India - Northern

Birds & Tigers

Assam Extension



Bengal Tiger by Adam Riley

India is a country without equal, offering extraordinary cultural depth and remarkable geographical diversity ranging from deserts and fertile plains to dense forests, tropical coastlines, and the snow-capped Himalayas. This variety supports a superb avifauna alongside some of the world's most iconic mammals, foremost among them the Bengal Tiger.

This tour explores the premier birding and wildlife sites of north-central India, combining exceptional bird diversity, classic mammal encounters, and cultural highlights. A visit to the legendary Ranthambhore National Park, widely regarded as one of the best places on Earth to see Tigers in the wild, forms a major highlight. An optional extension to Assam adds two of Asia's finest wildlife reserves.

We begin in New Delhi with an excursion to Sultanpur National Park, a productive wetland and grassland mosaic supporting wintering waterbirds and passerines. Here we search for ducks, geese, gulls, and waders, as well as species such as Striated Grassbird, Red Avadavat, Yellow-bellied Prinia, and Sind Sparrow.

From Delhi we travel by train to Kathgodam and ascend into the Kumaon Himalayan foothills, following the Kosi River to our base near Manila. Birding in the surrounding oak and rhododendron forests focuses on Himalayan specialties including Cheer, Kalij, and Koklass Pheasants, several ground thrushes, Golden Bush Robin, and other high-altitude forest species, all set against dramatic mountain scenery.

We then descend to Jim Corbett National Park, where sal forest, riverine woodland, grasslands, and foothills combine to produce excellent bird diversity. Target species include Tawny and Brown Fish Owls, Pallas's and Lesser Fish Eagles, Red Junglefowl, Slaty-headed Parakeet, Crested Treeswift, Golden-fronted Leafbird, Rufous and Grey Treepies, White-crested Laughingthrush, Rufous-bellied Niltava, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, several forktails, and large mixed-species flocks, along with distinctive species such as Wallcreeper and Ibisbill.

Our journey continues to Sattal, a cluster of forest-fringed lakes surrounded by oak and pine woodland and regarded as one of the finest birding areas in the western Himalayas. Here we focus on forest and lakeside birding, seeking a wide variety of foothill species including Himalayan Cutia, Spotted and Rufous-bellied Eagle-Owls, laughingthrushes, flycatchers, and wintering passerines.

Returning to the plains, we travel to Ranthambhore National Park, one of India's most celebrated wildlife reserves. This scenic landscape of dry forest, rocky hills, and open grasslands offers outstanding opportunities to see the Bengal Tiger, with additional chances for Leopard and Sloth Bear. Birding highlights include Indian Peafowl, Indian Scops Owl, Yellow-footed Green Pigeon, Crested Serpent Eagle, White-bellied Drongo, White-browed Fantail, and the endemic Painted Sandgrouse.

We next visit the renowned wetlands of Keoladeo National Park (Bharatpur), where rich marshes support vast numbers of waterbirds, raptors, and migrant passerines. Key species include Sarus Crane, Cotton Pygmy Goose, Painted and Black-necked Storks, Asian Openbill, Black Bittern, Pheasant-tailed and Bronze-winged Jacanas, and White-tailed Lapwing.

A boat excursion on the Chambal River takes us through one of the last strongholds of the endangered Ganges River Dolphin and Indian Skimmer. Other specialties include Black-bellied and River Terns, River Lapwing, and the remarkable Gharial. Nearby grasslands support Indian Courser, the endemic Sykes's Lark, several wheatears, and Isabelline Wheatear. The main tour concludes with a visit to the iconic Taj Mahal before returning to New Delhi for departure.

The optional extension begins with a flight from New Delhi to Guwahati, followed by visits to Kaziranga and Manas National Parks. Kaziranga is famed for its Indian Rhinoceros and exceptional concentrations of large mammals, as well as species such as Grey-headed and Pallas's Fish Eagles, Swamp Francolin, Slender-billed Vulture, Blossom-headed Parakeet, Pied Falconet, and Western Hoolock Gibbon.

At Manas National Park, near the Bhutanese border, extensive grasslands and broad-leaved forests support a rich assemblage of rare and localized species including Bengal Florican, Grey-lored Broadbill, Pied Harrier, Rufous-necked Laughingthrush, Pale-chinned Flycatcher, Black-backed Forktail, Great Hornbill, and large mammals such as Gaur. The extension concludes with a return to Guwahati for final departure.

