

BHUTAN

Apr 8, 2011 to Apr 29, 2011
Richard Webster

As we experienced, Bhutan is a wonderful place, and we enjoyed an excellent trip. The birding was highly successful, with a lengthy list of Himalayan species and many exciting Asian birds of wider distribution.

Among the most widely advertised specialties we did very well, including two bonuses, White-bellied Heron and Black-necked Crane (very rare and usually gone, respectively), other finds including Ward's Trogon (a cooperative pair), Ibisbill (including two family groups), Rufous-necked Hornbill (several close studies), Yellow-rumped Honeyguide (twice at Giant Rock Bee sites), and four fabulous pheasants seen well: Satyr Tragopan, Himalayan Monal, Blood Pheasant, and Kalij Pheasant. Of course we did miss some birds, this year including a couple of especially desired items: Fire-tailed Myzornis and Beautiful Nuthatch.

Also as we found out, while there are "stars" such as the above (and some of them are wonderful), there are many, many birds in Bhutan that are wonderful creatures, and which we enjoyed at close range, often repeatedly. These include glowing sunbirds such as Ms. Gould's and Fire-tailed, three species of niltava, and the pasta-scarfing Gold-billed Magpie. We did very well with the diverse assemblage of babblers, including beauties like Golden-breasted Fulvetta, Chestnut-tailed and Red-tailed minlas, Himalayan Cutia, and Silver-eared Mesia, and more subtly marked birds including the laughingthrushes (13 species!) and all the fulvettas and yuhinas. Other noteworthy groups include cuckoos (12 species, 10 seen) and parrotbills (six species, including Fulvous and Great).

The flock of Great Hornbills interacting was an aesthetic highlight, and we had special moments with some other widespread Asian birds, including Blue-bearded Bee-eater, Pin-tailed Pigeon, Chestnut-crowned Warbler, and all the minivets.

An Arctic Loon was an amazing rarity anywhere in the region; other unexpected waterbirds were Brown-headed Gull and White-breasted Waterhen. Among landbirds, Blandford's Rosefinch was a pleasant surprise (lifebird for your guide!).

Spring is accompanied by much song, and the forest echoed with cuckoos and barbets, and there were some individual fine vocal performances, such as the Pale Blue Flycatcher that sang at our feet and the rich tones of the skulking Spotted Laughingthrush.

Mammals are not a major part of the Bhutan experience, but we did see three species of leaf monkey, most notably the many troops of Golden Langurs. Rhododendrons can be a major part, but they were limited in extent this year, although we did see some fine individual specimens, as well as some striking magnolias.

It was a birding tour, but we were also steeped in the experience of traveling in Bhutan. We visited two dzongs and stopped at many other scenic spots. This Bhutanese experience was only made possible by the hospitality and hard work of Lebo, Sangay, Jigme, Chitra, and the rest of the camp staff--another great job by Gangri!



*A tour highlight was a fantastic encounter with Great Hornbills above Tingtibi -- this one is reaching into a cavity to forage.
(Photo by guide Richard Webster)*

Taxonomy follows in large part the latest version of the Clements list, with additional comments from Birds of South Asia (BSA). Conservation information is drawn from the publications of BirdLife International.

--Richard

We have more information about this itinerary and future departures on our web page for [Bhutan](#).

KEYS FOR THIS LIST

One of the following keys may be shown in brackets for individual species as appropriate: * = heard only, I = introduced, E = endemic, N = nesting, a = austral migrant, b = boreal migrant

BIRDS

Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

RUDDY SHELDUCK (*Tadorna ferruginea*) – Several flocks of wintering birds were still along the Puna Tsang Chhu near Punakha, and three more were in the wetlands of the Phobjika Valley near the Black-necked Crane.



Graceful Gold-billed Magpies were regular "camp followers" in search of any picnic scraps we might offer (several bits of pasta were seen being dispatched)! (Photo by guide Richard Webster)

GADWALL (*Anas strepera*) – Four near Punakha.

EURASIAN WIGEON (*Anas penelope*) – A pair near Thimphu and a small flock along the Puna Tsang Chhu.

GARGANEY (*Anas querquedula*) – A male near Punakha on 13 April; scarce in Bhutan, although a common winterer in India (i.e., most probably migrate around, not over, the Himalaya).

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

HILL PARTRIDGE (*Arborophila torqueola*) – Perpetually a difficult genus, we hear this species on a majority of days, and rarely see it. While some of you have reason not to believe it, we actually did very well this year, with a couple of folks getting naked eye views of one responsive bird on Pele La, and about four folks getting good binocular views of one on Yutong La, while others were blocked or not looking in the right hole at the right moment. It then called and called . . . from very close to us.

CHESTNUT-BREASTED PARTRIDGE (*Arborophila mandellii*) – Heard several times around our Yongkola camp, but never close enough to flail away at seeing it. [*]

RUFOUS-THROATED PARTRIDGE (*Arborophila rufogularis*) – Heard regularly from our Tingtibi camp and environs. Unlike pheasants, this genus of partridge is not inclined to come out along roads. [*]

BLOOD PHEASANT (*Ithaginis cruentus*) – We had wonderful views on Chele La, which was good enough, but unusually we had no further encounters apart from a couple heard on Thrumsing La. One of the first of many "it is so much better than the book" species.

SATYR TRAGOPAN (*Tragopan satyra*) – A difficult species to produce reliably, we were very fortunate to have two docile males in the road for extended views. Wow! Three more were much more typical--brief views for just a few folks.

HIMALAYAN MONAL (*Lophophorus impejanus*) – This stunning bird was seen well on Chele La, first from the bus, then much more distantly, but at leisure, in the telescope. Another seen quickly from the bus in Thrumsing La N.P. responded to recordings by sailing by in dramatic display flight. Finally, Bob spotted a Monal, looking more like a fighter jet, sailing over Pele La, making a long-distance flight of over a half kilometer.

KALIJ PHEASANT (*Lophura leucomelanos*) – A half dozen encounters was an above-average total; good views of both sexes, mostly from the bus.

Gaviidae (Loons)

ARCTIC LOON (*Gavia arctica*) – The rarity of the trip, which does not make it close to the bird of the trip! One in basic plumage, probably a one-year-old bird, on the Puna Tsang Chhu just below Punakha on 26 April was presumably the first for Bhutan, the second for the Indian Subcontinent, and about the fifth loon period for the subcontinent! A heavy rain storm did not help with enjoyment of it. (Photographed).

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

GREAT CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) – A few along rivers early in the trip.

Ardeidae (Heron, Egrets, and Bitterns)

WHITE-BELLIED HERON (*Ardea insignis*) – The rarity of the trip in another sense: White-bellied Heron is classified as "Critically Endangered" with a population of 50 to 250. It took some persistence near Punakha, but we were rewarded with views of one fishing along the river, allowing lengthy, albeit distant, views of this huge heron. Adding to the experience was the memorable stuck truck that delayed our return! That piece of heavy equipment certainly saved a normal dinner hour! A great bonus bird, one that we miss on a majority of tours.

LITTLE EGRET (*Egretta garzetta*) – A rarity away from the lowland edge of Bhutan, we had a remarkable six along the Puna Tsang Chhu at Bajo on 26 April, with another farther up river near Punakha later the same day.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

PALLAS'S FISH-EAGLE (*Haliaeetus leucoryphus*) – Two near Punakha on our first visit, one on our second. Memorable was the adult that flew in and landed in a Chir Pine, eventually to be harassed by two Large-billed Crows. It is considered "Vulnerable," with a population of under 10,000.

HIMALAYAN GRIFFON (*Gyps himalayensis*) – A couple of singles near Pele La (the primary spot on this trip for this bird) were followed by about ten on our return, including one soaring at close range.

CRESTED SERPENT-EAGLE (*Spilornis cheela*) – About four sightings, our best being of one Chris spotted perched close to the road, allowing brief-but-excellent views.

CRESTED GOSHAWK (*Accipiter trivirgatus*) – One bird, apparently in display, flying above forest above Tingtibi.

EURASIAN SPARROWHAWK (*Accipiter nisus*) – Three or four definite birds, and several more accipiter sp. that were probably this species.

NORTHERN GOSHAWK (*Accipiter gentilis*) – One seen from the bus in Thrumsing La N.P. by Doug and Jeff.



