov.; 1 on 30th Nov. Thattakad.

Black-hooded Oriole *Oriolus xanthornus*
1 on 30th Nov. Thattakad.

Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocercus*
Common in the lowlands on the mainland.

Ashy Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus*
Seen on 30th Nov., 1st & 2nd Dec. Thattakad.

Bronzed Drongo *Dicrurus aeneus*
3 on 1st Dec. Idamalayar.

White-bellied Drongo *Dicrurus caerulescens*
1 on 4th Dec. Anamalai NP; 1 on 7th Dec. Mudumalai NP.

Hair-crested (Spangled) Drongo *Dicrurus hottentottus*
Seen on 7th Dec. Mudumalai NP.

Andaman Drongo *Dicrurus andamanensis* **(E)**
Seen daily on South Andaman.

Greater Racket-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus paradiseus*
Seen regularly.

Spot-breasted Fantail *Rhipidura albogularis* (E)

2 on 6th Dec. Fernhills Palace, Ooty.

Black-naped Monarch *Hypothymis azurea*

Seen daily on South Andaman.

Asian Paradise-Flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi*

Small numbers seen on 30th Nov., 2nd, 3rd & 9th Dec.

Rufous Treepie *Dendrocitta vagabunda*

Seen regularly at Thattakad and Anamalai NP.

White-bellied Treepie *Dendrocitta leucogastra* (E)

2 on 30th Nov. Idamalayar; 1 on 5th Dec. Topslip.

Andaman Treepie *Dendrocitta bayleyi* (E)

Good numbers seen at Mount Harriet NP & Jirkatang.

House Crow *Corvus splendens*

Seen almost daily.

(Indian) Large-billed Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos culminatus*

Seen almost daily on the mainland.

(Eastern) Large-billed Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos levaillantii*

Seen daily on South Andaman.

Jerdon's Bushlark *Mirafra affinis*

1 on 4th Dec. Anamalai NP; 1 on 7th Dec. Mudumalai NP.

Ashy-crowned Sparrow-Lark *Eremopterix griseus*

3 on 4th Dec. en route to Anamalai NP; 2 on 7th Dec. Mudumalai NP & on 9th Dec. Nagarhole NP.

Rufous-tailed Lark *Ammomanes phoenicura*

5 on 9th Dec. Nagarhole NP; 2 on 11th Dec. Ramanagara Hills, en route to Bangalore.

Malabar Lark *Galerida malabarica* (E)

1 on 9th & 10th Dec. Nagarhole NP; 1 on 11th Dec. Ramanagara Hills, en route to Bangalore.

Dusky Crag-Martin *Ptyonoprogne concolor*

6 on 1st Dec. Idamalayar Dam; on 4th Dec. between Valparai and Anamalai; on 11th Dec. Nandi Hills.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Seen fairly regularly.

Wire-tailed Swallow *Hirundo smithii*

1 on 10th Dec. nr Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary.

Pacific Swallow *Hirundo tahitica javanica*

A few seen on South Andaman.

Pacific (Hill) Swallow *Hirundo tahitica domicola*

1 on 2nd and 2 on 3rd Dec. Munnar.

Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica*

Seen around Thattakad & Nagarhole.

Streak-throated Swallow *Petrochelidon fluvicola*

Seen on 8th Dec. en route to Nagarhole NP.

Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher *Culicicapa ceylonensis*

Singles on 2nd & 3rd Dec. Munnar.

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Great Tit *Parus major*

2 on 4th Dec. Munnar; 2 on 10th Dec. nr Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary.

Black-lored Tit *Parus xanthogenys*

2 on 2nd Dec. Munnar; 1 on 3rd Dec. Bodi Ghat.

Pale-footed Bush-Warbler *Cettia pallidipes*

2 on 27th Nov. seen well en route to Chidiya Tapu, South Andaman.

Velvet-fronted Nuthatch *Sitta frontalis*

1 on 1st Dec. Idamalayar Forest; 2 on 6th Dec. Ooty.

Grey-headed Bulbul *Pycnonotus priocephalus* (E)

Only heard Mudumalai NP.

(Andaman) Black-headed Bulbul *Pycnonotus atriceps fuscoflavescens* (E)

2 on 26th Nov. Mount Harriet NP; 3 on 28th Nov. Chidiya Tapu. This form is very distinctive and surely deserving of full species status (as Andaman Bulbul).

Black-crested (Flame-throated) Bulbul *Pycnonotus melanicterus gularis* (E)

Seen on 30th Nov. & 1st Dec. Thattakad.

Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer*

Common on the mainland.

Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus*

Common throughout.



