

Goa



India



2nd to 9th February, 2001



Friday, 2 nd	Hotel Lagoa Azul area Baga fields & Beira Mar marsh	15:00 - 15:45 16:15 - 18:45
Saturday, 3 rd	Backwoods Forest Tamdi Surla	7:30 - 15:00 16:00 - 19:00
Sunday, 4 th	Backwoods Forest Raptor watch & Tamdi Surla Backwoods Forest	7:00 - 10:00 10:30 - 13:00 13:30 - 19:00
Monday, 5 th	Backwoods Forest Arpora & Baga Hill	7:00 - 13:30 16:00 - 18:30
Tuesday, 6 th	Morji Beach Baga Forest & Arpora	7:00 - 12:00 12:30 - 18:30
Wednesday, 7 th	Aguada Carambolim	6:45 - 7:15 9:00 - 18:00
Thursday, 8 th	Soligao Zor Maem Lake Tikana	6:45 - 12:00 12:30 - 15:00 15:30 - 17:45

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Introduction

Goa seems to be recognised as one of the more affluent parts of India, mainly due to the area being one of the most popular tourist destinations in the country. It also means that for birding, it is an easily accessible and relatively cheap spot to visit, with a range of package tours available. The capital is Panjim, but the main resorts of Baga, Calangute, and Candolim are further North, and it is Baga that is best placed, since it is surrounded by marshes, rice paddy fields, and forest. The Western Ghat mountain range is only about 1½ hours drive from Baga. The mountains are better described as low hills, and well worth visiting for a different mix of species that cannot be found near the coast.

First views from a birding perspective can be a little disappointing, since a lot of the hotels are situated slap in the centre of the hustle and bustle of Indian life. However, even the most central are only a short walk from good birding. We were at the Lagoa Azul in Arpora, which is about 1 mile north of Baga. The accommodation was very good, with air conditioning, a fridge, and even the comfort of hot water. The Baga river passes alongside the hotel, and in itself can have some good birds (White-breasted & Stork-billed Kingfisher, Pied Bushchat, and Striated Heron on the last morning), with even the woods around the village holding typical Indian species (Magpie-Robin, White-cheeked Barbet, Purple-rumped Sunbird, and Koel on the first evening walkabout). A lot of birders book into the Beira Mar at Baga. This has the great benefit of overlooking a very productive marsh to the rear, and some of the balconies there must have a wonderful room list! On the down side, we heard that the accommodation leaves a lot to be desired (how much of a disadvantage that is remains to be debated, since we saw very little of our hotel with dawn to dusk birding a priority).



The actual birding seems to be divided into three different types. As with most

good spots, a day or two walking the area is very enjoyable, gets an eye for the birds, and can tot up the beginnings of a very good list. The varying habitats surrounding Baga and Arpora help here enormously. Once the local specialities have been seen, there are a number of good sites within a taxi ride of up to 1½ hours. Again, the variety of habitat offered with these sites is interesting, from forest, inland freshwater lagoons, and open farmland, to coastal watching. The final choice is as much of an experience as a birding stop, and that is the comparatively new venture of Backwoods. This is a novel enterprise set up three years ago, where you can stay in tents within the forests of the Western Ghats, and walk the surrounding area during a one to two night stay. It is well



Backwoods is a tented camp situated in forest within the Western Ghats, and is run by Loven Pereira, Leio de Souza, and Pramod Madkaikar. They run an excellent and different birding experience, since you are living and sleeping amongst the birds for a couple of days. There are currently 6 tents, each containing 2 single beds on a concrete floor. We were asked to bring an extra blanket for warmth during the night, but those provided were more than adequate. At the rear of the tent is an outside toilet and (cold) shower - interesting to see what ticks you can get from there (my best was Black-hooded Oriole!). Usual outline of a day is birding from first light (7 o'clock) until 10 am breakfast, birding from 10:30 to lunch and afternoon siesta (13:00 till 16:00 - lie down optional), and then birding until dusk (19:00). Most of the birding is on forested tracks by foot, but the camp bus is also used for some other nearby sites. The whole 2 night experience costs only 3200 rupees each (£50), and includes transport to and from the hotel, and all meals. It has to be said that, although the food should be considered basic, it is excellent - drinks from the fridge cost extra. The Backwoods team can be contacted on fax 91-832-224904 (E-mail: Loven@goa1.dot.net.in), and it is worth booking well in advance, since they are becoming very popular.

recommended.