Satyr Tragopan male right along the road -- wow! (Photo by guide Richard Webster)

COMMON BUZZARD (*Buteo buteo*) – We saw one dark bird on a ridge above the Phobjika Valley. The taxonomy of these birds is very confusing, but note that the recent BSA treatment is to split them as Himalayan Buzzard, *B. burmanicus* (others call them 'Steppe' Buzzard, *B. b. vulpinus*).

BLACK EAGLE (*Ictinaetus malayensis*) – We first enjoyed a soaring bird above Namling that was eventually strafed by a Large-billed Crow, leading to some interesting "talons up" barrel rolls. Another was seen below Tingtibi, followed by two more from the bus on our return from there to Trongsa.

RUFOUS-BELLIED EAGLE (*Lophotriorchis kienerii*) – Sangay spotted an immature near Kosha La, and we then enjoyed lengthy views of an adult carrying prey (a green bird about barbet size??) circling below Tingtibi.

MOUNTAIN HAWK-EAGLE (*Nisaetus nipalensis*) – The regularly seen large eagle of these tours. We saw about ten, including a perched bird that Iris spotted near Yongkola--crest up in the telescope. Near Zhemgang another memorable bird apparently dove on a Rufous-necked Hornbill, which flew off squawking, and which then upset the Golden Langurs, which also 'squawked.'

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

EURASIAN KESTREL (*Falco tinnunculus*) – A scattered few, plus a group of five circling over the Mangde Chhu valley near Kosha La.

EURASIAN HOBBY (*Falco subbuteo*) – Our exciting first were on our return to Dochu La, where they provided an exciting finale to the last picnic lunch, followed by two more at Drukgyel Dzong.

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

WHITE-BREASTED WATERHEN (*Amaurornis phoenicurus*) – Rare in Bhutan, especially at 2,600m, where we saw one on our return to Baritsho (Queens' Botanic Gardens) on 27 April.

BLACK-TAILED CRAKE (*Amaurornis bicolor*) – On our first attempt near Paro, Iris and a few others had brief looks, while our second attempt produced point-blank views of a wonderfully cooperative bird (seen again here by Sue on our return).

Gruidae (Cranes)

BLACK-NECKED CRANE (*Grus nigricollis*) – A real bonus, although with a twist, because all the cranes should be gone. However one, not visibly injured, was still in the Phobjika Valley, and we enjoyed views from a distance. Several hundred of this "Vulnerable" species winter here, usually leaving in the middle of March.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

RIVER LAPWING (*Vanellus duvaucelii*) – A lovely bird, albeit a disappointment at times because they are not Ibisbills! We had repeated good views along several large chhus.

Ibidorhynchidae (Ibisbill)

IBISBILL (*Ibidorhyncha struthersii*) – We have always seen this distinctive specialty, and this was an especially good year, with two broods (three chicks below Paro on 11 April, and another chick Chris found below Punakha on 13 April). A fine way to start a visit to Bhutan. [N]

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

COMMON SANDPIPER (*Actitis hypoleucos*) – A few along rivers.

COMMON SNIPE (*Gallinago gallinago*) – One near Paro on 11 April should be treated as "Snipe sp."--it could as easily have been Pin-tailed.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

BROWN-HEADED GULL (*Chroicocephalus brunnicephalus*) – One in breeding plumage along the Puna Tsang Chhu on 26 April was a local rarity (ID confirmed later from the photographs, versus other much rarer alternatives).

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) – Many of the birds we see are "Feral Pigeons," but we are on their home turf (or



A Black-throated Parrotbill seen fabulously well at Dochu La. It may be split as "Orange-eared" in the future, a feature seen nicely in this image. (Photo by guide Richard Webster)

cliffs!), such as the birds we saw on ledges at the honeyguide spot below Trongsa.

SNOW PIGEON (*Columba leuconota*) – Always an exciting find, and a somewhat unpredictable one. This year a small flock flew by at close range, and landed in the fog at Chele La, while a large flock was watched in flight and in fields far below us below our Gankar Punsum vantage point.

SPECKLED WOOD-PIGEON (*Columba hodgsonii*) – They showed up at the end, on our way back over Dochu La, where we had good telescope views of flocks feeding in the broadleaf forest.

ORIENTAL TURTLE-DOVE (*Streptopelia orientalis*) – Almost daily, missed only on a day in the forest near Yongkola. These populations ally with those of NE Asia.

SPOTTED DOVE (*Streptopelia chinensis*) – Small numbers in disturbed areas on the lower slopes.

BARRED CUCKOO-DOVE (*Macropygia unchall*) – One fly-by near Tingtibi was glimpsed by a few people (in other words, it does not get much worse!).

EMERALD DOVE (*Chalcophaps indica*) – One was seen briefly by the side of the road below Tingtibi (close for a few folks).

PIN-TAILED PIGEON (*Treron apicauda*) – We had lengthy telescope views of one that Sangay spotted just above Tingtibi, and then had great views the next day of two that Doug spotted below Tingtibi that then landed on the bamboo in front of us. Lovely.

WEDGE-TAILED PIGEON (*Treron sphenurus*) – Doug got us on four birds at our first stop along the Mo Chhu.

MOUNTAIN IMPERIAL-PIGEON (*Ducula badia*) – We saw a couple of birds perched in the semi-deciduous forest above Tingtibi.

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

CHESTNUT-WINGED CUCKOO (*Clamator coromandus*) – One or two were heard below Tingtibi, one of which responded, with some brief, excellent views for part of the group. It was an excellent trip (our best ever?) for cuckoos, which, while not regional specialties, are an important slice of the Bhutanese avifauna. Excellent in terms of diversity of species seen, although the most common ones seemed less numerous than normal.

LARGE HAWK-CUCKOO (*Hierococcyx sparveroides*) – We ended up seeing four or five of this vocal, but reclusive, species, including one that Bob spotted below Sengor that was 'drying out' below us.

HODGSON'S HAWK-CUCKOO (*Hierococcyx nisicolor*) – Only one, a vocal bird near Zhemgang that responded nicely, perching in view for good studies. As split in an article by Ben King, who called this form 'Whistling' Hawk-Cuckoo, *C. nisicolor* (or *Hierococcyx nisicolor*); Clements has retained "Hodgson's" as the common name for this species while splitting it from the others.

INDIAN CUCKOO (*Cuculus micropterus*) – A half dozen heard, including from our Tingtibi camp, but none were especially close or would respond. [*]

COMMON CUCKOO (*Cuculus canorus*) – Heard on a majority of the days, with three or four seen, including a migrant that stopped at Yutong La, sang briefly, and headed onward.

HIMALAYAN CUCKOO (*Cuculus saturatus*) – Bernie spotted our first, a singing bird below Sengor, with a couple more later. As split from Oriental Cuckoo, *C. optatus*, of NE Asia.

LESSER CUCKOO (*Cuculus poliocephalus*) – Jan spotted our first, an early bird that acted like an exhausted migrant; encountered again at the end of the tour below Dochu La.

BANDED BAY CUCKOO (*Cacomantis sonneratii*) – One bird singing below Tingtibi was responsive, but would only land on distant perches (telescope views).



One of four fabulous pheasant species we saw so well: Blood Pheasant (Photo by guide Richard Webster)

PLAINTIVE CUCKOO (*Cacomantis merulinus*) – A widespread bird of disturbed habitats that we usually miss on this tour, but we had a good view of one below Trongsa and heard another.

ASIAN EMERALD CUCKOO (*Chrysococcyx maculatus*) – We have variable luck with this species, and this year was in the plus column, with several near Yongkola, then another encounter with one Bob spotted near Tingtibi.

ASIAN DRONGO-CUCKOO (*Surniculus lugubris*) – None until late in the tour, when we had them daily between Zhemgang and Tingtibi, including good, close views of the details of bill and tail (the square-tailed lugubris group).

ASIAN KOEL (*Eudynamys scolopaceus*) – Heard only (from the Punakha Dzong); scarce in Bhutan, where a colonist from the lowlands. [*]

Strigidae (Owls)

MOUNTAIN SCOPS-OWL (*Otus spilocephalus*) [*]

COLLARED OWLET (*Glaucidium brodiei*) – After playing the recording many times, we finally got a live one high overhead near Yongkola.