Red-whiskered Bulbul

Yellow-throated Bulbul *Pycnonotus xantholaemus* (E)

1 on 3rd Dec. Bodi Ghat; 1 on 4th Dec. between Valparai & Anamalai

White-browed Bulbul *Pycnonotus luteolus*

1 on 4th Dec. Anamalai; 1 on 8th Dec. Mudumalai NP.

Yellow-browed Bulbul *Iole indica*

Seen on 1st & 2nd Dec. Urulanthany.

(Square-tailed) Black Bulbul *Hypsipetes leucocephalus ganeesa*

1 on 2nd Dec. Munnar.

Tickell's Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus affinis*

1 on 2nd Dec. Munnar; 1 6th Dec. Dodda Betta, Ooty.

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*

2 on 26th Nov. Mount Harriet NP.

Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei*

1 on 11th Dec. Nandi Hills.

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Green Warbler *Phylloscopus nitidus*

A 'greenish'-type warbler giving a trisyllabic call heard at Nagarhole NP on several occasions was presumably this species.

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*

Seen/heard frequently almost daily.

Large-billed Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus magnirostris*

1 on 30th Nov. Urulanthany; heard at Mudumalai.

Tytlers' Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus tytleri*

3 on 2nd Dec. Munnar; 1 on 6th Dec. Ooty.

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata*

2 on 7th Dec. Mudumalai NP.

Sykes's Warbler *Hippolais rama*

1 at Bodi on 3rd Dec. (SL).

Blyth's Reed-Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*

Seen/heard almost daily on the mainland.

Oriental Reed-Warbler *Acrocephalus orientalis*

1 probable on 27th Nov. Sippighat, South Andaman.

Thick-billed Warbler *Acrocephalus aedon*

1 glimpsed on 30th Nov. Idamalayar.

Broad-tailed Grassbird *Schoenicola platyurus* (E)

Heard only (but glimpsed by our guide) on 3rd Dec. Eravikulam NP.

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*

Heard on 8th Dec. en route to Nagarhole NP.

Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius*

1 on 30th Nov. Thattakad; 1 on 7th Dec. Mudumalai NP.

Grey-breasted Prinia *Prinia hodgsonii*

1 on 7th Dec. Mudumalai NP.

Jungle Prinia *Prinia sylvatica*

2 on 3rd Dec. nr Bodi.

Ashy Prinia *Prinia socialis*

2 on 6th Dec. Ooty.

Plain Prinia *Prinia inornata*

2 on 3rd Dec. Eravikulam NP.

Hume's Whitethroat *Sylvia althaea*

3 on 7th Dec. Mudumalai NP.

Eastern Orphean Warbler *Sylvia crassirostris*

1 on 7th Dec. Mudumalai NP.

Asian Fairy-bluebird *Irena puella*

Seen daily on South Andaman and at Thattakad and Mudumalai NP.

Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica*

Seen daily on South Andaman; 1 on 9th Dec. Nagarhole NP.

Rusty-tailed Flycatcher *Muscicapa ruficauda*

1 on 30th Nov. Urulanthany.

Brown-breasted Flycatcher *Muscicapa muttui*

1 on 30th Nov. Urulanthany; 1 on 7th Dec. Mudumalai NP.

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Ultramarine Flycatcher *Muscicapa superciliaris*

1 on 11th Dec. Nandi Hills.

Black-and-rufous(-orange) Flycatcher *Ficedula nigrorufa* (E)

2nd & 3rd Dec. Munnar; 3 on 6th Dec. Fernhills Palace, Ooty; 1 on 7th Dec. Ooty.

Verditer Flycatcher *Eumyias thalassinus*

1 on 30th Nov. Urulanthany; 1 on 8th Dec. Mudumalai NP.

Nilgiri Flycatcher *Eumyias albicaudatus* (E)

6+ on 2nd Dec. Munnar; 1 on 6th Dec. Ooty.

White-bellied Blue-Flycatcher *Cyornis pallipes* (E)

1 on 5th Dec. Topslip; 1 on 7th Dec. Mudumalai NP.

Blue-throated Flycatcher *Cyornis rubeculoides*

2 on 30th Nov. Urulanthany.

Tickell's Blue-Flycatcher *Cyornis tickelliae*

1 on 7th Dec. Mudumalai NP.

Indian Blue Robin *Luscinia brunnea*

1 on 6th Dec. Fernhills Palace, Ooty; 1 heard on 11th Dec. Nandi Hills.

Oriental Magpie-Robin *Copsychus saularis*

Common throughout.

White-rumped Shama *Copsychus m. malabaricus*

1 on 7th Dec. Ooty.

(Andaman) White-rumped Shama *Copsychus malabaricus albiventris* (E)

2 on 26th Nov. Mount Harriet NP.

Indian Robin *Saxicoloides fulicatus*

1 on 3rd Dec. nr Bodi; 1 on 6th Dec. Fernhills Palace, Ooty; 1 on 7th Dec. Ooty.