Visiting the different sites away from the tourist resorts obviously requires some sort of transport, and the most popular choice here is to employ one of the abundant tourist taxis. The taxi drivers in the area have quickly cottoned on to the fact that the increasing numbers of birders can bring with them a rich source of income. The better ones have taken the trouble to learn where the best sites are, and this can include species specific pinpointing such as owl roosting trees. The drivers outside the Beira Mar are the best bet - not sure about the birding knowledge of those from elsewhere, but the former congregate where the birders are, and are reputed to be the preferred choice. We asked for and got Naresh, who was very good. He is now also developing an interest in the birds themselves. He is regularly used by the birding tour companies, as are his friends, Josh and Adu. The taxis are almost all of one type, and really only comfortably seat three passengers, but with plenty of room in the back for bags and optics. A typical 12 hour day around the sites will cost 900 rupees, which rounded off to around £14 when we were there. The driving experience is one not to be forgotten in Goa, and you quickly

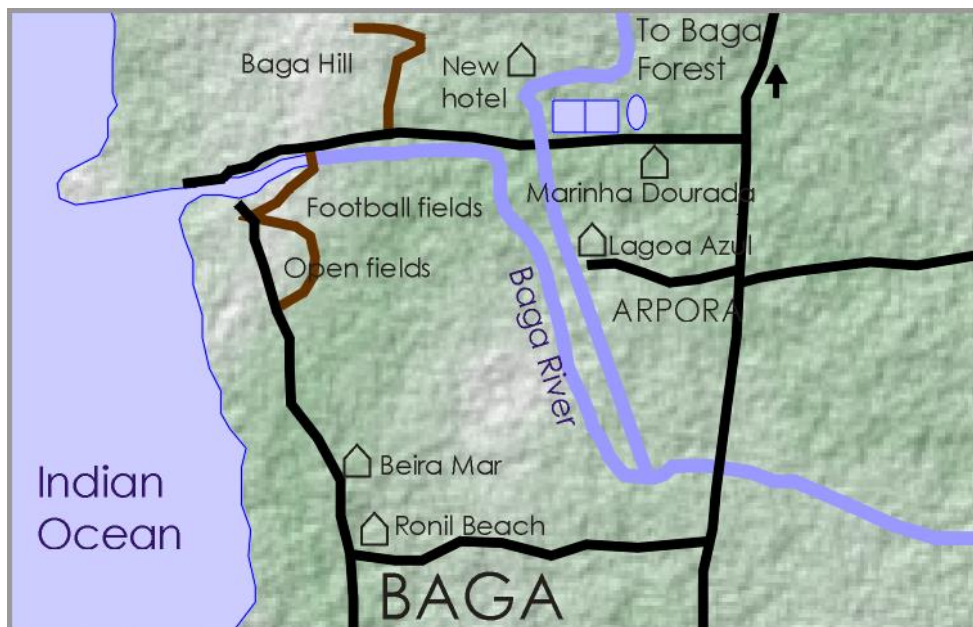
realise the benefits of a taxi and not car hire. Describing Indian driving as lunatic is wildly optimistic - they delight in overtaking on bends and the crests of hills, and usually where the road barely squeezes in two cars (that's what the pavements are for apparently), although it would seem that blowing the horn constantly absolves them of any misdemeanours.

