

12th March 2019

In this tour three participants joined us. They were picked up from Rangpo Tourist lodge at around 10:30 AM. On the way till Gangtok, we didn't stop for birding as heavy traffic movement was there. We checked in at Hotel Zong at Bojoghari. After having lunch we moved out for afternoon birding session. In the Pangthang area, the first bird we saw is a Striated Bulbul, which was seen feeding on some fruiting (local name Poiyu) tree. Little later we stopped for Bay Woodpecker, which was extremely shy in nature and hardly appeared in open, though we tried desperately to get good photos of the bird for more than half an hour. Otherwise, Mrs Gould's Sunbird, Striated Laughingthrush, Striated Bulbul, Lesser Yellownappe, Grey-headed Woodpecker etc were sighted. On our way back a flock of Black-throated Tit and a Scaly-breasted Wren Babbler foraging beneath a thickly vegetated area was sighted; though call of the bird was nicely recorded. Later, we stopped for a while at Tashi View point and had nicely prepared steamed momos. After we came back to our hotel at Bojoghari, we had a short birding discussion and had early dinner at 8:30 PM.

13th March 2019

Today we were supposed to start at 6 AM from our Gangtok hotel, but due to some unforeseen circumstances we started at 6:40 AM. We directly drove to Ganesh Tok. From near the temple area, a pair of Spotted Wren Babbler aka Elachura was sighted. Just Prabhanjan could click the bird. Little later, flock of Blue-winged and Chestnut-crowned Laughers were sighted. Red-billed Leiothrix and Rufous-capped Babbler was very commonly seen near the garbage dump against a hill slope. From the nearby thicket a pair of Streak-breasted Scimitar Babbler was calling continuously; however, we could not manage to get them. Little later, a flock of Streak-breasted Scimitar Babbler was seen and this time all the participants managed to get good photograph of the bird. In addition, a Golden-throated Barbet was sighted from this session as well. Two species of Yuhinas were also here – Whiskered and Stripe-throated. After having breakfast at Tashi view point, we drove via Tingda-Phensang area. Here, three Spot-winged Grosbeak was sighted; two male and a female was foraging on for a long time. From a nearby area, a Maroon Oriole was heard as well. Few turns up a Scaly-breasted Wren Babbler kept us busy for long time. Whistler's Warbler and Yellow-bellied Fantail was sighted there as well. In the first check post, at Kabi we stopped for a while at first check post. Due to checking and heavy tourist movement, we spent nearly half an hour. Just before we entered Chungthang, a big flock of Rusty-fronted Barwing gave us nice sight. We checked river side area at Chungthang, but found nothing much to mention other than three species of Redstarts – Plumbeous, White-capped and Blue-fronted. Just before sundown, a big flock of Black-faced Laughingthrush delighted us as well. We checked in at Lachen in evening at 6:30 PM. The hotel, where we would be staying for next three days was – Floret.

14th March 2019

In the early morning, we planned for going for the whole day at Gurdongmar; due to sudden snowfall, road beyond Thangu was closed. We experienced the situation later. Early morning sighting started with a flock of Snow pigeon just next to our hotel. Little later we moved little down and near the forest check post, we found a Black-throated Thrush with few Red-billed Blue Magpie, White-collared Blackbird and couple of Dark-breasted Rosefinch. We decided to go uphill for other birds. Just few minutes away, we saw a huge flock of Grandala flying around the huge glacial Lachen valley. Other tourists were not going up and due to low frequency of traffic; birds were sighted more on the morning session. A handsome looking Serow (a rarely photographed mammal from Himalayas) was sighted inside snow cover Rhododendron bush. Little later a flock of Blood Pheasant was seen foraging in a very nearby area. We sighted five different Blood Pheasant flock that day, each consisting of five to ten members in each. Other birds worth mentioning – Rufous-fronted Tit, Grey-crested Tit, Rufous-vented Tit, Coal Tit etc. Huge flocks of Red-billed Chough were sighted as well in higher altitude. We drove as far as we could go, but huge deposition of snow restricted hiking as well. After coming back from Yathang, we stopped at a Tea bar and had breakfast. On our way back we repeated almost all the morning species sighted and by 1 PM we were back to our hotel. In the afternoon session we decided to go downhill; however, no significant sightings were there, except some Nepal House Martin were flying around against huge rock cliffs. Again we drove back to Lachen and sighted Kalij Pheasant, White-browed Fulvetta, Alpine Accentor etc in a peaceful sight. The Kalij Pheasant sighted here consisted of two males and a female. It is really tough to see and photograph 'melanota' subspecies of Kalij, because of their skittish behavior. After this session we returned back to hotel and rested for the day.