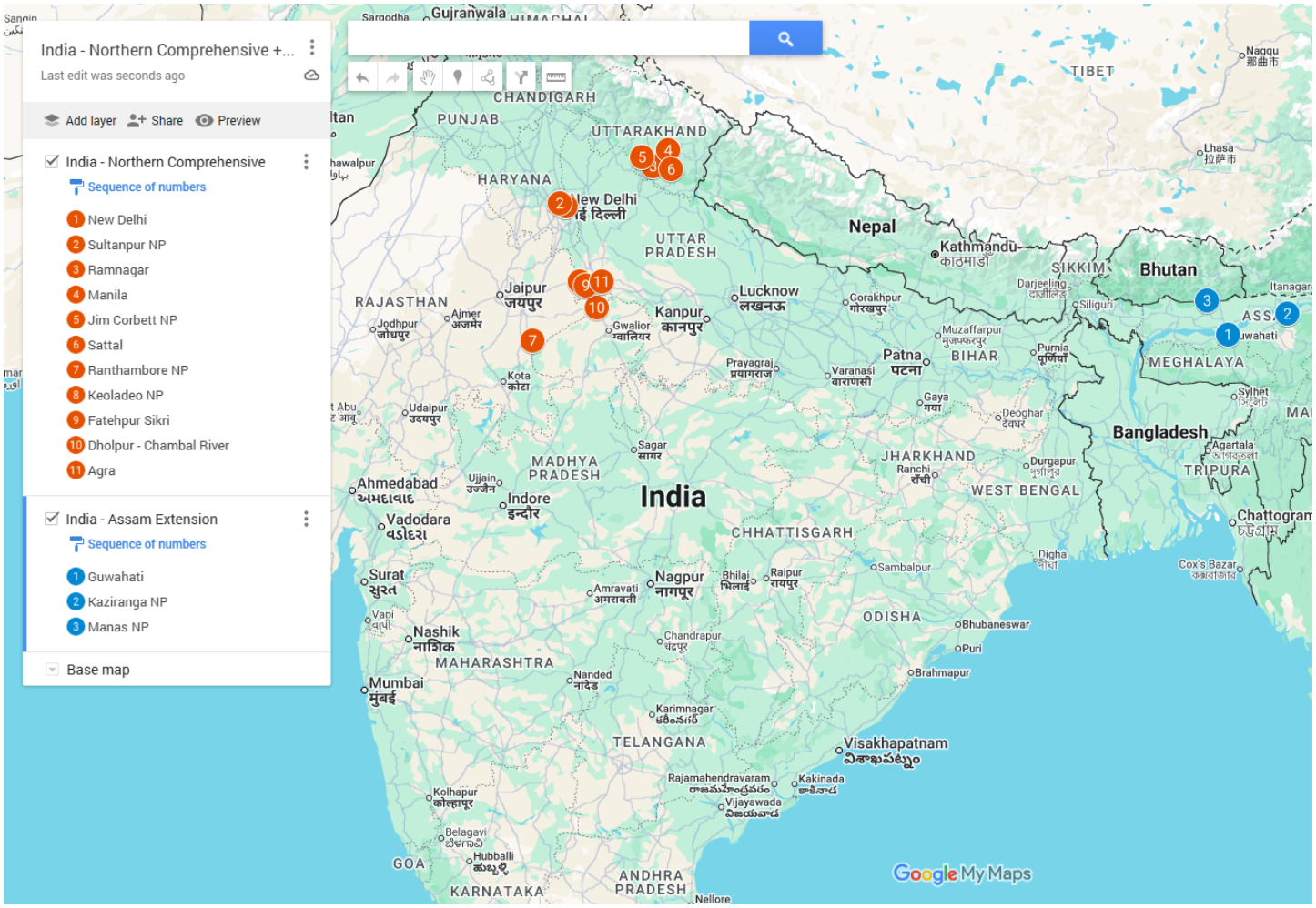
Itinerary & Map

Birds & Tigers

Day 1	Arrival into New Delhi
Day 2	Sultanpur National Park
Day 3	New Delhi; train to Kathgodam, transfer to Kumaon foothills & Kosi River
Day 4	Kumaon foothills & Kosi River to Manila
Day 5	Manila
Day 6	Manila to Jim Corbett National Park
Day 7	Jim Corbett National Park
Day 8	Jim Corbett National Park to Sattal
Day 9	Sattal
Day 10	Sattal to Kathgodam; train to New Delhi
Day 11	New Delhi; train to Ranthambhore
Days 12 & 13	Ranthambhore National Park
Day 14	Ranthambhore National Park; train to Bharatpur
Day 15	Keoladeo National Park
Day 16	Bharatpur to Chambal River via Fatehpur Sikri
Day 17	Chambal to New Delhi via Taj Mahal & final departure

Assam Extension

Day 1	Arrival into New Delhi; flight to Guwahati
Day 2	Guwahati to Kaziranga National Park
Day 3	Kaziranga National Park
Day 4	Kaziranga National Park to Manas National Park
Days 5 & 6	Manas National Park
Day 7	Manas National Park to Guwahati & final departure


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India - Northern Comprehensive
Sequence of numbers
1 New Delhi
2 Sultanpur NP
3 Ramnagar
4 Manila
5 Jim Corbett NP
6 Sattal
7 Ranthambore NP
8 Keoladeo NP
9 Fatehpur Sikri
10 Dholpur - Chambal River
11 Agra
India - Assam Extension
Sequence of numbers
1 Guwahati
2 Kaziranga NP
3 Manas NP
Base map
India
Nepal
Bhutan
Bangladesh
TIBET
PUNJAB
CHANDIGARH
UTTARAKHAND
HARYANA
UTTAR PRADESH
RAJASTHAN
BIHAR
SIKKIM
MEGHALAYA
TRIPURA
WEST BENGAL
JHARKHAND
CHHATTISGARH
MADHYA PRADESH
ODISHA
MAHARASHTRA
TELANGANA
ANDHRA PRADESH
GOA
KARNATAKA
New Delhi
Jaipur
Kanpur
Lucknow
Kathmandu
Patna
Ahmedabad
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Birding sites in detail

Sultanpur National Park. Sultanpur National Park or Sultanpur Jheel, as it is more commonly referred to, was proclaimed as a national park in 1991. It is located to the south-west of New Delhi in the state of Haryana. It offers an excellent introduction to Indian birding with over 300 species having been recorded here. We intend to spend the entire day in this bird-rich area where we should encounter over a hundred species during the course of the day. We'll take in Acacia woodland, the jheel (natural lake) itself, cultivated fields, pastures and semi-desert areas using the trail that circumnavigates the lake and will also likely visit one or two nearby sites just outside of the National Park.



Red-billed Blue Magpie by Stuart Elsom

The water level of the jheel does vary from season to season and is largely dependent on the rainfall from the previous summer monsoon. We will scan the wetland and its fringes for species such as striking Painted and Black-necked Storks, Little and Indian Cormorants, Indian Pond Heron, Bar-headed and Greylag Geese, Indian Spot-billed, Ferruginous and Tufted Ducks, Gadwall, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Red-crested and Common Pochards, Grey-headed Swamphen, Red-naped Ibis, White-tailed Lapwing, River Tern and Streak-throated Swallow.

Exploring the woodland and scrubby areas may produce White-throated Kingfisher, Indian Robin, Spotted Owlet, Ashy and Delicate Prinias, Black Redstart, Large Grey and Jungle Babblers, Black-rumped Flameback, Yellow-crowned Woodpecker, Red-breasted Flycatcher, Common Hoopoe, Greenish and Hume's Leaf Warblers, Common Hawk-Cuckoo, Indian Grey Hornbill, Brown-headed Barbet, Alexandrine Parakeet and Purple Sunbird.



Red Avadavat by Adam Riley

With some luck we may find the scarce Sind Sparrow, the rare Brook's Leaf Warbler (here on its wintering grounds), Black-breasted and Streaked Weavers, Red Avadavat, Eastern Orphean Warbler, Bluethroat, Ruddy-breasted and Brown Crakes, Moustached and Paddyfield Warblers, Indian Golden Oriole, Common Woodshrike, Brown Boobook, Indian Scops Owl and even Orange-headed Thrush. Raptors that we will be on the lookout for include Greater and Indian Spotted Eagles, Eastern Imperial Eagle,



Wallcreeper by Clayton Burne

Booted Eagle and Western Marsh Harrier. We should also get excellent views of Nilgai (Blue Bull), while possibilities exist for Golden Jackal and Jungle Cat.

Kumaon foothills & Kosi River. Clear mountain streams in this area support a selection of torrent specialists, notably the striking Crested Kingfisher, Plumbeous Water and stunning White-capped Redstarts, Grey Wagtail, and active Brown Dipper. Rock-lined riverbanks support small wintering populations of two highly desirable, but rare birds, the incredible Ibisbill and glamorous Wallcreeper, both of which we'll try our very best to find.