ASIAN BARRED OWLET (*Glaucidium cuculoides*) – We stumbled into one near Tingtibi; it was promptly mobbed by a Blue-throated Flycatcher.

TAWNY OWL (*Strix aluco nivicola*) – (this form split by some as Himalayan Wood-Owl) [*]

Caprimulgidae (Nightjars and Allies)

GRAY NIGHTJAR (*Caprimulgus indicus*) – Several sightings (from the bus, on hotel grounds), although our couple of group efforts to see it were flops, and we heard them several times.

Apodidae (Swifts)

HIMALAYAN SWIFTLET (*Aerodramus brevirostris*) – A few small flocks; uncommon.

FORK-TAILED SWIFT (*Apus pacificus*) – Some good views, particularly around a couple of nesting cliffs.

Trogonidae (Trogons)

WARD'S TROGON (*Harpactes wardi*) – It required going down a steep slope after the calling birds, but eventually we had good views of a pair inside the forest. Another was heard well upslope later in the trip. A regional specialty, it is considered "Near Threatened."

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

WHITE-THROATED KINGFISHER (*Halcyon smyrnensis*) – Two of this lowland bird in open areas near Punakha.

CRESTED KINGFISHER (*Megaceryle lugubris*) – Several exciting first encounters near Punakha, and a good showing with a couple more, including one spotted by Sue along the Mangde Chhu.

Meropidae (Bee-eaters)

BLUE-BEARDED BEE-EATER (*Nyctornis athertoni*) – This widespread forest bee-eater is one we usually see, but this year we had regular encounters, with good looks several times.

Upupidae (Hoopoes)

EURASIAN HOOPOE (*Upupa epops*) – Relatively conspicuous this year, with regular sightings, often in agricultural areas.

Bucerotidae (Hornbills)

GREAT HORNBILL (*Buceros bicornis*) – One of the aesthetic highlights of the tour was our encounter with around eight birds that went back and forth in front of us above Tingtibi, interacting and generally putting on a show. Our good fortune was the result of fruiting figs near the road; this widespread bird can be missed on this tour without a bit of luck. It is considered "Near Threatened."

RUFOUS-NECKED HORNBILL (*Aceros nipalensis*) – A specialty that is seen on few other tour routes. We had



Trongsa Dzong, bottom, from the Puenzhi (Photo by guide Richard Webster)

sightings on a half dozen days, first near Yongkola, then between Zhemgang and Tingtibi, including a couple of birds perched at close range. One managed to avoid a stoop by a Mountain Hawk-Eagle. It is considered "Vulnerable," with a population under 10,000.

Megalaimidae (Asian Barbets)

GREAT BARBET (*Megalaima virens*) – One of the characteristic voices of the tour, heard nearly daily, and seen regularly. a.k.a. Great Hill Barbet.

GOLDEN-THROATED BARBET (*Megalaima franklinii*) – Another characteristic voice, we had a number of views, most memorably the bird Joyce spotted below our Yongkola camp that landed below us for sunlit studies and photographs.

BLUE-THROATED BARBET (*Megalaima asiatica*) – Commonly heard and seen daily on our foray to lower elevations below Trongsa.

Indicatoridae (Honeyguides)

YELLOW-RUMPED HONEYGUIDE (*Indicator xanthonotus*) – Our first couple of checks of combs of Giant Rock Bees came up empty, but we succeeded on a couple of others, first near Yongkola, then below Trongsa. Single birds were seen, perched and in rapid flight around the cliffs. It is considered "Near Threatened" with no population estimate; very local, and seen on few tour routes, this being the most regular.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

WHITE-BROWED PICULET (*Sasia ochracea*) – Iris had the sharp eyes with this species, two days in a row near Tingtibi, the second time producing views for all of us in the bamboo.

GRAY-CAPPED WOODPECKER (*Dendrocopos canicapillus*) – A trio in woodland near Tingtibi.

RUFIOUS-BELLIED WOODPECKER (*Dendrocopos hyperythrus*) – Several encounters with this lovely "sapsucker" of Asia (a.k.a. Rufous-bellied Sapsucker, and we saw the rows of holes), including at the Queens' Botanical Garden.

CRIMSON-BREASTED WOODPECKER (*Dendrocopos cathpharius*) – As usual, scarce, with just one seen below our Yongkola camp.

DARJEELING WOODPECKER (*Dendrocopos darjellensis*) – A lovely woodpecker of upper elevation conifer forests; several encounters included some very good looks.

RUFIOUS WOODPECKER (*Ceelus brachyurus*) – A few seen and a few more heard, first along the Mo Chhu, later again below Tingtibi. It may be placed in the genus *Micropternus*, apart from otherwise New World *Ceelus*, based on genetic studies.

LESSER YELLOWNAPE (*Picus chlorolophus*) – One before breakfast on the ascent of Pele La, several more in forest above Tingtibi.

GREATER YELLOWNAPE (*Picus flavinucha*) – The striking punk hairdo was a crowd pleaser, first below our Yongkola camp, then above Tingtibi.

GRAY-FACED WOODPECKER (*Picus canus*) – Good views near Kosha La, heard again farther down the road. a.k.a. Gray-headed Woodpecker.

PALE-HEADED WOODPECKER (*Gecinulus grantia*) – A specialty of bamboo, we had a responsive bird near Tingtibi for good views, although only for a moment.

BAY WOODPECKER (*Blythipicus pyrrhotis*) – Heard regularly from wet forest, and seen several times, best on Pele La.

Eurylaimidae (Broadbills)

LONG-TAILED BROADBILL (*Psarisomus dalhousiae*) – This widespread Asian beauty is not common on this tour, but we usually do better than sightings of a calling bird by Joyce in our Yongkola camp and another by Bob in the rain below Zhemgang.

Prionopidae (Helmetshrikes and Allies)

LARGE WOODSHRIKE (*Tephrodornis gularis*) – A couple of views of foraging birds near Tingtibi.

Campephagidae (Cuckoo-shrikes)

BLACK-WINGED CUCKOO-SHRIKE (*Coracina melaschistos*) – Scattered sightings in forest along the whole tour route, with good views for all eventually.

LONG-TAILED MINIVET (*Pericrocotus ethologus*) – All of the minivets we see on this tour are gorgeous . . . but not so easy to tell apart! We had good looks at all, with this one generally at the highest elevations, including moving through the upper passes.

SHORT-BILLED MINIVET (*Pericrocotus brevirostris*) – Fairly common in broadleaf forest at middle elevations.

SCARLET MINIVET (*Pericrocotus flammeus*) – Common at lower and middle elevations.

GRAY-CHINNED MINIVET (*Pericrocotus solaris*) – Uncommon to fairly common in broadleaf forests at middle elevations.

BAR-WINGED FLYCATCHER-SHRIKE (*Hemipus picatus*) – Uncommon on this tour, we had just one pair, a fortunate occurrence right in our camp above Tingtibi.

Laniidae (Shrikes)

LONG-TAILED SHRIKE (*Lanius schach*) – Common in agricultural areas below Trongsa. These birds are part of a montane group of black-crowned subspecies (splits not expected).

GRAY-BACKED SHRIKE (*Lanius tephronotus*) – Widespread at upper elevations, occasionally as low as Tingtibi.

Oriolidae (Old World Orioles)

MAROON ORIOLE (*Oriolus traillii*) – More often heard than seen, but still a regular sighting in the montane broadleaf forests.

Dicruridae (Drongos)

ASHY DRONGO (*Dicrurus leucophaeus*) – The default drongo, occurring almost throughout.

BRONZED DRONGO (*Dicrurus aeneus*) – One near Yongkola, otherwise fairly common around Tingtibi.

LESSER RACKET-TAILED DRONGO (*Dicrurus remifer*) – Difficult, as usual. At least four seen, but either in flight, or deep into the forest. We did have one in the telescope for a while.

HAIR-CRESTED DRONGO (*Dicrurus hottentottus*) – This erratic, nectivorous bird, which we have missed or seen in numbers, was in small (but sufficient) supply this year, with a nice view along the Mo Chhu and several above Tingtibi. As split from Spangled Drongo and others in a huge complex across Asia to Australasia.

Rhipiduridae (Fantails)

YELLOW-BELLIED FANTAIL (*Rhipidura hypoxantha*) – This small, highly active flycatcher was seen on fewer days than normal, but included an impressive 15 or so migrating in small groups through Yutong La. Genetic studies place it in the Stenostiridae (Fairy Flycatchers), with a suggested name of Yellow-bellied Fairy-flycatcher *Chelidorhynch hypoxantha*.