The food available is almost as much of a treat as the birds. A favourite haunt should be any of the copious beach shacks, which are quite literally palm covered, open eateries lining the beach. The taste of the food is different yet again from that of Indian restaurants at home, and also considerably cheaper - each of the dishes usually costs no more than 100 rupees (£1.50). For something a little more up market, and with a greater variety, the Ronil Beach hotel must be very hard to beat, although the price of the food here was little more than the beach shacks. During the day, we found that the packed breakfast provided by the hotel would see us through, however rudimentary. We got into the habit of asking for it to be delivered to the room the previous evening, and the wondrous delicacy that consists of two hard boiled eggs, dry jam sandwiches, and orange juice would appear without delay. There are many roadside sellers everywhere, and a good bet is to stop off and buy a few fresh bananas to fill in any hunger gaps. Drink is obviously essential, and the same sellers usually have stocks of cold bottled water, although the mango juice (bottled as Slice or Maaza) is worth trying.

SITES

Airport to Baga

Friday



As usual necks were craned for views outside the aeroplane porthole to find the first birds of the trip, but the absence of a window, and the fact that we were delayed for an hour on the runway as we landed didn't help a great deal. Things improved enormously on the walk from the plane to the terminal building - when we had ignored the already monotonous House Crows, a White-bellied Sea-Eagle drifted across, making it a much more fitting first bird for the trip. Once through the mayhem that was the terminal building, with inordinately long queues to get through passport control, and bags littering the woefully inadequate conveyor belt area, we saw our cases hefted on to the top of an ancient bus, and set up station about 20 metres away before the journey began. Raptors

were showing quite well, with the soon to be numerous Black & Brahminy Kites joined by an Oriental Honey-buzzard. The hour long bus ride to Arpora, passing masses of humanity and litter, as well as the Goan capital, Panjim, also had plenty of woodland and wetland, with raptors the main birds seen (most of which couldn't be reliably identified on the move). As we neared Baga and Arpora, we then had mouth watering views of Indian Roller and Stork-billed Kingfishers close by.

Arpora area



After extensive unpacking and settling in to the hotel room, we hit the dust tracks of Arpora within five minutes, with the first find a Purple-rumped Sunbird nest near the reception. As often happens, birds were found at regular intervals, which meant that the plan to go further than the village and explore the wet paddies opposite the Marinha Dourada hotel were cut short. This was only after the introduction to Magpie-robin and White-rumped Munias, with White-throated Kingfisher already proving to be both numerous and happy with both dry and wet habitat.

We decided to catch the hotel's free bus service into Baga, and while waiting for this to leave, poked our noses over to the nearby Baga River to see Striated Heron, Night Heron, Jungle Mynahs, and the only Terek Sandpiper of the trip. The bus dropped us at the hive of activity that is the beach, but we escaped within minutes to the nearby fields, for a cracking walk which would eventually lead to the Beira Mar. Despite a game of football nearby, various pipits and larks were seen immediately, with a couple of White-browed Wagtails on a small patch of open mud, and Tailorbird in the overhanging bush. The open fields had us stopping every few minutes for Black Drongos, Indian Roller, Hoopoes, and yet more Jungle Mynahs. We were aiming for the road again, when a small copse overlooking a vegetation covered pond caught our attention, as did the Brahminy Starlings, singing Coppersmith Barbet, and mixed *hirundines*.



We actually made it to the Beira Mar an hour before dusk, and found ourselves on the

swimming pool balcony with a number of other birders, and tan happy tourists trying to swim and sunbathe. An hour and a quarter was spent there, scanning from the balcony over the marsh. A couple of snakes being grappled and tugged by Purple & Indian Pond-Herons provided the floor show. The best birds seemed to be in a particularly wet and litter strewn copse with small bushes directly below us - 2 male Cinnamon Bitterns, 3 White-breasted Waterhens, Ruddy-breasted Crake, Purple Gallinule, and a few Blue-tailed Bee-eaters overhead.