The forests in this area are excellent for birding and may yield Great Hornbill, Blue-bearded Bee-eater, Grey-capped Pygmy, Streak-throated, Grey-headed and Fulvous-breasted Woodpeckers, Greater and Lesser Yellownape and the gigantic Great Slaty Woodpecker, Lineated, Blue-throated and Brown-headed Barbets, Golden-fronted Leafbird, the outrageous Rufous and Grey Treepies, flocks of Red-breasted Parakeet, Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike – often associating with mixed flocks containing a host of bulbuls, such as Black-crested, Ashy, Black, Himalayan and Red-whiskered, Black-chinned, Yellow-eyed and Tawny-bellied Babblers, the very attractive White-crested Laughingthrush, Rufous-gorgeted, Slaty-blue and Snowy-browed Flycatchers, the stunning Rufous-bellied and Small Niltavas, Himalayan Black-lored Tit, Long-tailed Minivet often perched high in the treetops, White-throated and Yellow-bellied Fantails, Lemon-rumped, Buff-barred and Whistler's Warblers and the charismatic Velvet-fronted and Chestnut-bellied Nuthatches. With a dash of luck, we may even find the scarce Long-billed Thrush, an impressive and aptly named winter visitor from higher altitudes. Along the streams, we could find Spotted and Little Forktails, while the thickets and gullies hold Himalayan Rubythroat, as well as



Ibisbill by Adam Riley

Chestnut-headed and Grey-bellied Tesias and the range-restricted Nepal (Immaculate) Cupwing, although we will have to have patience and a little luck to see these shy understory skulkers.



Collared Falconet by Clayton Burne

Manila. This picturesque, high-altitude region has some exciting birding to look forward to. The high elevation grasslands interspersed with open pine forest have become one of the most reliable sites for Cheer Pheasant, while nearby denser forest patches offer for excellent Koklass Pheasant opportunities. While waiting patiently for these two tricky but very attractive species, we hope to encounter several other sought-after species such as Scaly-bellied, Himalayan, Rufous-bellied, Grey-headed, Grey-capped Pygmy and Brown-fronted Woodpeckers, the scarce Upland Pipit, Blue-capped Redstart, Himalayan Bluetail, Chestnut-bellied and White-tailed Nuthatches, Black-throated Bushtit, Long-tailed Minivet, Asian Tit and Bar-tailed Treecreeper, as well as a number of raptors like Mountain Hawk-Eagle, Steppe and Bonelli's Eagles, Himalayan Vulture and Himalayan Buzzard. With much luck we may even have a Bearded Vulture, Griffon Vulture or Cinereous Vulture fly by or taking to the thermals. We may also be fortunate to encounter some fly-by Common Wood Pigeons, Nepal House Martins or one or more of the area's elusive mammals such as Nepal Grey Langur, Himalayan Goral (a sure-footed mountain goat) or the voracious Yellow-throated Marten.

Dense thickets, scrubby thickets and dry secondary habitats in sheltered valleys usually harbour Himalayan Prinia, Streaked Laughingthrush, Black-chinned Babbler, Black-headed Jay, Grey Bush Chat, Russet Sparrow, nomadic flocks of Yellow-breasted Greenfinch, Himalayan Bulbul, Black-throated and Rufous-breasted Accentor, White-capped and Chestnut-eared Bunting, Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler, Grey Treepie, Green-backed Tit, a host of wintering warblers such as Buff-barred, Ashy-throated, Lemon-rumped, Blyth's Leaf and Grey-hooded Warblers and the handsome but ubiquitous Blue Whistling Thrush. With a bit of fortune, we may find the scarce Rock Bunting, elusive Pink-browed Rosefinch or Chukar Partridge, while the roadside cuttings and steep hillsides are an excellent place to seek out the sought-after and unique Wallcreeper, placed in its own monotypic family.



Koklass Pheasant by Glen Valentine

In denser forest patches, we'll keep a lookout for mixed species flocks that could support flocks of White-throated



Kalij Pheasant by Stu Elsom

and Striated Laughingthrushes, Eurasian Jay, Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher, the hyperactive Yellow-bellied and White-throated Fantails, Indian White-eye, Red-billed Blue Magpie, Great and Blue-throated Barbets, Mountain Bulbul, Maroon Oriole, Himalayan Black-lored, Yellow-browed and Coal Tits, Fire-breasted Flowerpecker and with extreme luck perhaps the stunning Scarlet Finch.

Jim Corbett National Park. From our comfortable lodge located adjacent to the buffer zone, we'll visit Corbett's core area in open safari vehicles. The park has several habitats, varying from sandy grasslands, rocky riverbeds (mostly dry outside of the monsoon season), and thick Sal and Teak Forests.

Kalij Pheasant and Red Junglefowl are likely to scatter off the sandy tracks as we make our way through the park, where we'll be targeting the likes of Great and Oriental Pied Hornbills, Slaty-headed and Plum-headed Parakeets, Asian Woolly-necked and Black Storks, and a pile of woodpeckers such as Streak-throated, Grey-capped Pygmy and Fulvous-breasted Woodpeckers and Black-rumped, Himalayan and Greater Flamebacks.



Rufous-chinned Laughingthrush by Glen Valentine

Other notable species we may encounter include Oriental Honey Buzzard, Black Eagle, Crested Serpent Eagle, Changeable Hawk-Eagle, Oriental Turtle Dove, Yellow-footed, Pin-tailed and Orange-breasted Green Pigeons, Lineated Barbet, Alexandrine and Rose-ringed Parakeets, Jungle Owlet, Crested Treeswift, Crested and Stork-billed Kingfishers, Golden-fronted Leafbird, White-bellied, Hair-crested, Greater Racket-tailed and scarcer Lesser Racket-tailed Drongos, Grey-breasted and Ashy Prinias, Indian

Robin, Black- chinned, Yellow-eyed, Puff-throated and Jungle Babblers, Indian Roller, Scarlet Minivet, and with some fortune, Chestnut-bellied and Velvet-fronted Nuthatches, Brahminy Starling, White-browed Wagtail, Blue-beaded Bee-eater and the rare and endangered Red-headed, Cinereous and White-rumped Vultures among the more numerous and readily seen Himalayan Vulture.



Black-headed Jay by Glen Valentine

Mammals are plentiful in number, and we can expect to see Chital (White-spotted Deer), Northern Red Muntjac (Barking Deer), Sambar, Eurasian Wild Pig (Wild Boar), Indian Grey Mongoose, Terai Sacred Langur and Rhesus Macaque. Tiger and Leopard are also present in the park and we will make an effort to find one, but they are elusive here and only occasionally seen.

During the heat of the day, the park closes, and we'll head back to our lodge to enjoy lunch and some downtown. The lodge gardens and surrounds may turn up White-rumped Shama, the localised Brown Rock Chat, Tickell's Blue Flycatcher, Rufous-bellied Niltava, Orange-headed Thrush, roosting Indian Scops Owl and with luck perhaps even Egyptian, White-rumped or Red-headed Vultures soaring overhead.

Kosi River Barrage. A quick stop at this artificial lake often produces hundreds of Ruddy Shelduck, a smattering of Gadwall and Common Pochard as well as Streak-throated Swallows overhead.

Sattal. The forests surrounding the foothill towns of Sattal (7 lakes) and Bimthal provide some of the very best birding in the entire Himalayan region between 1,500 and 2000 masl.