WHITE-THROATED FANTAIL (*Rhipidura albicollis*) – One or two on a half dozen days, with some excellent views of this bold bird.

Monarchidae (Monarch Flycatchers)

BLACK-NAPED MONARCH (*Hypothymis azurea*) – This low elevation species was seen below Tingtibi, where Iris spotted one that was seen by most, but moved off.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

EURASIAN JAY (*Garrulus glandarius*) – Good views below Dochu La, on our way out and on our return. A lovely bird, and fun views of the birds with reflections in the pond.

GOLD-BILLED MAGPIE (*Urocissa flavirostris*) – Widespread, seen on most passes, and as a 'camp follower' very appreciative of leftovers provided by the camp staff.

GREEN MAGPIE (*Cissa chinensis*) – A little less luck with this widespread beauty than normal--seen once (the guys' rest stop!) and then heard a couple of times (not responsive).

GRAY TREEPIE (*Dendrocitta formosae*) – Fairly common in broadleaf forests at middle elevations.

EURASIAN MAGPIE (*Pica pica*) – Local in Bhutan, but common in the various Bumthang valleys, where we saw them repeatedly. We saw the subspecies *bottanensis*. As split from Black-billed Magpie of North America.

EURASIAN NUTCRACKER (*Nucifraga caryocatactes*) – Seen on most passes, with repeated good looks. a.k.a. Spotted Nutcracker.

RED-BILLED CHOUGH (*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*) – Locally common in dry, upland valleys, including at several of our hotels, e.g., in Paro and near Jakar.

LARGE-BILLED CROW (*Corvus macrorhynchos*) – Nearly daily, missed only at the lowest stop. Another camp follower, including one with leucistic wing feathers at Thrumsing La. We saw the subspecies *tibetosinensis*, part of the *japonensis* group (split by some from Eastern Jungle and Indian Jungle of the southern lowlands).

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

BARN SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*) – One migrant flock along the Puna Tsang Chhu.

NEPAL HOUSE-MARTIN (*Delichon nipalense*) – We stopped to observe a colony on the cliffs near Namling (and to enjoy the views, and the Fork-tailed Swifts!), and then saw several flocks under low clouds and rain near Zhemgang.

Stenostiridae (Fairy Flycatchers)

GRAY-HEADED CANARY-FLYCATCHER (*Culicicapa ceylonensis*) – Genetic studies have shown that this Asian bird, along with Yellow-bellied Fantail, is part of the small, old, otherwise African family of Fairy Flycatchers. We saw this species regularly in broadleaf forest, and heard it frequently.

Paridae (Chickadees and Tits)

COAL TIT (*Pariparus ater*) – One of the common birds of high elevations, often seen with the next two species. *P. a. aemodius* (which strikes those, like Jeff, who have European experience, as quite different).

RUFOUS-VENTED TIT (*Pariparus rubidiventris*) – On most of the high passes, easily seen with mixed flocks.

GRAY-CRESTED TIT (*Lophophanes dichrous*) – Less common than the prior two, but seen on most of the same high passes.

GREEN-BACKED TIT (*Parus monticolus*) – Ubiquitous, seen on almost all days of the tour, which is just fine, because it is a beauty.

YELLOW-CHEEKED TIT (*Parus spilonotus*) – This striking bird was enjoyed several times in the Yongkola-Namling area.

YELLOW-BROWED TIT (*Sylviparus modestus*) – Fairly common in upper elevation broadleaf and conifer forests--the tiny bird without field marks!

SULTAN TIT (*Melanochlora sultanea*) – A widespread bird in southern Asia, but always a prize. After missing it last year, Jeff got us on an exciting pair near Yongkola, followed by two bonus encounters below Zhemgang. Wow!

Remizidae (Penduline-Tits)

FIRE-CAPPED TIT (*Cephalopyrus flammiceps*) – One seen by part of the group on Dochu La was followed by a pair on Pele La for all. We have missed this bird, and seeing it usually seems to involve luck.

Cettiidae (Bush-Warblers and Allies)

CHESTNUT-HEADED TESIA (*Tesia castaneocoronata*) – Tesias became emblematic of the world of skulkers in Bhutan (and there are many skulkers in Bhutan!). This species was seen three times, with views ranging from great for some to none for a few--tough birds.

SLATY-BELLIED TESIA (*Tesia olivea*) – This one was a star, after a struggle, with good views for all along the Mo Chhu.

GRAY-BELLIED TESIA (*Tesia cyaniventer*) – As with the others, many heard, and a couple seen, the best encounter coming on Pele La, where seen well by some, and glimpsed by all.

BROWNISH-FLANKED BUSH-WARBLER (*Cettia fortipes*) – We worked on one in a shrubby clearing near Namling, obtaining good views eventually.

ABERRANT BUSH-WARBLER (*Cettia flavolivacea*) – Briefly for some on the slopes of Pele La.

YELLOWISH-BELLIED BUSH-WARBLER (*Cettia acanthizoides*) – We had several birds respond with close approaches in high elevation bamboo.

GRAY-SIDED BUSH-WARBLER (*Cettia brunnifrons*) – The finest of bush-warbler performers--at close range, orange mouth lining in view during the song, and even a couple of field marks besides the voice.

RUFOUS-FACED WARBLER (*Abroscopus albogularis*) – Found above Tingtibi, where we had good views of this tiny bird. Widespread (to Taiwan) but on very few tour routes.

YELLOW-BELLIED WARBLER (*Abroscopus superciliaris*) – Good views of several pairs in bamboo below Tingtibi.

BLACK-FACED WARBLER (*Abroscopus schisticeps*) – A tiny warbler of the broadleaf forest, and a regional specialty seen on few tours. We had repeated encounters with it, several dozen individuals all told.

BROAD-BILLED WARBLER (*Tickellia hodgsoni*) – A monotypic genus, and a real specialty that we do not always see, or at least see so well. A responsive bird made repeated very close approaches in bamboo near Namling, although it was hard to tear your eyes off of the dazzling Golden-breasted Fulvetta.

MOUNTAIN TAILORBIRD (*Phyllergates cucullatus*) – After some searching we found one near our Yongkola camp, and enjoyed good views (and the lovely song). Genetic studies have shown that this "tailorbird" does not belong in the traditional tailorbirds, hence the different generic name and its location in the bush-warbler family.

Aegithalidae (Long-tailed Tits)

BLACK-THROATED TIT (*Aegithalos concinnus*) – Relatively scarce (or at least seldom seen) this year, but we had several good views, including on our returns over Pele La and Dochu La. a.k.a. Red-capped Tit.

BLACK-BROWED TIT (*Aegithalos iouschistos*) – Regular in small numbers on the higher passes, with some very close encounters. a.k.a. Rufous-fronted Tit.

Sittidae (Nuthatches)

CHESTNUT-BELLIED NUTHATCH (*Sitta castanea*) – Seen on several occasions in woodland above Tingtibi. Split by some as Chestnut-bellied, *S. cinnamoventris* (from Indian, *S. castanea*; e.g., by BSA).

WHITE-TAILED NUTHATCH (*Sitta himalayensis*) – Regular in upper elevation broadleaf forest; seen on most passes.

Certhiidae (Creepers)

EURASIAN TREECREEPER (*Certhia familiaris*) – We saw two: In dry conifer forests on Chele La and Sheltang (Ura) La. This subspecies, *mandellii*, is proposed as a split by some (Himalayan Treecreeper), but complexities with Hodgson's of the western Himalaya remain to be worked out (BSA).

RUSTY-FLANKED TREECREEPER (*Certhia nipalensis*) – Thanks to Dave Farrow's recording, a responsive bird on our return over Pele La; a close and lovely look.

BROWN-THROATED TREECREEPER (*Certhia discolor*) – One on Dochu La and two more near Zhemgang, with others heard near Yongkola; the treecreeper of broadleaf forests.

Cinclidae (Dippers)

BROWN DIPPER (*Cinclus pallasii*) – A good number of sightings on this trip, first at Chuzom, then along the rivers of the Punakha area. As usual, some juveniles were seen, having already fledged by early spring.

