



RamitSingal's Trip Report

My dad (Dr. Dinesh Singal) and I made a pleasant short 2 day trip to Sat Tal on the 28th and 29th of December 2010. We took the overnight train to Kathgodam from Delhi, and then took a cab from there onwards to the Sat Tal Birding Camp. As for the return, we again took a cab down to Kathgodam, from where the overnight train got us to Delhi.

All our birding was done in the Sat Tal region and we took it easy during the car rides. Below are the highlights of the trip:

28 December 2010

Trek to Mehragaon @ 0900 hrs: Speckled Piculet, Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker.

Several mixed flocks also fetched us the four Tits we saw time and again, Lemon-rumped Warblers, Leothrix, Red-billed Blue Magpies, Grey Treepies, Bar-tailed Treecreepers, Chestnut-bellied and White-tailed Nuthatch etc. These birds were almost always constant in the region and we saw plenty of such flocks throughout.

Steppe Eagles were commonly seen soaring overhead throughout the trip.

Eureka Forbes Field and adjoining temple and scrub @ 0945 hrs: Black-throated Accentor, Himalayan Griffon, Ashy-throated Warbler, Buff-barred Warbler, Asian Barred Owllet.

Despite a stringent search, we dipped on the Rubythroats but my only clear views of the Ashy-throated Warbler and Buff-barred Warbler individuals came from the scrub next to the stream that runs down from the temple near the Eureka Forbes factory.

Flower Mead Cottage @ 1200 hrs : Eurasian Treecreeper, Bar-winged Flycatcher Shrike, Emerald Dove, Black-faced Warbler, fantastic and close views of a very patient White-throated Fantail.

An old 1886 cottage with a nice field in front of it and some woods next to it proved to be a nice spot. Lots of Treecreepers and Nuthatches were present here apart from our first of several Blue-winged Minlas and Long-tailed Minivets. A couple of very shy Barking Deer scampered up the hillside. A mixed flock had a Black-faced Warbler as well.

Trek to Hanuman Tal from Birding Camp @ 1530 hrs: Banded Bay Cuckoo, many Greater Flamebacks and other woodpeckers, Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush

An interesting trail which got us brilliant views of the Banded Bay Cuckoo, apart from playing host to a large number of woodpeckers and also Bronzed Drongos. It passed through a lot of open fields, which as with many other open fields in the region, had a good number of Olive-backed Pipits.

Along the main lake @ 1615 hrs: Great Slaty Woodpecker, Greater Yellownape, Kaleej Pheasant, Water Redstarts - Plumbeous and White-capped

It was getting dark and just moved along the main lake's boundary and it fetched us fantastic views of a pair of Greater Yellownapes which flew in and just hung around on the trees over the lake for over ten minutes at eye level! Later, as it got darker, our attention was drawn to the trees on the hillside thanks to very peculiar and loud calls. The source was identified as two HUGE woodpeckers which then came closer and, although quite silhouetted, proved to be Great Slaty Woodpeckers. Following them, a male Kaleej was perched fairly high up on one of the trees as well.

A Green Sandpiper and Grey Wagtail were present by the lake shore.

Trek back to Camp @ 1715 hrs: White-crested Laughingthrush, Eurasian Hobby, Nepal House Martins

29 December 2010

Trail down the temple stream + Eureka Forbes @ 0700 hrs: Chestnut-headed Tesia, Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babblers, Rufous Sibilias in the open, Yellow-breasted Greenfinch, Blue-capped Redstart, Chestnut-tailed Minla, Grey-headed Woodpecker

A 2 second glimpse of the Tesia as it came out of undergrowth alongside a flock of Leothrix and a large mixed flock which also gave us nice views of many Lemon-rumped Warblers was excellent. Also a Whistler's Warbler, Chestnut-tailed Minla and a Blue-capped Redstart amongst the flock. Later, Rufous Sibilias and Greenfinch on a bare tree and several Olive-backed Pipits and Russet Sparrows in the field with Scimitar Babblers in the scrub were nice. Another hunt for the Rubythroats was unsuccessful.

* The only birds of note/new birds as we moved towards the lakes from the camp were Common Rosefinches, of which a flock of 6 sat on a bare tree but moved up the hill upon seeing us. Also, a very large flock of White-throated Laughingthrush was spotted.

A Mountain Hawk Eagle soared high up in the sky.

Trail ahead of Bharat/Arjun Tal @ 1100 hrs: Rufous-chinned Laughingthrush, Fulvous-breasted Woodpecker, Grey-sided Bush Warblers, mixed flocks with lots of species, White-bellied Drongo, Ashy and Black Bulbuls

The Laughingthrush was just seen as it came out of the undergrowth to catch some food. This was followed by a female Fulvous-breasted Woodpecker with the entirely black cap high up in a tree. Several Nuthatches - Velvet-fronted, Chestnut-bellied, and White-tailed were seen here as were lots of Blue-winged Minlas and Black-chinned Babblers. I had been trying to see skulking and unIDed Bush Warblers at every stage of the trip but it was here I got my first views of a couple of adult Grey-sided Bush Warblers.