Grey-winged Blackbird by Clayton Burne

We'll work our way along the main roads, taking opportune detours down various side roads as we find mixed species flocks. The surrounding habitat comprises fields, scrub and taller woodland which supports the likes of Mountain Hawk-Eagle, Kalij Pheasant, Slaty-headed and Red-breasted Parakeets, Red-billed Blue Magpie, Grey Treepie, Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler, Maroon Oriole, Greater Flameback, Slaty-blue Flycatcher, Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush, White-crested and Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrushes, Rufous-breasted and Black-throated Accentors, Blue-fronted and Blue-capped Redstarts, Green-tailed and (Eastern) Crimson Sunbird, White-capped Bunting and Common Rosefinch.

Birding the side roads and forest trails may also reveal Lesser Yellownape, Siberian Rubythroat, Grey-winged Blackbird, Blue-winged Minla, Black, Mountain and Ashy Bulbuls, Himalayan Black-lored Tit, Common Green Magpie, Red-billed Leiothrix, Speckled Piculet, Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher, Rufous Sibia, Whistler's Warbler, the cryptic Scaly-breasted Cupwing and sneaky Chestnut-headed Tesia. With a bit of luck, we may find a roosting Tawny or Brown Fish Owl or Brown Wood Owl, the beautiful but elusive Golden Bush Robin, erratic Pink-browed Rosefinch, White-browed Scimitar Babbler or even the once-mythical Grey-crowned Prinia.



Jungle Bush Quail by Glen Valentine

Forest-lined streams support Spotted and Slaty-backed Forktails, Brown Dipper, White-capped and Plumbeous Water Redstarts and with extreme luck and some stealthy searching, perhaps even the very rarely recorded Dark-sided Thrush.

We also hope to be able to visit one of the well-situated hides dotted around the forest edge where Rufous-throated Partridge occasionally visits, alongside Kalij Pheasant, Grey Treepie, Rufous-chinned, White-throated, White-crested and Striated Laughingthrushes, Red-billed Leiothrix, Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch, Great Barbet, Greater and Lesser Yellownapes, Grey-headed and Brown-fronted Woodpeckers, Slaty-headed and Plum-headed Parakeets, Black-headed Jay, Common Green and Red-billed Blue Magpies, Green-backed Tit, Black and Himalayan Bulbuls, Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler, Rufous Sibia, Blue-winged Minla, Bar-tailed Treecreeper and Grey-winged Blackbird, and with some luck, perhaps a wintering Black-throated Thrush.

Ranthambhore National Park. With our time in the Himalayas over, we switch our attention to the deciduous forests, woodlands, and lakes of the central plateau.



Plum-headed Parakeets by Adam Riley

The tropical, dry deciduous and thorn forest covers an area of more than 1,300km2 (500m2); needless to say, there is plenty of area to roam! Dominated by the 10th century Ranthambhore Fort which sits atop a plateau 700ft above the plains, this scenic reserve contains high concentrations of herbivores such as Chital (Spotted Deer), Sambar and Wild Boar, and it is this abundance of prey species that supports one of the healthiest populations of Tiger anywhere on Earth. Locating these magnificent cats requires a combination of skill and patience – and, of course, a small dose of luck!

We will use open-top jeeps and/or canter vans to explore the park in search of Tigers, watching for

tell-tale signs such as pugmarks or scat in the road and listening for the alarm calls of Sambar, Chital, Bengal Sacred Langurs and Indian Peafowl. With luck, these will lead us to a Tiger padding along a dusty track or sprawled out in the dappled sunlight of a bamboo thicket. Looking into the amber eyes of this, the largest of all the big cats, undoubtedly ranks as one of the world's ultimate wildlife experiences! In addition to Tigers and their favourite prey species, during our safari drives, we may also come across Ruddy Mongoose or even Jungle Cat, Leopard and Sloth Bear.



Displaying Indian Peafowl by David Hoddinott

Although our main reason for visiting Ranthambhore is to search for Tigers, the rich woods and meadows of this scenically stunning park also offer excellent birding and the valley floors support healthy populations of otherwise rare species such as Painted Spurfowl, Jungle Bush Quail, White-naped Woodpecker and Brown Crake, although these usually still require some effort to find. Other noteworthy species we might encounter include roosting Indian Scops Owl, Spotted Owlet and Brown Fish Owl, flocks of Yellow-footed Green Pigeon, Alexandrine and Plum-headed Parakeets, Stork-billed Kingfisher, the scarce and unobtrusive Sirkeer Malkoha, Common Iora, White-bellied Drongo, Indian Thick-knee, the active White-browed Fantail, Grey-breasted and Ashy Prinias, Common Woodshrike, Black-rumped Flameback, Yellow-crowned Woodpecker, Brown-headed Barbet, Tree Pipit, Indian Grey Hornbill, Small Minivet, Indian Cuckooshrike, the scarce Sulphur-bellied Warbler, Red-breasted Flycatcher and Yellow-throated Sparrow.



Rufous Treepie by Adam Riley

We'll also keep our eyes peeled for Indian Vulture, Shikra, Bonelli's Eagle, White-eyed Buzzard, Changeable (Crested) Hawk-Eagle, Crested Serpent Eagle, Dusky Crag Martin and Eastern Red-rumped Swallow.

We will also take the opportunity to bird around our lodge, which regularly produces the endemic Painted Sandgrouse, Yellow-wattled Lapwing, Indian Roller, Indian Thick-knee (Stone-curlew), Rosy and Brahminy Starlings, Common Woodshrike, Ashy-crowned sparrow-Lark, Large Grey and Common Babblers, Rufous-fronted Prinia and Grey Francolin, and with a fair amount of luck, perhaps even an Indian Fox.

Soorwal Lake. If time and conditions permit, we may visit this nearby lake to search for a host of water associated birds that could include the rare Dalmatian Pelican, Great White Pelican, Spotted Redshank, Temminck's Stint, Common Ringed Plover, Indian Courser, Asian Green Bee-eater, Ashy-crowned Sparrow-Lark, Indian Bush Lark, Moustached Warbler, Ashy and Yellow-bellied Prinias, Rosy Starling and the ever-popular Greater Painted-snipe.

Keoladeo National Park. We will base ourselves a few minutes from the entrance to the incredible Keoladeo National Park. Usually known simply as 'Bharatpur', the extensive series of shallow ponds were artificially created as a duck-shooting preserve by a former Maharaja of Bharatpur but is now a wetland sanctuary attracting thousands of wintering waterfowl, waders, cranes and raptors.



Sarus Cranes by David Hoddinott

We'll explore the riches of this amazing reserve on foot and by electronic rickshaw, following the network of raised dykes that criss-cross the labyrinth of ponds. Scanning through the waterbirds is usually our priority and we will likely be overwhelmed by the staggering numbers of species, although there are also a number of great birds to be found in the surrounding bushes and trees.