Pycnonotidae (Bulbuls)

STRIATED BULBUL (*Pycnonotus striatus*) – Fairly common in mid-elevation broadleaf forests, e.g., around Yongkola and near Zhemgang.

BLACK-CRESTED BULBUL (*Pycnonotus melanicterus*) – The most difficult (it is a lowland species) of the regular bulbuls, as usual, with just a couple seen at medium distance.

RED-VENTED BULBUL (*Pycnonotus cafer*) – Common in disturbed areas at lower elevations.

WHITE-THROATED BULBUL (*Alophoixus flaveolus*) – Seen well in forest above Tingtibi.

MOUNTAIN BULBUL (*Ixos maclellandii*) – Generally uncommon, but widespread; seen on at least four days.

ASHY BULBUL (*Hemixos flavala*) – Fairly common in the Tingtibi area.

BLACK BULBUL (*Hypsipetes leucocephalus*) – Widespread and common, often to quite high elevations (though strangely scarce or absent around Yongkola).

Regulidae (Kinglets)

GOLDCREST (*Regulus regulus*) – Two on Chele La in arid, high-elevation conifer forest.

Phylloscopidae (Leaf-Warblers)

TICKELL'S LEAF-WARBLER (*Phylloscopus affinis*) – Migrants were arriving; intermittent encounters, generally in scrubby areas.

BUFF-BARRED WARBLER (*Phylloscopus pulcher*) – Seen on many of the high passes, where some will breed; generally in smaller numbers than many of the other warblers.

ASHY-THROATED WARBLER (*Phylloscopus maculipennis*) – One of the easiest leaf warblers to identify. Fairly common on most of the passes, generally in moister areas.

PALE-RUMPED WARBLER (*Phylloscopus chloronotus*) – Often common in high-elevation conifer forests. a.k.a. Lemon-rumped Warbler; as split from Pallas's Warbler.

YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER (*Phylloscopus inornatus*) – [something of the Yellow-browed/Hume's ilk was seen (silent) but not identified to species]

LARGE-BILLED LEAF-WARBLER (*Phylloscopus magnirostris*) – This breeder was just arriving from southern breeding grounds, and we heard more as the trip progressed, with good views finally on our return over Yutong La, with more on the next two passes.

BLYTH'S LEAF-WARBLER (*Phylloscopus reguloides*) – One of the most common and widespread warblers, now mostly at upper elevation breeding grounds.

YELLOW-VENTED WARBLER (*Phylloscopus cantator*) – A distinctive leaf-warbler, and something of a specialty of this tour route, where it is fairly common at lower elevations in broadleaf forest, first seen along the Mo Chhu, again around Tingtibi.

GOLDEN-SPECTACLED WARBLER (*Seicercus burkii*) – We saw (and, perhaps more importantly) heard this species in upper elevation broadleaf forest, primarily on Dochu La and Pele La, with another study on our return. a.k.a. Green-crowned Warbler (BSA). This form has retained the common and scientific names of a complex now split into six species (*Zoologica Scripta* 33: 501-510 and *Ibis* 141: 545-568).

WHISTLER'S WARBLER (*Seicercus whistleri*) – This split from Golden-spectacled was fairly common at higher elevations than it, often seen on the upper slopes or in the passes.

GRAY-HOODED WARBLER (*Seicercus xanthoschistos*) – Common in middle elevation forests. Note that this species will be moved to the genus *Phylloscopus*.

GRAY-CHEEKED WARBLER (*Seicercus poliogenys*) – Fairly common in the understory of wet forest around Yongkola.

CHESTNUT-CROWNED WARBLER (*Seicercus castaniceps*) – This little beauty was seen regularly in broadleaf forest, often with mixed bird flocks.

Cisticolidae (Cisticolas and Allies)

COMMON TAILORBIRD (*Orthotomus sutorius*) – Not a feature of this tour, but we did encounter a couple in disturbed areas at lower elevation (Kosha La, above Tingtibi) (and in India).

STRIATED PRINIA (*Prinia crinigera*) – This bird of open areas, including agriculture, was seen twice, on the first day down from Trongsa, then on the return at Kosha La.

HILL PRINIA (*Prinia atrogularis*) – We had a very cooperative bird in the shrubbery near our Yongkola camp. a.k.a. Black-throated Prinia, reflecting the breeding plumage we saw.

Sylviidae (Old World Warblers)

GREAT PARROTBILL (*Conostoma oemodium*) – A struggle, as we heard some, had to find some more, heard them, looked again as we came back, saw one well for some but not all, had to find some more, did find some more, also transitory, until Sangay spotted one, in back a little, but staying put! Whew.

BROWN PARROTBILL (*Paradoxornis unicolor*) – It was a great parrotbill trip, one of our best. Sangay also spotted this one on Yutong La, saving us some (perhaps much) searching later.

FULVOUS PARROTBILL (*Paradoxornis fulvifrons*) – One of the prizes of the trip, a species we have seen only a few times. Good views in bamboo on Thrumsing La.

BLACK-THROATED PARROTBILL (*Paradoxornis nipalensis*) – A recent article (Craig Robson in *The Forktail*) proposed splitting this taxon; if split, we saw 'Orange-eared' Parrotbill, *Suthora humii*. And we saw it very well, and more times than normal, our first a fabulously close pair on Dochu La.

BLACK-BROWED PARROTBILL (*Paradoxornis atrosuperciliaris*) – A.k.a. (as we called it) Lesser Rufous-headed Parrotbill, but we didn't call it that very much, because the birds disappeared quickly, seen by just a couple of folks during breakfast below Tingtibi.

RUFOUS-HEADED PARROTBILL (*Paradoxornis ruficeps*) – A.k.a. Greater Rufous-headed. We had excellent views of a flock in bamboo near Yongkola, and then had a reprise above Tingtibi. Excellent.

Muscicapidae (Old World Flycatchers)

DARK-SIDED FLYCATCHER (*Muscicapa sibirica*) – About seven arriving migrants were seen, typically perched like mini-Olive-sided Flycatchers on high, exposed perches. a.k.a. Siberian Flycatcher.

RUFOUS-GORGETED FLYCATCHER (*Ficedula strophiiata*) – Common at higher elevations, where they had arrived to breed, we gradually learned the variety of "looks" they can present, the gorget generally not seen on first glance. a.k.a. Orange-gorgeted Flycatcher.

TAIGA FLYCATCHER (*Ficedula albicilla*) – One female, a migrant, was seen briefly below Tingtibi. As split from Red-breasted Flycatcher. a.k.a. Red-throated Flycatcher.

LITTLE PIED FLYCATCHER (*Ficedula westermanni*) – Not uncommon in broadleaf forests around Yongkola and Tingtibi.

ULTRAMARINE FLYCATCHER (*Ficedula superciliaris*) – Regular in broadleaf forests, generally a little higher than Little Pied.

SAPPHIRE FLYCATCHER (*Ficedula sapphira*) – One migrant female was seen briefly by about half the group (the half that was not investigating bushes after breakfast).