(Siberian) Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus maurus*

1 on 25th and 2 on 27th Nov. South Andaman.

Pied Bushchat *Saxicola caprata*

Seen daily on the mainland after we left Thattakad.

Blue Rock-Thrush *Monticola solitarius*

2 on 3rd Dec. Munnar.

Malabar Whistling-Thrush *Myophonus horsfieldii* (E)

Heard at Thattakad; 1 seen 3rd Dec. Munnar; 1 on 7th Dec. Mudumalai NP.

Orange-headed Thrush *Zoothera citrina*

1 on 30th Nov Thattakad; 1 on 7th Dec. Mudumalai NP.

(Indian) Eurasian Blackbird *Turdus merula simillimus*

5 on 6th Dec. Ooty.

(Nilgiri) White-bellied Shortwing *Brachypteryx m. major* (E)

1 on 6th Dec. Ooty.

White-bellied Shortwing *Brachypteryx major albiventris* (E)

1 on 2nd Dec. Munnar; 1 on 3rd Dec. Eravikulam NP.

Rufous-breasted (Nilgiri) Laughingthrush *Garrulax cachinnans* (E)

2 on 6th Dec. Ooty.

Grey-breasted (Kerala) Laughingthrush *Garrulax jerdoni* (E)

3 on 2nd Dec. Munnar; 1 on 3rd Dec. Eravikulam NP.

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Puff-throated Babbler *Pellorneum ruficeps*
Several on 7th Dec. Mudumalai NP.

Indian Scimitar-Babbler *Pomatorhinus horsfieldii*
1 on 2nd Dec. Munnar.

Tawny-bellied Babbler *Dumetia hyperythra*
5 on 10th Dec. Nagarhole NP; 2 on 11th Dec. Nandi Hills.

Dark-fronted Babbler *Rhopocichla atriceps*
30th Nov. Thattakad.

Common Babbler *Turdoides caudata*
3 on 11th Dec. Ramanagara Hills.

Large Grey Babbler *Turdoides malcolmi*
3 on 4th Dec. en route to Anamalai NP.

Rufous Babbler *Turdoides subrufa* (E)
Heard 30th Nov. Idamalayar Forest; 3 on 1st Dec. Idamalayar Forest; 2 on 4th Dec. between Valparai & Munnar.

Jungle Babbler *Turdoides striata*
3 on 30th Nov. Thattakad; 2 on 2nd Dec. Urulanthany; 2 on 9th Dec. Nagarhole NP

Yellow-billed Babbler *Turdoides affinis*
Seen regularly on the mainland.

Brown-cheeked Fulvetta *Alcippe poioicephala*
1 on 5th Dec. Topslip; 1 on 7th Dec. Mudumalai NP.

Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus*
Seen 2nd, 6th & 7th Dec.

Common Hill Myna *Gracula religiosa*
4 on 26th and 1 on 28th Nov. Mount Harriet, South Andaman.

Southern Hill Myna *Gracula indica*
Seen fairly regularly at Thattakad. Heard at Nagarhole NP.

Jungle Myna *Acridotheres fuscus*
A few at Bodi Ghat & Ooty.

Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis*
Very common in towns and agricultural areas.

(Malabar) Chestnut-tailed Starling *Sturnia malabarica blythii* (E)
3 on 30th Nov. Idamalayar Forest.

White-headed Starling *Sturnia erythropgia*
27 on 26th Nov. & 3 on 28th Nov. Mount Harriet NP.

Brahminy Starling *Temenuchus pagodarum*
7th Dec. Mudumalai NP.

Rosy Starling *Pastor roseus*
1 on 3rd Dec. en route to Bodi Ghat; 1 on 4th Dec. Munnar.

Jerdon's Leafbird *Chloropsis jerdoni*
2 on 4th Dec. en route from Munnar to Valparai.

Golden-fronted Leafbird *Chloropsis aurifrons*
2 on 30th Nov. Urulanthany; 1 on 4th Dec. en route from Munnar to Valparai.

Thick-billed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum agile*
1 on 30th Nov. Urulanthany; 1 on 1st Dec. Thattakad.

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Pale-billed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum erythrorhynchos*
2 on 3rd Dec. Bodi Ghat; 1 on 7th Dec. Mudumalai NP.

Plain (Nilgiri) Flowerpecker *Dicaeum c. concolor* (E)
1 on 2nd Dec. Munnar.

Plain (Andaman) Flowerpecker *Dicaeum c. virescens* (E)
5+ on 26th Nov. Mount Harriet NP.

Purple-rumped Sunbird *Leptocoma zeylonica*
1 on 3rd Dec. Bodi Ghat; 1 on 10th Dec. nr Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary.