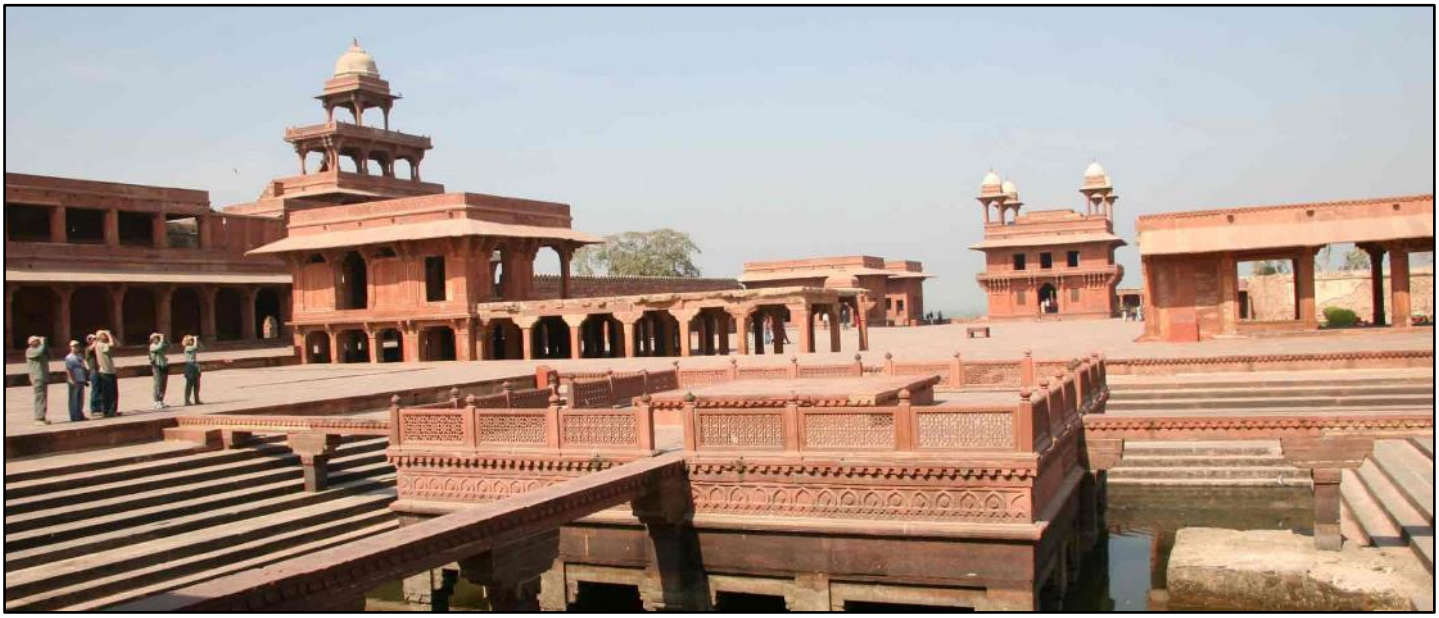
Possibilities include the beautiful Bar-headed Goose, whose migration sees them travelling from northern China over the high Himalayan Mountain ranges to winter here on the plains. Other species may include Garganey, Northern Pintail, Lesser Whistling, Indian Spot-billed and Ferruginous Ducks, Red-crested Pochard, Cotton Pygmy Goose, Little and Indian Cormorants, Oriental Darter, Grey and Purple Herons, Great, Medium and Little Egrets, Black-crowned Night Heron, Painted, Asian Woolly-necked and Black-necked Storks, Asian Openbill, Black-headed Ibis, Eurasian Spoonbill, Pheasant-tailed and Bronze-winged Jacanas, White-breasted Waterhen, Purple Swamphen, Black Bittern and Black-winged Stilt. Regal and elegant Sarus Cranes are often heard calling before they are seen striding over the flooded grasslands.



Painted Spurfowl by Adam Riley

The marshy edges attract a variety of migrant passerines, including the secretive Bluethroat, Clamorous and Blyth's Reed Warblers, Rosy Pipit, Western Yellow, Citrine and White-browed Wagtails, whilst Wire-tailed Swallows hawk insects overhead. Raptors are especially well represented at Bharatpur, with concentrations of large migrant eagles such as Eastern Imperial, Greater Spotted, Steppe and Indian Spotted being of special interest. Other raptors we may find include Western Marsh Harrier, Shikra, Booted Eagle and if we are fortunate, Laggar Falcon.

Extensive areas of arid Acacia dominated woodland and dry grasslands surround the ponds and we will be sure to explore this habitat for Black-rumped Flameback, Yellow-crowned Woodpecker, Indian Grey Hornbill, Greater Coucal, Brahminy Starling, White-eared Bulbul, Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher, Indian Golden Oriole, Zitting Cisticola, Purple Sunbird,



Fatehpur Sikri by Adam Riley

Baya Weaver and small flocks of Indian Silverbill. These Indian residents share their habitat during the winter months with a wide range of migrants from northern Asia, notably Red-breasted Flycatcher, the scarce Brooks's Leaf Warbler, Booted, Sykes's and Dusky Warblers, the skulking Siberian Rubythroat, Olive-backed Pipit and Isabelline Wheatear.

We will also search for the nocturnal residents at their day roosts, including Dusky Eagle-Owl, Spotted Owlet and Large-tailed and Jungle Nightjars, although these are extremely hit and miss and can be very challenging to find. Occasionally, there might be a wintering thrush or two lurking about with past trips having yielded Orange-headed, Scaly and even the scarce and erratic Tickell's Thrush but we'd have to consider ourselves immensely fortunate to see any of these eruptive and unpredictable species. Mammals we should see include groups of the huge Nilgai (Blue Bull), the largest of all Asian antelope, as well as Golden Jackal, Sambar, and the attractive Northern Palm Squirrel.



Bar-headed Goose by Adam Walleyn

Reptiles such as the huge Indian Flap-shell Turtle are often seen sunbathing on dry land together with Indian Roof Turtles. Water Monitors patrol for prey items and Checkered Keelbacks are often seen sunbathing just above the water. If we are very lucky, we may even come across an Indian Rock Python sunning itself.

Fatehpur Sikri. The ancient city of Fatehpur Sikri is an amazingly well-preserved historical city constructed by Mughal emperor Akbar in 1570, which served as the empire's capital from 1571 until 1585. Though it took 15 years to build, it was abandoned after only 14 years because the water supply was unable to sustain the growing population. Today numerous notable imperial buildings and a fabulous mosque still stand, and a visit to Fatehpur Sikri is a truly memorable experience.



Indian Skimmer by Adam Riley

If time permits, we'll spend an hour or two down a nearby side-track that consistently produces a number of excellent species, several of which will likely be new for the trip such as Black-breasted, Baya and Streaked Weavers, Red-headed Bunting, Brown Crake, Black Francolin and Red Avadavat, while other noteworthy species we'll likely encounter include Sarus Crane, Indian Silverbill, Bluethroat, Tawny Pipit, Large Grey, Common and Yellow-eyed Babblers, White-eared Bulbul, Ashy and Yellow-bellied Prinias and Egyptian Vulture.