The Bharat Tal itself was host to several Common Kingfishers, confiding Whistling Thrushes, and Bronzed Drongos and Red-billed Blue Magpies by the shore. A single White-bellied Drongo in the trees was nice too. A Banded Bay Cuckoo was calling continuously.

Feeder stream for Bharat/arjun Tal @ 1300 hrs: Rufous-bellied Niltava, Yellow-bellied Fantail, Green-tailed Sunbird, several tits and excellent views of bathing Scimitar Babbler, Lemon-rumped Warblers, Canary Flycatcher, etc.

As advised by Satyendra Sharma, we sat by the rocks and waited for some action to happen. It wasn't long before a Niltava appeared, followed by several Leothrix, Blue-winged Minla, Scimitar Babbler, Lemon-rumped Warbler, Black-lored, Green-backed, Great, and Black-throated Tits, along with Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher, Black-chinned Babblers, Yellow-bellied and White-throated Fantail, etc.

Panna Tal @ 1530 hrs: A small lake a little detour away from the trail to the Camp was devoid of activity as such but it scored with the sighting of a single male Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher.

Later, along the trail back to the camp - we got excellent views of a pair of Greater Flamebacks as well as a female Red-breasted Flycatcher. Another mixed flock was seen with more Black-chinned Babblers and Bar-winged Flycatcher Shrikes too.

The Camp has a little area with undergrowth that attracts a lot of Leothrix and Grey Treepies every morning. It was excellent, especially to see the latter numbering around 10-11 feeding within a meter's radius.

All in all, a fantastic trip. Although the Rubythroats will have to wait another day - we were very pleased with what we saw and some of the moments will be etched into my memory.

I want to specially thank Satyendra Sharma for some excellent tips as well as Abhijit Menon-Sen for help with the Eureka Fields spot.

1. Black Kite
2. Mountain Hawk Eagle
3. Steppe Eagle
4. Himalayan Griffon
5. Eurasian Hobby
6. Kaleej Pheasant
7. Red-wattled Lapwing
8. Green Sandpiper
9. Emerald Dove
10. Rock Pigeon
11. Slaty-headed Parakeet
12. Banded Bay Cuckoo
13. Asian Barred Owlet
14. House Swift
15. Common Kingfisher
16. Great Barbet
17. Greater Yellownappe
18. Great Slaty Woodpecker
19. Grey-headed Woodpecker
20. Greater Flameback
21. Brown-fronted Woodpecker
22. Fulvous-breasted Woodpecker
23. Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker
24. Speckled Piculet
25. Nepal House Martin
26. Bronzed Drongo
27. White-bellied Drongo
28. Bar-winged Flycatcher Shrike
29. Long-tailed Shrike
30. Jungle Myna
31. Black-headed Jay
32. Grey Treepie
33. Red-billed Blue Magpie
34. Jungle Crow
35. Black Bulbul
36. Ashy Bulbul

37. Red-vented Bulbul
38. Himalayan Bulbul
39. Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler
40. Black-chinned Babbler
41. Jungle Babbler
42. Red-billed Leothrix
43. Blue-winged Minla
44. Chestnut-tailed Minla
45. Rufous Sibia
46. Rufous-chinned Laughingthrush
47. Streaked Laughingthrush
48. White-throated Laughingthrush
49. White-crested Laughingthrush
50. Red-breasted Flycatcher
51. Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher
52. Rufous-bellied Niltava
53. Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher
54. White-throated Fantail 55. Yellow-bellied Fantail
55. Chestnut-headed Tesia
56. Black-faced Warbler
57. Grey-hooded Warbler
58. Whistler's Warbler
59. Grey-sided Bush Warbler
60. Hume's Leaf Warbler
61. Lemon-rumped Warbler
62. Ashy-throated Warbler
63. Buff-barred Warbler
64. Blue-capped Redstart
65. White-capped Water Redstart
66. Plumbeous Water Redstart
67. Oriental Magpie Robin
68. Siberian Stonechat
69. Grey Bushchat 71. Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush
70. Blue Whistling Thrush
71. Great Tit
72. Green-backed Tit
73. Black-lored Tit
74. Black-throated Tit
75. Bar-tailed Treecreeper
76. Eurasian Treecreeper
77. Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch
78. White-tailed Nuthatch
79. Velvet-fronted Nuthatch
80. Olive-backed Pipit
81. White-browed Wagtail
82. Grey Wagtail
83. Oriental White-eye
84. Green-tailed Sunbird
85. House Sparrow
86. Russet Sparrow
87. Scaly-breasted Munia
88. Black-throated Accentor
89. Yellow-breasted Greenfinch
90. Common Rosefinch