Backwoods

Saturday



After only half sleeping through the night following the long flight to Goa, we were shepherded into the Backwoods minibus by 5:30. The journey, which took 1½ hours, was made mainly in the dark - always a benefit because you don't miss anything. As soon as we arrived, it was down with the bags and into the woods with Pramod, who turned out to be an excellent birder with very keen hearing. The whole of the morning session was spent in the woods, with the only breakfast some rather filling potato curry. We skirted the edge of the forest, which occasionally led to more open clearings, with the typical neck-breaking patience that is needed for this type of birding. However, the Backwoods list kicked off with 4 species of Woodpecker (Heart-spotted, Rufous, Brown-capped, and Common Flameback), almost all the potential sunbirds, Flycatchers in the form of Tickell's Blue & Black-naped Monarch, Parrots (Plum-headed Parakeet & Vernal Hanging), and just before breakfast, we picked up a single Blue-bearded Bee-eater, which seems to be a difficult species to catch up with. The latter was seen over more open land adjacent to the forest, containing farmland and a few scattered buildings, and was home to Red-vented Bulbuls, Ashy Wood-swallow, and Rufous-tailed Starlings.



After breakfast, we headed deeper into the forest, which took us to a couple of dry river beds, which showed the ravages of the previous monsoon in the deeply cut banks and discarded debris. Next to one of these was the staked out site for Sri Lanka Frogmouths, which had just been found this Winter, following the destruction of the

previous roost site during the monsoon. Two of the most unusual looking birds were sat side by side in an innocuous tangle of bamboo. It would seem almost impossible to find them in the first instance - we had difficulty seeing them when we knew they were there! There were plenty of scattered bird parties throughout.



After a siesta in the afternoon (not!), we trudged the 1½ hours to Tamdi Surla temple. The idea of walking was to bird on the way, but the track was generally quiet. Tamdi Surla itself is a surprisingly small and poorly maintained temple (although it is still religiously used by the locals) surrounded by forest with 2 or 3 fairly large clearings. Next to the temple are a few steps which lead to a mainly dry stream bed, and patience was rewarded here with a Malabar Whistling-Thrush and Brown-breasted Flycatcher. Following a watch of the main clearing just before dusk (Mountain Imperial Pigeons and Malabar Grey Hornbills), Loven joined us with an impressively powerful searchlight to look for nightjars - a quick sweep round usually catches the red reflection in their eyes. Just before dark, we caught up with a flying Jungle Nightjar, which eventually landed on one of 3 favoured perches. In addition, in what appears to be a regular 5 to 10 minute window, up to 3 Jerdon's Nightjars were calling, but couldn't be seen properly.



Backwoods Forest

Sunday

After a poor nights sleep with a painful headache, it had thankfully gone for the next early morning walk into the forest. First objective was a Spot-bellied Eagle-Owl nest, where the parents were again absent, but the fluffy white chick popped its head above the hole for some time. Birding was hard in the forest as usual, with bird parties few and far between, until we came to another partly dried river bed with pools, where we sat for half an hour, and were rewarded by overflying Malabar Pied Hornbill, White-throated Kingfisher, and our first white (or light smoky grey to be exact, with white tail) Asian Paradise Flycatcher. Carrying on along this river bed, we eventually came to some more open woods with much lower trees, which was a great deal easier to bird. We had the closest views of Heart-spotted Woodpecker of the trip, and it probably turned out to be one of the most enigmatic birds we were to see. These woods ended at a road, which was actually only a hundred metres or so from the entrance to the Backwoods track. The opposite side of this road was open land with scattered trees and copses, with wooded hillsides behind. Birding was very good here, with quite a variety of species between our wooded exit and the minibus. A couple of Vernal Hanging-Parrots landed to feed over our heads, a small group of Jungle Babblers were at the roadside, and female Black-headed Cuckoo-shrike above. The last of the Drongos to fall (White-bellied) was a little further

into the trees.