Chambal River. We head towards the town of Dholpur on the Chambal River where we will take lunch before proceeding on a boat trip. Despite the presence of this majestic river, the area is surprisingly dry. We will focus our attentions on the river itself, searching for several river specialists. The endangered Indian Skimmer, one of our main reasons for visiting this reliable site, can often be found on islands in the river together with Black-bellied and River Terns.

During our boat trip, we will do a lot of shoreline scanning and this could turn up other exciting species in the form of Ruddy Shelduck, Black Stork, Red-naped Ibis, Small Pratincole, Long-legged Buzzard, Laggar Falcon, Short-toed Snake Eagle, Bonelli's Eagle, River Lapwing, Pallas's Gull, Great Stone-curlew, Sand Lark, Desert Wheatear, and possibly even Indian Eagle-Owl roosting on the small cliff faces.



Indian Courser by Clayton Burne

We will also be keeping a sharp eye out for one of the rarer inhabitants of this river, the unique Ganges River Dolphin that is confined largely to the Ganges and Brahmaputra Rivers and their tributaries. Another rare species we should encounter is the bizarre, long-snouted Gharial – one of the most localised and critically endangered crocodilians on the planet, together with Mugger Crocodile and Flap-shelled Turtle.

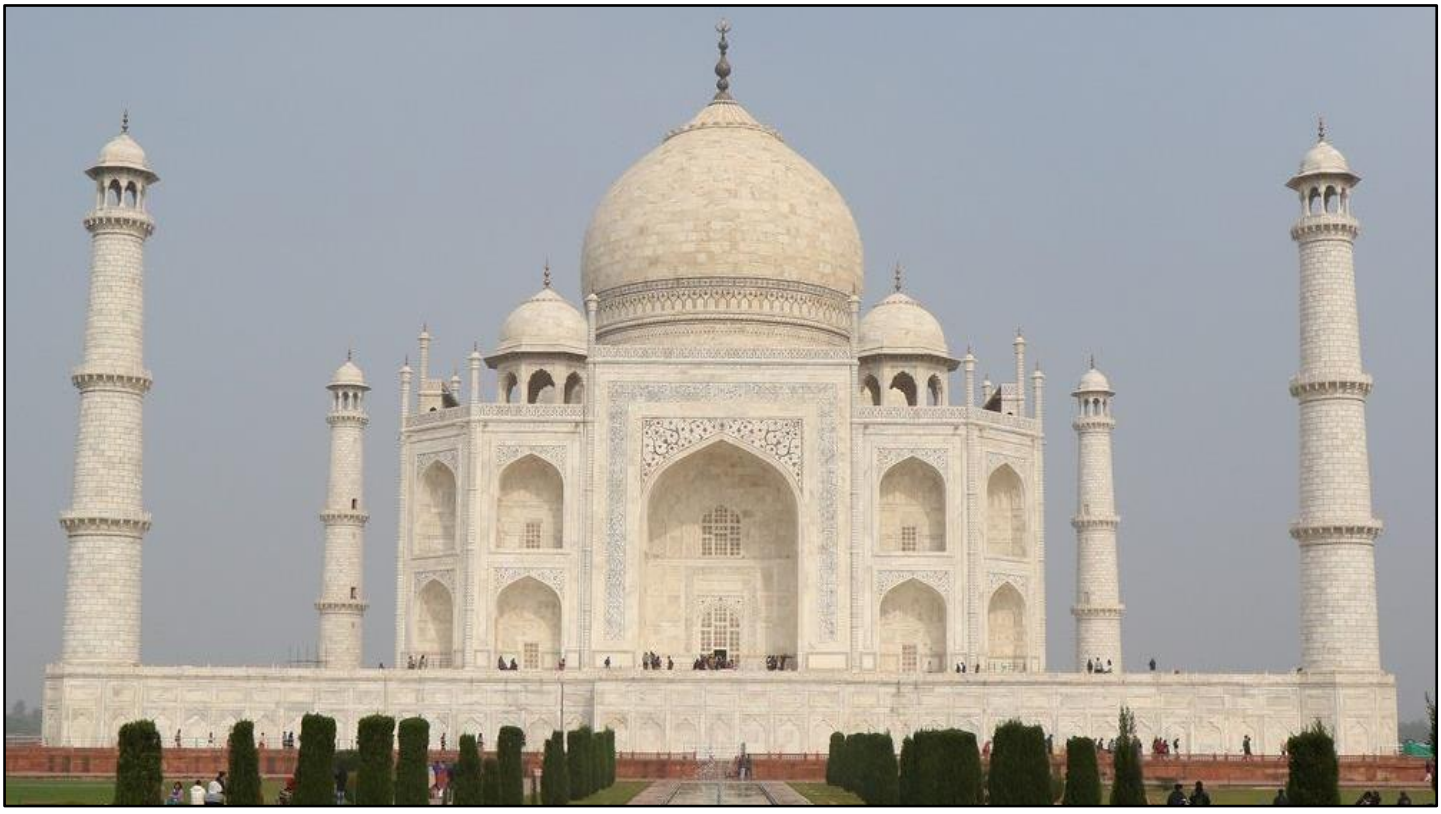
We may have some time to search the woodlands around our lodge grounds, which



Gharial by Adam Riley

often hold wintering migrants such as Verditer Flycatcher and Booted and Sykes's Warblers, as well as Indian Flying Fox. At night we can take a short walk to look for Brown Hawk-Owl and even Common Palm Civet, which is often found in the trees around the lodge grounds.

Dholpur area. Heading slightly west of the Dholpur, we'll spend an hour or two birding the grassy plains, interspersed with scrubby brush. This relatively newly discovered birding area has some very interesting species such as the endemic Sykes's Lark and sometimes a few of the scarce and nomadic Indian Courser. Whilst walking and scanning the plains, we should find Yellow-wattled Lapwing and possibly Egyptian Vulture, Desert, Isabelline and Variable Wheatears, Isabelline Shrike and Ashy-crowned Sparrow-Lark. Arid savanna could turn up the rare and elusive White-bellied Minivet, as well as Indian Bush Lark, Jungle Bush Quail and Bay-backed Shrike.



Taj Mahal by Daniel Danckwerts

Agra & Taj Mahal. After a short, but exciting morning, we will head to Agra for the cultural highlight of the trip, the simply magnificent Taj Mahal, literally meaning "Crown of Palaces". It is also a World Heritage Site and is famous for the elegance of its design, its extraordinary translucent white marble dome, its mathematical symmetry and the immense numbers of intricately carved and inlaid semi-precious stones that adorn its walls. Begun in 1632, tens of thousands of architects and labourers, and over a thousand elephants, toiled for more than 20 years to complete this breath-taking edifice, which was commissioned by the grief-stricken Shah Jahan after his third wife died during the birth of their 14th child. This is without a doubt one of India's most iconic and impressive sites and should not be missed!