Crimson-backed Sunbird *Leptocoma minima*
2 on 30th Nov. Urulanthany; 1 on 2nd Dec. Munnar.

Purple Sunbird *Cinnyris asiaticus*
1 on 3rd Dec. nr Bodi.

Olive-backed Sunbird *Cinnyris jugularis*
Seen most days on South Andaman.

Long-billed (Loten's) Sunbird *Cinnyris lotenius*
1 on 30th Nov. Urulanthany.

Little Spiderhunter *Arachnothera longirostra*
2 on 30th Nov. Urulanthany.

Western Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*
Seen on 27th & 28th Nov. on marshy areas on South Andaman.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*
Common.

White-browed Wagtail *Motacilla maderaspatensis*
Fairly common on the mainland.

Oriental (Paddyfield) Pipit *Anthus rufulus*
1 on 4th Dec. en route to Valparai; 1 on 5th Dec. Topslip; 2 on 7th Dec. Mudumalai NP.

Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii*
5 on 3rd Dec. nr Bodi.

Nilgiri Pipit *Anthus nilghiriensis* (E)
2 on 3rd Dec. Eravikulam NP.

Forest Wagtail *Dendronanthus indicus*
3 on 26th Nov. Mount Harriet NP.

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*
1 on 3rd Dec. Eravikulam NP.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*
Common in urban areas on South Andaman and the mainland.

Chestnut-shouldered Petronia *Petronia xanthocollis*
6 on 7th Dec. Mudumalai NP.

Indian Silverbill *Euodice malabarica*
1 on 7th Dec. Mudumalai NP.

White-rumped Munia *Lonchura striata*
Several on 7th Dec. Mudumalai NP.

Nutmeg Mannikin (Scaly-breasted Munia) *Lonchura punctulata*
c15 on 7th Dec. Mudumalai NP.

Tricolored (Black-headed) Munia *Lonchura malacca*
8th, 9th, 10th Dec. Nagarhole NP.

SYSTEMATIC LIST - MAMMALS

Nomenclature and classification follow Duff, A. & Lawson, A. *Mammals of the World: a checklist* (London: A & C Black, 2004). Endemic species are marked **(E)**.

Indian Hare *Lepus nigricollis*
2 on 7th Dec. Mudumalai NP.

Indian Giant Squirrel *Ratufa indica* **(E)**
1 on 30th Nov., 2 on 1st Dec. Urulanthany; 1 on 6th Dec. Ooty.



Indian Giant Squirrel

Sri Lankan Giant Squirrel *Ratufa macroura*
1 on 4th Dec. nr Valparai.

Indian Palm Squirrel *Funambulus palmarum*
1 on 5th Nov. South Andaman; regularly in the lowlands.

Leopard *Panthera pardis*
1 on 9th Dec. Nagarhole NP.

Indian Grey Mongoose *Herpestes edwardsii*
3 on 10th Dec. nr Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary.

Ruddy Mongoose *Herpestes smithii*
1 on 8th Dec. Nagarhole NP.

Stripe-necked Mongoose *Herpestes vitticollis*
1 on 8th & 9th Dec. Nagarhole NP.

Smooth-coated Otter *Lutrogale perspicillata*
2 on 8th Dec. Nagarhole NP.

Indian Flying Fox *Pteropus giganteus*
1 on 4th Dec. Banyan Tree Farm; 10th Dec. Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary.

Southern Plains Grey Langur *Semnopithecus dussumieri* **(E)**
4th Dec. between Munnar & Anamalai NP; Nagarhole NP.

Hooded Leaf Monkey (Nilgiri Langur) *Trachypithecus johnii* **(E)**
4 on 4th Dec. between Munnar & Valparai

Bonnet Macaque *Macaca radiata* **(E)**
Good numbers at Urulanthany, Anamalai & Nagarhole NP.

Lion-tailed Macaque *Macaca silenus* (E)

8 on 4th Dec. nr Valparai.



Lion-tailed Macaque (Les Colley)

Eurasian Wild Boar *Sus scrofa*

4th & 5th Dec. Anamalai NP and Topslip.

Indian Muntjac *Muntiacus muntjak*

1 on 1st Dec. Thattakad; 1 on 9th Dec. Nagarhole NP.

Sambar *Cervus unicolor*

8th & 9th Dec. Nagarhole NP.

Chital (Axis Deer) *Axis axis*

4th Dec. between Munnar and Anamalai NP; 7th, 8th, 9th Dec. Nagarhole NP.

Nilgiri Tahr *Hemitragus hylocrius* (E)

8 on 3rd Dec. Eravikulam NP.

Asian Elephant *Elephas maximus*

2 on 8th and 3 on 9th Dec. Nagarhole NP.



Asian Elephant (Les Colley)