Back for breakfast, which was a delightful green scrambled egg, we sat and picked off Blyth's Reed-Warbler, Koel, and then rambled the camp before leaving with a rather shabby Rufous-bellied Eagle circling overhead. The late morning session was provisionally aimed at raptor watching, and a perched White-eyed Buzzard shortly after getting into the minibus seemed to kick off well. The raptor watch point turned out to be from the section of road where we had seen the Vernal Hanging-Parrots earlier. We spent about $\frac{3}{4}$ hour watching the hillside, but visibility was hazy, and all we had was a displaying Oriental Honey-buzzard. So we decided to return to Tamdi Surla, which turned out to be an excellent move. The temple was thronging with people (presumably because it was Sunday), but we quickly left them when we walked up the dry stream bed for about 100m, and sat on the rocks looking upstream. Blue-eared Kingfisher was visible most of the time, as well as occasional Stork-billed & White-throated Kingfisher. This proved a prime spot for passerines - the bush(es) next to the Kingfisher perch contained Verditer, Grey-headed Bulbul, Brown-breasted Flycatcher, and the *hirundine* flock overhead included Asian Swiftlets. Back at the bus, Mike had thoughtfully left his bag at the stream, the retrieval of which allowed us to find our first Plain Flowerpeckers. Walking back to the camp with lunch in mind, we chanced upon a Forest Wagtail, which by all accounts is a difficult bird to see. This led (in the camp) to bathing Magpie-Robin, preening Asian Paradise Flycatcher, flighty male Fairy Bluebird, and finally male Red-breasted Flycatcher.



After a half an hour break, we went back into the forest again, with Malabar Trogon the main quarry. Birding was quite difficult until after about half an hour, when Pramod heard a trogon calling in the distance (nobody else did!). He called back regularly, and within minutes, and with well scratched legs, we had magnificent views of a richly coloured Malabar Trogon, with deep salmon-pink breast, and rich rufous chestnut back. It was well worth the trek and patience. More sparse birding followed. We finally staked out the Spot-bellied Eagle-Owl nest for some time, before making yet another good call in returning to Tamdi Surla to look for nightjars again. The Jungle Nightjar was perched in the same tree as the previous night, but Loven also picked up a calling Jerdon's Nightjar in his torch.

Last morning at Backwoods

Monday



bushes and trees. From the bridge, Striated Heron, White-throated Kingfisher and Little Cormorant were sat almost together, and a Broad-billed Flowerpecker landed on the

First order of the day was to walk a short distance from the camp to look for woodpeckers, with White-bellied top of the list. The absence of this species didn't really matter too much, since we finally obtained good views of the Flamebacks, which included the first definite Greater. We then walked from the woodpecker site to the bus, where the Spangled Drongos were showing well, perched out on bare trees. A short ride of about 10 minutes led to an area which had some of the best concentrated birding so far. The bus parked at the start of a large crescent shaped track next to a bridge over a flowing river, and the former was lined by

wires directly in front of us. The track was a lot easier to bird than the denser forest, and immediately had Grey-breasted Prinia and Tawny-bellied Babbler, Most of the birds appeared in the canopy, which wasn't too high to be uncomfortable best was probably Little Spiderhunter, which was very fleeting, as well as some Chestnut-headed Bee-eaters and singing Red-whiskered Bulbuls.

Back at Arpora



After 1½ hours drive during which we dodged cattle, people, motor bikes, and lorries, at what was probably the maximum speed that maintains life, we arrived back at the hotel at around 16:00. As is required, we were in the field within 5 minutes, and headed straight to the paddies in front of the Marinha Dourada hotel, where we expected and saw a variety of waders in small numbers, and kingfishers. Eventual target was Baga Hill, and we found the almost hidden track opposite some concrete seats reasonably easily. Overall, the hill was fairly quiet, with all of the birds in the trees on the ascent and descent. The top of the hill is exposed and windy with virtually no birds here, but the view from the north side of the farmland and countryside is wonderful. Amongst the bulbuls, orioles, and parakeets, we had singles of White-throated Fantail and White-cheeked Barbet lower down. Before the treat of our first beach shack meal, it was off to the Marina Douradha area again, where we had Stork-billed & White-throated Kingfishers, Common Mynah mingling with Jungle Mynahs, and a couple of Little Swifts overhead.