In Agra, we will also visit the fabled Agra Red Fort, located in the centre of the city and serving as a monumental reminder of the fascinating history of the region. This UNESCO World Heritage Site is more accurately a 94-acre walled city and was constructed in the 16th century. Exploring this architecturally spectacular complex is fascinating and from here we will also enjoy further views of the shimmering marble Taj Mahal. In fact, Shah Jahan spent his final years here at the Agra Fort as a captive of his son Aurangzeb who deposed him. Shah Jahan apparently died here whilst imprisoned in a tower with a view of the Taj Mahal.

Whilst marvelling at these impressive historical sites, we will no doubt also keep an eye out for birds, and species that we may encounter include Brown Rock Chat and Dusky Crag Martin which call these buildings home, families of Spotted Owlets in the gardens, raptors (Egyptian Vultures are frequently seen around the Taj Mahal), and waterbirds on the holy Yamuna River, including the elegant River Lapwing.

Guwahati. We will make a stop at the local refuse dump that attracts hundreds of regal Greater Adjutant, a rare and extremely localised bird throughout most of its limited range. Guwahati remains the best place on earth to see this stately, yet also very ugly stork, with smaller numbers of the more widespread Lesser Adjutant, Asian Openbill and Black-headed Ibis also being attracted to this site. Citrine and White Wagtails are usually around in good numbers, while Striated Grassbird and Plain and Yellow-bellied Prinias will be looked for in areas of rank grass.

Kaziranga National Park. This exciting wilderness of marshes, open grassland, woodlands and forest, which is situated on the floodplain of the Brahmaputra River, will be the focus of our attention. A total of one-third of



Indian Rhinoceros by André Bernon

the entire world population of Indian Rhinoceros is located in Kaziranga and we will likely enjoy incredible sightings of these highly threatened beasts. The area is also home to many eye-catching and very special birds including the rare Bengal Florican, which will be searched for in the long grass that covers huge areas of the reserve, though we will have to be lucky to see this extremely rare species!



Swamp Francolin by Glen Valentine

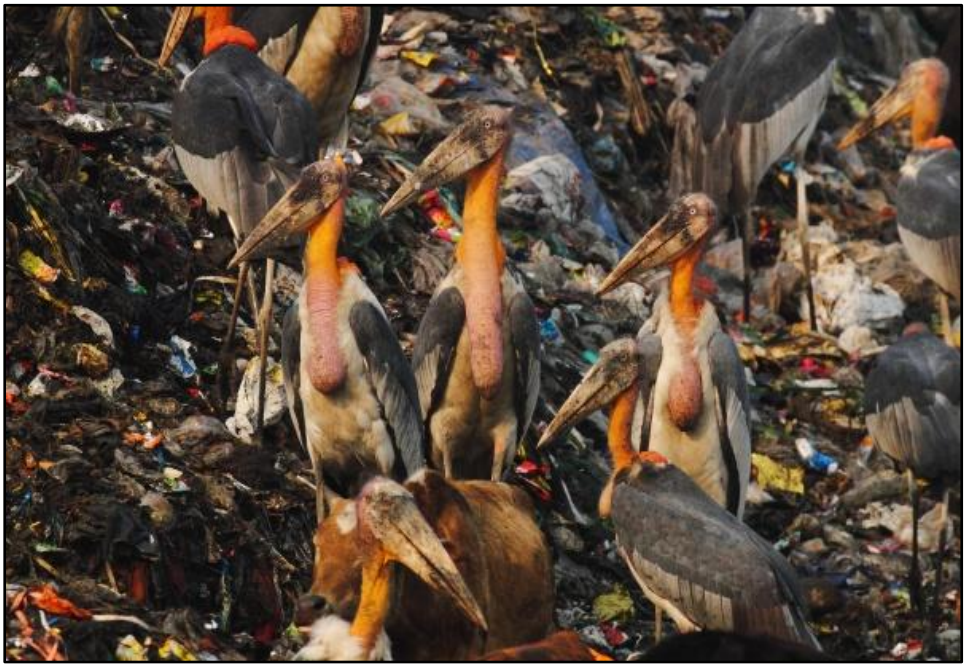
This habitat also offers us the best shots at other high priority species such as the near-endemic Swamp Francolin, Baya, Streaked, Black-breasted and the extremely rare Finn's Weavers, as well as Chestnut-capped and Striated Babblers, Bengal Bush Lark, Rosy Pipit and Siberian and Himalayan Rubythroats. The critically endangered Greater Adjutant occurs alongside the Lesser Adjutant in wet areas, and we will keep our eyes peeled skywards for Pallas's and Grey-headed Fish Eagles. Western Marsh and Pied Harriers can be found quartering over the grassland areas, and the stately Black-necked Stork is still fairly numerous throughout the region.

Kaziranga's network of extensive wetlands is home to huge numbers of resident and migrant waterbirds, most notably the handsome Bar-headed Goose, Indian Spot-billed Duck, Cotton Pygmy Goose, Pheasant-tailed and Bronze-winged Jacanas and the splendid Stork-billed Kingfisher, among many other species. Woodland areas are the best place to search for a number of specials, including the huge Blue-bearded, Blue-tailed and stunning Chestnut-headed Bee-eaters, Green Imperial Pigeon, Black-winged Cuckooshrike, Large Woodshrike, Lineated, Blue-throated and Coppersmith Barbets, extravagant Green-billed Malkoha, four species of gorgeous parakeets (Rose-ringed, Alexandrine, Red-breasted and the scarce Blossom-headed) and a host of woodpeckers, which includes Streak-throated, Fulvous-breasted and Grey-capped Pygmy, as well as Greater and Black-rumped Flamebacks. We will also explore small patches of evergreen forest in the area where we hope to find numerous interesting species. These include the striking Asian Fairy Bluebird, Black-crested Bulbul and Great and Oriental



Pied Falconet by Stephan Lorenz

Pied Hornbills. More secretive species include Puff-throated and Abbott's Babblers and White-rumped Shama. Other notable birds that we hope to see here are Yellow-footed Green Pigeon, Common Emerald Dove, Greater and Lesser Yellownapes, Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, Golden-fronted Leafbird, Streaked Spiderhunter and Crimson and Ruby-cheeked Sunbirds.



Greater Adjutant by Glen Valentine

Game viewing in the reserve is excellent and besides the Indian Rhinoceros, there are also plenty of wild Water Buffalo and Asian Elephant. Furthermore, Kaziranga is one of the reserves where Bengal Tiger still occurs in reasonable numbers; here they tend to favour areas where the grass is long and dense, which aids them in ambushing their main prey, the increasingly rare Barasingha (Swamp Deer) and Hog Deer. We will, however, be lucky to encounter one of these regal beasts. While in the forests we will also keep our eyes and ears open for Hoolock Gibbon, Capped Langur, Assam Macaque and Rhesus Monkey. Other mammal species we may find include Sambar and Wild Boar, all of which frequent the grassy, watery meadows in the reserve.