- VERDITER FLYCATCHER** (*Eumyias thalassinus*) – Common and easily observed, seen nearly daily.
- LARGE NILTAVA** (*Niltava grandis*) – We saw a couple of females near Yongkola, then enjoyed a male in the telescope near Zhemgang, where some saw another a couple of days later.
- SMALL NILTAVA** (*Niltava macgrigoriae*) – The wonderful blue highlights were first enjoyed along the Mo Chhu, with additional sightings near Yongkola, and above Tingtibi.
- RUFOUS-BELLIED NILTAVA** (*Niltava sundara*) – Relatively conspicuous this trip, with repeated sightings, perhaps our best view coming at the end as we ascended Dochu La.
- PALE BLUE-FLYCATCHER** (*Cyornis unicolor*) – We tried several before finding a responsive bird, but that one was a winner, coming to perch at length at close range within a meter of the ground. A wonderful combination of voice and plumage.
- BLUE-THROATED FLYCATCHER** (*Cyornis rubeculoides*) – Seen well in dry woodland above Tingtibi, with another one later dive-bombing our Asian Barred-Owlet. a.k.a. Blue-throated Blue Flycatcher.
- PYGMY BLUE-FLYCATCHER** (*Muscicapella hodgsoni*) – Doug spotted a female on Pele La (good views), and some then saw the more distant male. Genetic studies suggest that this species will be included in *Ficedula*.
- RED-FLANKED BLUETAIL** (*Tarsiger cyanurus*) – Several seen and more heard on Chele La, with a few more heard later in the trip. a.k.a. Orange-flanked Bush-Robin; split by BSA as Himalayan Red-flanked Bush-Robin, *T. rufilatus* (thereby hybridizing the common names!).
- GOLDEN BUSH-ROBIN** (*Tarsiger chrysaeus*) – They stayed on the move, but we had a responsive pair on Thrumsing La, with most getting a good view of the male; a good find.
- ORIENTAL MAGPIE-ROBIN** (*Copsychus saularis*) – Scattered small numbers in open country at lower elevations, mostly from a moving vehicle.
- HODGSON'S REDSTART** (*Phoenicurus hodgsoni*) – A common wintering species, many are gone by the start of the tour, and as usual our few sightings were early in the trip--near Paro our first day, and then around Punakha.
- BLUE-FRONTED REDSTART** (*Phoenicurus frontalis*) – Nice views of birds on Chele La the first day (where they will breed), with a few later (e.g., near Namling) probably still in wintering habitat.
- WHITE-CAPPED REDSTART** (*Chaimarrornis leucocephalus*) – Defiantly still River Chat! And most were along watercourses, including a few artificial irrigation canals, etc.! A lovely and charismatic bird.
- PLUMBEOUS REDSTART** (*Rhyacornis fuliginosa*) – Fairly common along rivers and other watercourses, seen on about half of the days of the trip, with good views of the distinctively different sexes. a.k.a. Plumbeous Water-Redstart.
- WHITE-TAILED ROBIN** (*Cinclidium leucurum*) – Seen by Doug on Dochu La, otherwise heard several times, with a few glimpses.
- LITTLE FORKTAIL** (*Enicurus scouleri*) – We missed them at a couple of spots, then found a pair at a waterfall on our second attempt, followed by another pair of star performers on the stream at the big honeyguide cliff.
- SLATY-BACKED FORKTAIL** (*Enicurus schistaceus*) – We had good looks at several along the Mo Chhu, and then saw another along a stream above Tingtibi.
- STONECHAT (SIBERIAN)** (*Saxicola torquatus maurus*) – Migrants were seen near Punakha, Namling, and Yutong La. The subspecies *maurus* is given--birds we saw are in that subspecies group, which is sometimes split as Siberian Stonechat.
- GRAY BUSHCHAT** (*Saxicola ferreus*) – Ones and two were sprinkled around, generally in mid-elevation clearings.
- Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)*
- BLUE-CAPPED ROCK-THRUSH** (*Monticola cinclorhynchus*) – An arriving breeder, they became common at lower elevations at the tour progressed, especially on the Tingtibi run.
- CHESTNUT-BELLIED ROCK-THRUSH** (*Monticola rufiventris*) – A few breeders were seen, particularly above Yongkola. Good views of birds on high perches.
- BLUE WHISTLING-THRUSH** (*Myophonus caeruleus*) – Common, most seen from the moving vehicle early and late in the day, with some daily totals in the dozens. Of course we also periodically had good views in the field.
- PLAIN-BACKED THRUSH** (*Zoothera mollissima*) – A tough genus we generally miss. This year we did find one Plain-backed, a bird foraging on the ground on Pele La.
- WHITE-COLLARED BLACKBIRD** (*Turdus albocinctus*) – A common thrush of upper elevations, generally around all the passes.
- GRAY-WINGED BLACKBIRD** (*Turdus boulboul*) – Much less easily seen, and indeed we just had them at one place on Dochu La.

DARK-THROATED THRUSH (*Turdus atrogularis*) – A scarce wintering species that we generally miss. We saw two Black-throated (nominate) types in the Paro Valley on 11 April, and a Red-throated (*ruficollis*) bird the next day on Chele La. The two are often split, the taxonomic challenge being how to handle a narrow hybrid zone in Siberia.

LESSER SHORTWING (*Brachypteryx leucophrys*) – A mega-skulker, about half of the group saw one responsive bird in the undergrowth along the Mo Chhu, actually quite a victory; the complex song of several others was heard.

Timaliidae (Babblers)

WHITE-THROATED LAUGHINGTHRUSH (*Garrulax albogularis*) – In the judgmental scheme of your guide, this is a good laughingthrush, and it was often good, with flocks seen on a majority of the days of the tour, often right along the road edge.

WHITE-CRESTED LAUGHINGTHRUSH (*Garrulax leucolophus*) – This jay-like laughingthrush was more difficult than normal, but we finally had a good view of a small group near Tingtibi.

LESSER NECKLACED LAUGHINGTHRUSH (*Garrulax monileger*) – A skulker, so a bad laughingthrush, we had to work to get fairly good views of a pair near Tingtibi.

GREATER NECKLACED LAUGHINGTHRUSH (*Garrulax pectoralis*) – Another bad one, we heard them below Tingtibi, where about half of the group did have quick views.

STRIATED LAUGHINGTHRUSH (*Garrulax striatus*) – A good one, an arboreal species often seen in broadleaf forests without particular effort. A series of papers by Alice Cibois et al. on the genetics of babblers have shown that the laughingthrushes are a somewhat artificial assemblage, and *Grammatoptila striata* is the likely future scientific name of this one.

RUFOUS-NECKED LAUGHINGTHRUSH (*Garrulax ruficollis*) – Definitely a bad one, but we found a good individual that responded by emerging from the undergrowth to call from an exposed perch. Very nice views. a.k.a. *Dryonastes ruficollis*.

RUFOUS-CHINNED LAUGHINGTHRUSH (*Garrulax rufogularis*) – Usually a bad one, but we again found a kind individual that perched to inspect us, allowing telescope views of a bird that we are happy to get in our binoculars.

SPOTTED LAUGHINGTHRUSH (*Garrulax ocellatus*) – We struggled on Chele La, where only part of the group had views while listening to the loud, rich calls, but we did better on Pele La, everyone having good views of a pair. a.k.a. *Ianthocincla ocellata*.

GRAY-SIDED LAUGHINGTHRUSH (*Garrulax caerulatus*) – Sue spotted some birds moving along a slope, and we were delighted to see a group of Gray-sided Laughingthrushes, a bad one for sure, moving slowly through relatively open vegetation. a.k.a. *Dryonastes caerulatus*.

BHUTAN LAUGHINGTHRUSH (*Garrulax imbricatus*) – At our Yongkola camp, a pair of this fairly good one, often carrying food, was frequently seen, even from the mess tent. A few others were seen in shrubby clearings. As split from Streaked Laughingthrush, this is as close to an endemic as Bhutan has. a.k.a. Bhutan Streaked Laughingthrush, *Trochalopteron imbricatum*.

SCALY LAUGHINGTHRUSH (*Garrulax subunicolor*) – Another bad one, we were pleased to have a responsive pair approach us closely, finally providing nice views above Namling. a.k.a. *Trochalopteron subunicolor*.

BLUE-WINGED LAUGHINGTHRUSH (*Garrulax squamatus*) – More trouble, but we managed, for this species, fairly good views of a responsive pair that moved through roadside shrubbery in the forest near Yongkola, and even came out onto the shoulder.

BLACK-FACED LAUGHINGTHRUSH (*Garrulax affinis*) – A fairly good laughingthrush, with time we get repeated good views of what is a fairly common high elevation species. We enjoyed seeing them feeding in rhododendron flowers from our meal table on Pele La, and often saw birds with a frosting of pollen on the face. a.k.a. *Trochalopteron affine*.

CHESTNUT-CROWNED LAUGHINGTHRUSH (*Garrulax erythrocephalus*) – A mixed reputation, but fairly common, and so with time more and more views are obtained. a.k.a. Red-headed Laughingthrush, *Trochalopteron erythrocephalum*.

RED-FACED LIOCICHLA (*Liocichla phoenicea*) – We had three visual encounters, with mixed results each time as this skulker would approach closely as a pair and slip through the roadside shrubbery.

RUSTY-CHEEKED SCIMITAR-BABBLER (*Pomatorhinus erythrogegens*) – Our first was near Kosha La, where a bird carrying a caterpillar responded, and we saw another above Tingtibi the next day.

WHITE-BROWED SCIMITAR-BABBLER (*Pomatorhinus schisticeps*) – Excellent views of a very responsive pair in bamboo near Tingtibi.