Morji Beach

Tuesday

The 6 o'clock departure from the hotel got us to the river ferry crossing in 20 minutes, which is an experience in itself. Totally different from that in The Gambia, it is a much smaller vessel, and doesn't seem to dock safely - people generally seemed to jump off before it had stopped. We arrived at Morji Beach just before 7am, with the light just beginning to be sufficient for visibility. The most productive part of the beach is on an

elbow, which overlooks the meeting of the river and the sea. We were disappointed at first, since there were only 3 or 4 Gulls present. As we stood for a while, it was obvious that gulls and terns were coming in from the sea, with a good number passing by upriver, and we then also discovered small groups of Kentish Plover only feet away, with a large collection of sandplover further back. Standing in the same place for over 1 hour was rewarding. During that time, many birds passed by into the river, with a proportion landing on the beach, including all the common gulls we were likely to see, as well as the odd Little, Sandwich & Common Tern. A flypast (very close) of Little Pratincoles early on was extra icing on the cake.



After a short 10 minute drive further North, we arrived at Mandrum Beach, which had a sandbar 50 metres offshore, and many Great Black-headed Gulls, interspersed with groups of Gull-billed, Lesser Crested & Sandwich Terns. This is also reputed to be a possible Crab Plover location, but not today.

On the road back to the ferry, and after a couple of miles, we spotted some birds on open parched farmland, and this was a productive diversion. Initial Malabar Larks then turned up Pied Bushchats and Blue Rock Thrush, followed by a small field which seemed alive with Indian Robins. On the other side of the road, Brahminy Starlings were approachable.

Baga Forest

The ferry ride back was as novel as the first crossing, only this time we stood outside and took in the sights of a half finished bridge that will take another 6 years to complete, masses of people on the boat, and a perched Blue-tailed Bee-eater. The terminal at the other side was much busier than first thing in the morning - horns blaring, scooters and lorries crammed everywhere.



We were dropped off at the entrance to the Club Cabana, adjacent to Baga Forest, which Naresh confidently told us was where the Fish-Owls were. He led us around a small

copse near the road, but it seemed obvious that they were only there occasionally, although we did see White-throated Fantail. However, after almost wandering off in the wrong direction, 2 older birders gave us directions to the Fish-Owl nest. After about 400 metres, and totally overshooting the mark, we found the owl on the nest, glaring back at us. It was bigger and much more impressive than the books suggest. Other notable birds here were Blue-winged Leafbird, Common Iora, and Red-whiskered Bulbul. One or two raptors put in appearances through the canopy.



A drink break was now essential, and turned out to be 2 soft drinks each, and a bottle of water on the spot. Added spice was an Oriental Honey-buzzard chased into a palm tree on the opposite side of the road by House Crows. Back into the forest again, we took a different track towards the centre of the valley, which was at first fairly open, but closed in as height was gained. This followed some excellent raptor watching from a small clearing. We laid on our backs and looked skyward, but only after we brought the bags closer in (no telling what the Black-faced Langurs might have made off with). Menu included Booted &

Short-toed Eagles, kites, Shikra, Oriental Honey-buzzard, and White-bellied Sea-Eagle. The location was obviously good for rising thermals - ground temperature was very high and the clearing exposed. The walk up the centre of the valley was very good, with various passerines on the way to the top. This took us to mid-afternoon, and we were looking forward to another hour at the Beira Mar marsh watch, but first we needed to get a taxi. We headed for the cabs at the Marinha Dourada, but first felt compelled to have a quick look around the paddies. Another good call! No fewer than 5 species of kingfisher were now in that small area, with other goodies such as Pied Bushchat, Paddyfield Pipit, and Common & Jungle Mynahs thrown in.

At the Beira Mar for the last hour of daylight, and back on the balcony overlooking the marsh. It was just as well we came earlier in the week - there was no sign of either the Cinnamon Bittern or Ruddy-breasted Crake! However, half a dozen Painted-snipe came out into the open as the light was failing (much better than the half hidden birds we had seen before). Just as we were about to leave, a Barn Owl ghosted past in the gloom.