Manas National Park. Situated on the north bank of the Brahmaputra River, the park incorporates the Royal Manas National Park in Bhutan to the North, and the Manas Tiger Reserve to the West. Manas National Park is 500km^2 in size and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



Great Hornbill by Glen Valentine

During our time here, we'll explore the riches of this national park with its extensive bird and mammal list. In the grasslands, we will scan for one of the area's very special birds, the endangered Bengal Florican, occurring here in small numbers and regularly seen in the Kokilabari area just adjacent to the extreme eastern edge of the national park. Other possible grassland birds we may see include Pied, Hen and Eastern Marsh Harriers, White-eyed Buzzard, the spectacular Indian Peafowl, Collared Falconet - from open perches adjoining the grasslands, Black and Swamp Francolins, Chestnut-capped and Striated Babblers, Bengal Bush Lark, Scaly-breasted and White-rumped Munias, wintering Crested, Little and Chestnut-eared Buntings and Golden-headed Cisticola. We'll also spend some time searching for the area's rarer and more elusive grassland species, most of which are exceedingly localised, endangered and extremely elusive and we'd have to consider ourselves

immensely fortunate to encounter any one or more of Slender-billed and Jerdon's Babblers, Finn's Weaver, Indian Grassbird and Black-breasted Parrotbill.



Bengal Florican by Glen Valentine

In the surrounding woodlands and forest we will search for the range-restricted Grey-lored Broadbill with Manas seemingly the best locality globally for this otherwise scarce and elusive species. Other interesting and potentially new species we hope to encounter while working our way through this bird-rich habitat include Wreathed, Oriental Pied and Great Hornbills, Changeable Hawk-Eagle, Crested Goshawk, Orange-breasted and Pin-tailed Green Pigeons, Barred Cuckoo-Dove, Asian Koel, Green-billed Malkoha, Red-headed Trogon, Greater Flameback, Blue-bearded Bee-eater, Blue-eared Barbet, Rufous-necked Laughingthrush, Speckled Piculet, Sultan Tit, Slaty-backed and Black-backed Forktails, Yellow-vented, Plain and Scarlet-backed Flowerpeckers, Streaked Spiderhunter, Large Woodshrike, Maroon Oriole, Pale-chinned Flycatcher, Orange-bellied and Golden-fronted Leafbirds, Grey-bellied Tesia, Yellow-vented and Tickell's Leaf Warblers, Pin-striped Tit-Babbler, White-throated Bulbul, Black-winged and Oriental Cuckooshrikes and Asian Fairy-bluebird.

There are also reasonable numbers of mammals in Manas and we can expect to encounter many of the same species that occur in Kaziranga, although at a fraction of the density. However, the impressive Gaur (Indian Bisson) is one particularly noteworthy mammal that we will be on the lookout for and hope to encounter during our time in this beautiful and wildlife-rich reserve.

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Moderate to undemanding. Suitable for all birding / wildlife interest levels. India is an assault on the senses first time around, requiring a little tolerance to begin with.
Birding Ease		Undemanding. Most species provide good visuals in open conditions. Some forest edge, but true forest birding is limited.
Accommodation		Comfortable to very comfortable.
Walking / Trails		Mostly on gently undulating roads/lodge gardens. Electric rickshaws at Keoladeo NP.
Vehicles / Roads		Busses, trains, 4x4 & open safari vehicles. Variable to poor road conditions. Vehicles are manufactured to local requirements, so tend to be a squeeze/on the small size for Western foreigners.
Photography		Good to excellent. From vehicle & in lodge gardens.
Annoyances		Slow traffic, poor road conditions. Spicy food, strong smells of various types. Can be cold at altitude & on early morning safaris.

Financial Arrangements and Important Notes

Tour dates, prices, single supplement, approximate flight costs and tour spaces are displayed on our website.

Tour inclusions:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to lunch on day 17 of Birds & Tigers tour;
- All meals from dinner on day 1 to lunch on day 7 of the Assam extension;
- Bottled drinking water;
- All lodgings;
- All ground transportation during the tour (including train transport);
- Boat excursion on the Chambal River;
- All reserve entrance fees;
- All guiding services
- Tips for local guides, drivers and services.

Tour exclusions:

- Visa fees;
- ANY flights;
- Any beverages (including mini-bar charges at hotels);
- Optional excursions;
- Special gratuities;
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

Tipping: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader/s. If you feel that they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them at your discretion.

- **Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing. The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates.**
- **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registrations, a small group supplement will be offered to confirm the tour.**
- **Tour prices are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**
- **The designated tour leader/s may be changed at short due to unforeseen circumstances.**
- **The itinerary is indicative only. Changes may need to be made to the order in which the tour is conducted, or some of the venues we visit closer to departure. We will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

- Roads outside of Indian cities are poorly maintained, causing vehicles to travel very slowly. To make best use of our time, we use several train journeys to cut travel times and increase both comfort and safety. Our local agents, tour leaders and porters ensure that all your luggage is stowed aboard at embarkation, as well as taken off and transferred to our vehicles at disembarkation.
- Rest rooms on trains vary in cleanliness. Facilities are of the squat toilet type.
- **We no longer make use of any OVERNIGHT trains on our northern India tours.**
- It is important for the comfort of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20 kg (44 lb) for check in luggage and 8 kg (+-18 lb) for hand luggage.
- This tour does not require a high level of fitness, but participants should be in good general health and reasonably fit as some of the birding will be done on foot and may require walking for several hours at a time.
- It is not permissible to leave the vehicle in parks with potentially dangerous animals, except at designated sites.
- If you have any physical or medical limitations or conditions, please notify us in advance of departure.
- For much of this tour we will be far away from modern medical facilities.
- Accommodation throughout the trip is of a good standard, and the hotels and resorts that we make use of range from comfortable to rather luxurious. There is no camping on this trip.
- Overnight temperatures, particularly in the Himalayan foothills, can be quite cool and it is advisable to bring layered clothing for warmth and convenience.
- The open jeep tours can be very cold (especially in the mornings), do ensure you bring sufficient warm clothing, including gloves, scarf/buff and a beanie (woolly hat).

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour begins in New Delhi on day 1, and as this is scheduled as an arrival day; you are free to arrive at any time. The tour will conclude in the late afternoon in New Delhi on day 17.

The extension begins in New Delhi on day 1. Depending on flight schedules, we may depart Delhi for Guwahati on the evening of Day 1, or in the morning of Day 2. The tour will conclude at the Guwahati airport on the afternoon of day 7.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your Tour Confirmation package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

Indira Gandhi International Airport, New Delhi (IATA: DEL) is the main port of entry for international flights into India. Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport, Guwahati (IATA: GAU) is the main port of departure for the extension.

Visa requirements differ by country, nationality of the traveller and duration and purpose of your intended stay. It may be necessary to obtain a visa or an electronic travel authorization in advance of your travel. It is therefore vitally important that you check with your travel agent/consulate/embassy for exact visa requirements.

DO NOT book any flights until the Rockjumper Team have officially confirmed the tour.