STREAK-BREASTED SCIMITAR-BABBLER (*Pomatorhinus ruficollis*) – Fairly common by voice, and after several

- attempts good views for all of a star performer that approached closely.
- CORAL-BILLED SCIMITAR-BABBLER** (*Pomatorhinus ferruginosus*) – It responded somewhat, but not even a motion was seen. [*]
- SLENDER-BILLED SCIMITAR-BABBLER** (*Xiphirhynchus superciliaris*) – Most saw one with Rusty-fronted Barwings along the Mo Chhu, and we called out another on Pele La for views for everyone. A skulker with an amazing bill.
- SCALY-BREASTED WREN-BABBLER** (*Pnoepyga albiventer*) – Heard twice, once a bird that it really seemed we ought to be able to see . . . [*]
- PYGMY WREN-BABBLER** (*Pnoepyga pusilla*) – With perseverance, good views along the Mo Chhu, with more heard later in the trip. Genetic studies have shown that the four species in this genus are not related to other wren-babblers or babblers in general, and so are increasingly elevated as a family, the Pnoepygidae.
- RUFOUS-THROATED WREN-BABBLER** (*Spelaeoris caudatus*) – The first was a struggle with limited success, the second a star seen by all at close range above Yongkola.
- SPOTTED WREN-BABBLER** (*Spelaeoris formosus*) – Heard at length, first along the Mo Chhu, then near Yongkola, where a responsive bird was seen by many.
- RUFOUS-CAPPED BABBLER** (*Stachyris ruficeps*) – Fairly common, often with mixed flocks.
- GOLDEN BABBLER** (*Stachyris chrysaea*) – Our third encounter near Zhemgang was the best, as a pair approached very closely.
- GRAY-THROATED BABBLER** (*Stachyris nigriceps*) – More trouble than normal, as several attempts produced views of varying quality near Tingtibi.
- SILVER-EARED MESIA** (*Leiothrix argentauris*) – After coming up empty several times, we finally found a pair that was responsive, and enjoyed good views of this striking bird; another pair the next day, also near Zhemgang.
- RED-BILLED LEIOTHRIX** (*Leiothrix lutea*) – Good views near Namling.
- HIMALAYAN CUTIA** (*Cutia nipalensis*) – This wonderful bird was seen twice near Yongkola, the second time a group of about ten that put on a fine show at eye level.
- BLACK-HEADED SHRIKE-BABBLER** (*Pteruthius rufiventer*) – A regional specialty and a bird that we miss some years. After finding a couple of White-browed where Black-headed have been before, we found one above Yongkola that called back from close range and which we finally spotted for nice views. A good find. Shrike-babblers have been shown by genetic studies not to be babblers, but a lineage related to vireos (e.g., Reddy & Cracraft, MPE 44: 1352) dating back to the split up of the Corvoids 30+ m.y.a., but Clements lags sadly behind in the babbler section, and has not moved them yet.
- WHITE-BROWED SHRIKE-BABBLER** (*Pteruthius flaviscapis*) – We had several good views of this striking species, the first on Dochu La where we studied the distinctive sexes, then near Namling and above Tingtibi. Splits have been proposed; we presumably saw *validirostris*, which is part of Blyth's, *P. aeralutus*, but there is additional muddle I do not wish to confront!
- GREEN SHRIKE-BABBLER** (*Pteruthius xanthochlorus*) – A regional specialty not seen on many tour routes. We saw three, fewer than in many years, but had good looks each time, including very close on Pele La near the end.
- BLACK-EARED SHRIKE-BABBLER** (*Pteruthius melanotis*) – Unusually few, just a couple of birds.
- WHITE-HOODED BABBLER** (*Gampsorhynchus rufulus*) – A good find, in a flock with Greater Rufous-headed Parrotbills in bamboo below Zhemgang. As split from Collared Babbler (e.g., of Thailand).
- RUSTY-FRONTED BARWING** (*Actinodura egertoni*) – We had several flocks along the Mo Chhu and above Yongkola, where traveling with Greater Rufous-headed Parrotbills.
- HOARY-THROATED BARWING** (*Actinodura nipalensis*) – A regional specialty (Nepal to Bhutan) seen on few tour routes. We saw them well on several passes, starting on Dochu La.
- BLUE-WINGED MINLA** (*Minla cyanouroptera*) – Most birds in Bhutan were 'better than the book'; this one is seldom seen that way! But we did see them, several times in small flocks in the canopy. Genetic studies show that this Minla will likely be separated from the others.
- CHESTNUT-TAILED MINLA** (*Minla strigula*) – Fairly common in the high country, many quite responsive, approaching closely to be savored, and there is a lot to be savored in the complex plumage. a.k.a. Bar-throated Siva or Bar-throated Minla.
- RED-TAILED MINLA** (*Minla ignotincta*) – This striking bird was seen several times in small flocks, many behaving much like nuthatches.
- GOLDEN-BREASTED FULVETTA** (*Alcippe chrysotis*) – This stunning bird is uncommon, so it was great to have three

quality encounters to enjoy the gorgeous plumage. Based on genetic studies, this bird will increasingly be treated as *Lioparus chrysotis*, and moved to the *Sylviidae*.

YELLOW-THROATED FULVETTA (*Alcippe cinerea*) – Locally common in the understory of wet forest; great views several times of this odd bird that looks more like a warbler.

RUFOUS-WINGED FULVETTA (*Alcippe castaneiceps*) – Uncommon, but we still saw it on a half dozen days of the tour, with good views of the complicated pattern.

WHITE-BROWED FULVETTA (*Alcippe vinipectus*) – Common, and one of the first responders at high elevation. Genetic studies also move this fulvetta to the *Sylviidae*, as *Fulvetta vinipectus*.

NEPAL FULVETTA (*Alcippe nipalensis*) – A fulvetta of lower elevations, seen in small flocks in the understory along the Mo Chhu and around Tingtibi.

RUFOUS SIBIA (*Heterophasia capistrata*) – One of the common babblers of the trip, missed on only a few days. Very attractive trash!

Zosteropidae (White-eyes)

STRIATED YUHINA (*Yuhina castaniceps*) – Not the most striking bird! Small groups, often rapidly on the move, were seen on several days on the Trongsa to Tingtibi trip.

WHITE-NAPED YUHINA (*Yuhina bakeri*) – A regional specialty, and an uncommon one, seen just a few times around Yongkola and on the ridge near Zhemgang, where many folks got their best look.

WHISKERED YUHINA (*Yuhina flavicollis*) – A common bird of mid-elevation broadleaf forest, seen on most days of the trip.

STRIPE-THROATED YUHINA (*Yuhina gularis*) – Overlaps some with Whiskered, but generally at higher elevation in shrubs of the conifer zone. Another bird often seen with a dusting of rhododendron pollen.

RUFOUS-VENTED YUHINA (*Yuhina occipitalis*) – Common at higher elevations around most of the passes; easily seen, but a bit more shy about getting photographed than most.

BLACK-CHINNED YUHINA (*Yuhina nigrimenta*) – Uncommon, in lower elevation broadleaf forests, seen in the Zhemgang and Tingtibi areas.

WHITE-BELLIED YUHINA (*Yuhina zantholeuca*) – Seen twice in the Tingtibi area. Widespread in SE Asia, but a special bird taxonomically: Genetic studies have shown that it is an old-world component of the vireo assemblage (as with the shrike-babblers). Hence, it has been separated from the yuhinas as *White-bellied Erpornis*, *Erpornis zantholeuca*.

ORIENTAL WHITE-EYE (*Zosterops palpebrosus*) – Small numbers on about half the days of the tour. Genetic studies have shown that the white-eyes are part of the greater babbler assemblage, hence the family now includes some, such as yuhinas.

Sturnidae (Starlings)

SPOT-WINGED STARLING (*Saroglossa spiloptera*) – Poorly known in Bhutan, and only the second time we have seen it on the tour. We had good looks at a pair in flowering trees below Kosha La.

COMMON MYNA (*Acridotheres tristis*) – Common in agricultural and village habitats.

CHESTNUT-TAILED STARLING (*Sturnia malabarica*) – Not seen every year; this year we found this nectivorous species feeding in a bottlebrush (introduced) at the Punakha Dzong!