Fort Aguada and Carambolin

Wednesday

We had been looking forward to sitting among the piles of human excrement that is reported to be at the pitta site at Fort Aguada. However, it wasn't nearly as bad as expected, with only the odd dollop and wandering canine to be wary of. We were lucky - just after the light had become half reasonable, we found the pitta twice on the left hand side of the path, under cover of bushes. Despite having made ourselves rather comfortable for a return and photo shoot, the Pitta did not appear in the next hour, although Orange-headed Thrush came to within feet of us, Blyth's Reed-Warbler did a regular circuit, and Ashy Prinia appeared twice. Just before we were about to leave, we found the Pitta briefly again on the other side of the path. A very nice bird, and perhaps a lot bigger and more rotund than we had expected. There is a possibility that there are actually two birds here!

Before covering Carambolin lake, we tried the small wood nearby that is supposed to hold Brown Hawk-Owl. The wood is bounded on one side by an expanse of open water and muddy fields, and the other by dry farmland with reeded marsh and lagoons behind. The wood itself is owned by an old lady in the first house on the left, and she apparently is the landlady to the few households nearby. This wood is quite active for birdlife, and the open land around alive with egrets, waders, and larks. Many raptors, almost all kites, are overhead. One of the pair of Hawk-Owls died last week, probably an explanation for its partners absence in the last couple of days, although the old lady apparently either

heard or saw it the previous evening. No disappointments here, though. A pair of Spotted Owlets were at the nest hole, and one of local boys found a Jungle Owlet roosting on a branch. The wood deserves a little more time than a short owl watch, and we subsequently found Banded Bay Cuckoo, Black-rumped Flameback, Golden & Black-hooded Oriole, and Tailorbird. We spent a short time on the open fields - the south side held a rash of mainly Great White Egret and other waders, on the North side Malabar Larks, a few Stonechats, and Woolly-necked Stork riding the thermals with the kites.



Carambolin Lake makes Minsmere look like Teesside on a bad day. It is very large (perhaps 400m across), with lush green paddyfields to the South, bounded by a recently constructed railway to the west, and trees to the East and North. The lagoon itself is much different from those in Britain, being covered in the main by floating vegetation. Even the open areas of water are criss-crossed by grasses and other water plants. The view of the lake from the south side is magnificent, particularly later in the afternoon, when the sun is behind you. Absolutely masses of birds can be seen, with most concentrated on the more open water. Most numerous are Lesser Whistling-Duck and Purple Swamphen, which both number in the hundreds, or possibly over a thousand in the case of the ducks. Amongst these are many egrets and both types of Jacana.

In the early afternoon, we moved from the South bank to the eastern shore and some shade, where the sun would be poorer as the day progressed, and a lot of the birds closer. We trolled through the masses, and picked out Cotton Pygmy-Goose and Comb Duck, While here, some



Openbill Storks passed overhead.

After Naresh had finished his midday nap, we headed through the village to what we thought was a new location, and a possible for Rufous-tailed Lark. After travelling the full length of the very basic village, we eventually found ourselves back at the owl wood. Onward and upward - we went past the wood and parked the taxi in a small clearing bounded on one side by a bank. On the other side of this was a reeded marsh, with a few houses on the shore. We plonked ourselves beside the first house, and enjoyed the best raptor watch yet. Through a couple of hours mid afternoon, we had a wide variety of species, such as Black-shouldered Kite, Great Spotted Eagle, Bonelli's Eagle, Marsh Harriers, Brahminy & Black Kites, which all added to the single Crested Serpent Eagle that we had seen over Carambolin earlier. Searching the skies also pulled out more Woolly-necked Storks, and even a couple of Lesser Adjutants. If this was not enough, the *hirundines* which we had at first passed off as Red-rumped Swallows were found to contain Streak-throated Swallows, and a Plain Prinia popped its head up over the waters edge. A group of Woolly-necked Storks was seen to be landing in a nearby clearing, but mud and water prevented us from getting any closer. On the return to the taxi, we were diverted by an Indian Roller on telegraph wires, which then led on to a dozen Hoopoes on the ground, 2 perched Black-shouldered Kites, and a very close calling Coppersmith Barbet.