15th March 2019

Today also according to the itinerary we had a full day drive to Gurdongmar. However, due to road blockage and weather turning bad, we decided to go to Lachung and spending two nights there, instead of spending just one night. In the morning session just inside Lachen village – Speckled Wood Pigeon, was sighted along with Plain Mountain Finch and Hoary-throated Barwing. Spotted Nutcracker, Small Niltava, Rufous-fronted Tit etc etc were found at the edge of the village. Participants spent considerable amount of time behind a Winter Wren, with Garrulax and Turdus thursh. In lower altitude areas, there were Slender-billed Scimitar Babbler, following the call we found a White-browed Piculet as well. By 11 PM we checked in to Lachung Hotel Floret. Post lunch afternoon session, we decided to spend time at the further eastern uphill of Lachung. Red-headed Bullfinch, Hodson's Treecreeper and a Green Shrike-babbler are important birds sighted from this session.

16th March 2019

A full day at Lachung – at Singba Rhododendron Sanctuary. We hardly sighted any birds on our way up. Near the park entrance gate, too many tourists were there. As we drove further ahead, birds were sighted more and more. Turdus group - Red-throated Thrush along with Black-throated Thrush and White-collared Blackbirds were sighted in huge numbers. A Rosy Pipit was foraging on almost in the

same place. A Himalayan Buzzard was found sweeping over our head just near the park entrance. After having breakfast, we drove down hill and on our way back, a Shaheen Falcon (rufous morph of resident Peregrine species) was sighted. This is a very rare sighting in my opinion. As resident Peregrine (Shaheen) are hardly seen in entire north-east India. This bird was seen devouring on a Gadwall. After photographing the Falcon we left out and had lunch. Post lunch we again drove back to the same place. Trace elements – feathers, gizzards etc was found on the sight. Little ahead an Altai Accentor was seen. At 3 PM, we drove back and again drove uphill next to our hotel. A flock of Maroon-backed Accentor, Long-billed Thrush, Sikkim Treecreeper etc were sighting near a cushionoid stream area. It is worth mentioning that, we sighted both White-throated Redstart (from morning session at higher altitude) and Hodgson's Redstart (at lower altitude near Lachung Chu).

17th March 2019

Today we had to drove back to Gangtok. On our way back there were some potential bamboo thickets, which I decided to check. Brown Parrotbills, Rufous-capped Babblers, two species of Yuhina – Whiskered and Stripe-throated, Long-tailed Minivet etc were sighted. At the chungthang check post, there was a sighting for Black-throated Prinia (from 13th afternoon by our team). Though we checked the place, but we couldn't find the bird again. After breakfast we drove downhill and couldn't find any good birds till Tung. A flock of Golden Babbler, Grey-throated Babbler, Snowy-browed Flycatcher etc were sighted just before lunch hours. Before reaching Mangan we took our lunch and again started going further downhill. After crossing Dikchu, before we reached Pangthang – a Chestnut-headed Tesia rocked for nearly 30 minutes. A Pale Blue Flycacter was sighted at the same place; both the birds were sighted near a cattle shade.

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Today being the last day of the tour, we decided to spend time at a higher elevation above Gangtok-Nathula road. A rapid fire Laughingthrush-round yielded five different species of Laughingthrush within just 5 minutes. Grey-sided, Blue-winged, Scaly, Black-faced and Chestnut-crowned were the birds there foraging at the edge of Fambong Lho WLS. One more bird which we expected but missed is Spotted Laughingthrush. Bar-throated Siva, Fire-tailed Sunbird and Rufous-capped Babblers were plentiful around.

After driving down through Gangtok, we stopped for breakfast at Paglakhola and drove via Singtam-Pendam road to do afternoon birding at Pendam. By the time we reached Pendam, we were little late. White-crested Laughingthrush obliged participant so as Lesser Necklaced Laughingthrush. As the participants took lunch at my place, we drove uphill in search of Spotted Elachura and Tesia if any. Two days back Elachura was sighted but, we couldn't find the bird here (we sighted this bird on day 2 i.e. on 13th March at Ganesh Tok area). A Grey-bellied Tesia kept us busy almost at the same location, but didn't appear in open. Light was going down fast in the afternoon and rain was about to start. We had a long way to drive back Siliguri. We started at 4 PM in the afternoon at Pendam and reached Siliguri at

7:30 PM. All the participants were dropped at Marina's Motel at Bihar More, they had flight to catch on the next day to their hometown.