Chloropseidae (Leafbirds)

ORANGE-BELLIED LEAFBIRD (*Chloropsis hardwickii*) – Scarce early on, but we caught up with more and more in the flowering trees below Zhemgang.

Dicaeidae (Flowerpeckers)

FIRE-BREASTED FLOWERPECKER (*Dicaeum ignipectum*) – This tiny bird was scarcer than normal, but we still had good looks on a handful of occasions.

Nectariniidae (Sunbirds and Spiderhunters)

GOULD'S SUNBIRD (*Aethopyga gouldiae*) – Mrs. Gould's Sunbird, as we often said! A really gorgeous bird, seen on about half of the days of the trip.

GREEN-TAILED SUNBIRD (*Aethopyga nipalensis*) – Omnipresent at higher elevations, stunning at close range, which they often were. And yes, the tails in Bhutan are rather blue!

BLACK-THROATED SUNBIRD (*Aethopyga saturata*) – A bird of lower elevations, generally appearing dark, but

occasionally revealing some nice shots of violet or maroon.

EASTERN CRIMSON SUNBIRD (*Aethopyga siparaja*) – A bird of lower elevations, always marginal on this tour route, and the margin was slim on this trip, as one male flew by, to be glimpsed by only a few.

FIRE-TAILED SUNBIRD (*Aethopyga ignicauda*) – As unpredictable as always, but a good trip for this species, which we saw on four days, with excellent views on Pele La and Yutong La, where actually fairly common in transit to the breeding grounds.

STREAKED SPIDERHUNTER (*Arachnothera magna*) – While not fancy, this bird always intrigues people, perhaps starting with the pink feet! We had more than normal, thanks to the flowering trees attracting some below Zhemgang.

Prunellidae (Accentors)

RUFOUS-BREASTED ACCENTOR (*Prunella strophciata*) – Wintering accentors are usually tough, but a couple of species seemed to be gone, and this species was in low numbers, although eventually seen a half dozen times.

Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)

GRAY WAGTAIL (*Motacilla cinerea*) – A handful of migrants, many of them in flowing culverts along the road either side of Zhemgang.

WHITE WAGTAIL (*Motacilla alba*) – Birds of the local breeding population, *M. a. alboides*, were seen along several large rivers (Ibisbill habitat), especially around Paro.

ROSY PIPIT (*Anthus roseatus*) – A few migrants along rivers and in pastures at Paro, Thimphu (the sewage plant), and on Pele La.

OLIVE-BACKED PIPIT (*Anthus hodgsoni*) – Fairly common, a mix of breeders on the high passes, a few doing flight songs and perching on tree tops (a.k.a. Indian Tree Pipit), and migrants/winterers at lower elevations, e.g., along the road at our Yongkola camp.

Emberizidae (Buntings, Sparrows and Allies)

CRESTED BUNTING (*Melophus lathami*) – Good views of breeding birds, some singing, in agricultural areas like buckwheat fields below Trongsa.

LITTLE BUNTING (*Emberiza pusilla*) – A wintering bird that is generally gone by these dates; we had two migrants, our first in a while, on Pele La.

Fringillidae (Siskins, Crossbills, and Allies)

PLAIN MOUNTAIN-FINCH (*Leucosticte nemoricola*) – Several flocks of this erratic wintering bird were on Chele La our first morning.

GOLD-NAPED FINCH (*Pyrrhoplectes epauletta*) – Not a bird we see every year, so any sighting is a victory. We had a pair, the male seen best (in the telescope), near Namling.

BLANFORD'S ROSEFINCH (*Carpodacus rubescens*) – Further checking confirms the identification. A lifebird for your guide, and a seldom-seen bird in Bhutan. We had good views of several on the upper slopes of Thrumsing La (the elevation at which they could breed).

BEAUTIFUL ROSEFINCH (*Carpodacus pulcherrimus*) – One female was seen on Sheltang La. BSA splits this as Himalayan Beautiful Rosefinch (same scientific name).

DARK-RUMPED ROSEFINCH (*Carpodacus edwardsii*) – Often a tough bird, especially males, we had good views of both sexes twice, first on Chele La, then on Thrumsing La.

SCARLET FINCH (*Haematospiza sipahi*) – Not a good year for this one, we saw a female Bob spotted near Yongkola, and had a brief (but glowing) pair for some near Zhemgang. Many of these finches are not on breeding grounds, and we are dependant on luck.

RED CROSSBILL (*Loxia curvirostra*) – Erratic here just like at home, Red Crossbills had apparently bred earlier in the winter, and we saw a number of juveniles (and relatively few adults) on several of the passes.

TIBETAN SERIN (*Serinus thibetanus*) – A bird we often miss, we had a flock feeding in an alder (just like the siskins we know) above Namling. a.k.a. Tibetan Siskin.

RED-HEADED BULLFINCH (*Pyrrhula erythrocephala*) – Several encounters with pairs on the higher passes.

COLLARED GROSBEAK (*Mycerobas affinis*) [*]

SPOT-WINGED GROSBEAK (*Mycerobas melanozanthos*) – Bob found a couple of males on Yutong La for our first of this uncommon bird, and we then had a flock of 17 below Zhemgang, perhaps the largest flock in the (admittedly not long) history of the tour.

WHITE-WINGED GROSBEAK (*Mycerobas carnipes*) – The most consistent grosbeak of the tour, regular in small

numbers in junipers of the higher passes.

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

RUSSET SPARROW (*Passer rutilans*) – Common in the higher intermontane valleys, often around habitations.

EURASIAN TREE SPARROW (*Passer montanus*) – In the House Sparrow role in Bhutan, commensal with humans.

Estrildidae (Waxbills and Allies)

WHITE-RUMPED MUNIA (*Lonchura striata*) – Sangay spotted a small flock feeding in bamboo near Tingtibi.

NUTMEG MANNIKIN (*Lonchura punctulata*) – Part of the group had a flock during a White-bellied Heron search, and Lebo spotted another flock farther down river on our return. a.k.a. Scaly-breasted Munia.

MAMMALS

ASSAMESE MACAQUE (*Macaca assamensis*) – Small troops were seen along the road several times.

COMMON LANGUR (*Presbytis entellus*) – A.k.a. Gray or Hanuman Langur. Sue spotted a group, like Christmas ornaments on a tree, below Dochu La, and we saw another small group on Pele La.

GOLDEN LANGUR (*Presbytis geei*) – Common daily on the Tingtibi run, with excellent opportunities to observe them and to photograph them. Several young families were particularly enjoyed. This very local species occurs just over the border into India, but is largely restricted to a small part of Bhutan.

LEAF MONKEY SP. (*Presbytis pileata*) – Generally known as Capped Langur. This relative of Golden Langur was seen once during an afternoon walk above our Yongkola camp, an entertaining group of mighty leapers.

PIKA SP. (*Ochotona roylei*) – Multiple species of pika occur in Bhutan. Our attempts to figure out what we are seeing usually comes back to this one, of which we saw a half dozen.

BLACK GIANT SQUIRREL (*Ratufa bicolor*) – We usually see this species, but never many. We had one brief view near Tingtibi, dramatic because of the size of this squirrel.

IRAWADDY SQUIRREL (*Callosciurus pygerythrus*) – A.k.a. Hoary-bellied Squirrel. Fairly common at lower elevations.

HIMALAYAN STRIPED SQUIRREL (*Tamiops maccllellandi*) – The chipmunk-like squirrel; about a half dozen seen.

HIMALAYAN GROUND-SQUIRREL (*Dremomys lokriah*) – Seen on the ground, but also quite arboreal; about four. a.k.a. Orange-bellied Ground-Squirrel.

YELLOW-THROATED MARTEN (*Martes flavigula*) – Some folks saw one dash across the road in front of the bus near Trongsa; ID by Sangay.

MUNTJAC (BARKING DEER) (*Muntiacus muntjak*) – With five seen, perhaps the most ever, including some good looks, e.g. of the one walking across a field below our Tingtibi camp. The hoarse bark was also heard from camp.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Honorable mention to Yak, seen in the high country throughout. They were all domestic; wild Yaks are rare and local anywhere now (mostly in Tibet?).

Insectivorous bats

Mouse sp., Black Rail model

squashed snake, live snake streaking off the road

Many fine butterflies

Totals for the tour: 294 bird taxa and 11 mammal taxa