After the excellent raptor watch had quietened down, we went for a last hour or so to Carambolin Lake. The sun was now fairly low in the sky - a similar array of birds was seen again, but the light was much softer and made the colours on the birds and plants so much richer. An unexpected addition to the critter list was a single Marsh Mugger crocodile, which had apparently been stranded here following the high waters of the monsoon.

Soligao Zor

Thursday



Soligao Zor was the first port of call, and its well known Brown Wood-Owls, with the possibility of the odd bit of birding here and there before moving on. As often happens, the total birding in the vicinity of the village was a lot better than expected. Soligao Zor is a small village set in a clearing in the woods, with reasonably large church at its centre. A small pool at the base of a dry stream through the woods is used by the locals to bathe and wash clothes, and a Whistling-Thrush could be heard from there first thing. First light found the tree which was supposed to support the owls, and, although this was owl-less, one of the pair flew in to another tree, and its mate, about 50m away. One of the pair then flew into the roosting tree straight above us. Alongside the village, the



wood gives way to a mini valley which is set in a more open area, and at the start of the day this is alive with bird activity. After we had spent some time on the owls, we headed to this spot, and the birds included White-browed Bulbuls, Jungle Babblers, Blue-winged Leafbird, White-bellied Drongo, and plenty of Golden Orioles flying around. A Flameback made 2 attempts to land right in front of us, but was very wary. Further to the South and West, the ground goes up to a couple of open fields for larks and pipits. Raptors started to rise later in the morning, with Booted Eagle and Oriental Honey-buzzard among the kites. The upward walk

held a Southern Shrike, which seemed to have less white in the wings than expected, being confined to the tertial and median covert edges. The plateau at the top had approachable Blue-tailed Bee-eaters, perched White-eyed Buzzard, and, at long last, the much preyed for Baya Weaver, in stunning non-breeding plumage (just as boring as it looks in the books). Just before the egg and stale jam sandwich breakfast feast, we stopped by the bathing pool for final superb views of the better marked Wood-Owl.

Maem Lake and Tikana

The first hint of Maem Lake is a let down, with tat stalls lining the approach road. Once the dam is passed, and the parking at the resort completed, the people are also left behind. The lake itself is quiet and closed in, with very little exposed shoreline, with the walk around it passing through fairly dense woodland, with very few clearings. The first leg of the walk was uneventful, until we found a Jungle Nightjar roosting on a tree at the apex of the path. There was a question over its identity at first, due to its seemingly rufous appearance, but this was dispelled by a scramble up the hillside to eyeball it on a level. Further round, where the track leaves the side of the lake, a gaggle of Red-whiskered Bulbuls signalled the start of some good birding. A short distance in, at least 6 Coppersmith Barbets were in one tree, sharing the branches with Thick-billed Flowerpeckers. In the denser undergrowth, there was one of the local race Blackbirds, which was mid to slate grey, with a darker cap, yellow eye ring and yellow bare area extending behind the eye.

The last site stop of the trip was at a place called Tikana, which doesn't seem to be generally well known. Naresh has known about it for 3 years. The birding focus consists of a causeway leading to a small village, which separates a tidal inlet from a lagoon on the eastern side. The latter is where most of the birds are found, since it is surrounded by wet pasture land and paddyfields. This was another good stop, with a different variety of birds yet again. Around the lagoon was a reasonable collection of Glossy Ibis, some Woolly-necked Storks, 3 species of kingfisher, 3 Small Pratincoles on a mini causeway, and, as luck would have it, a perched Lesser Spotted Eagle, which then obligingly flew into the adjoining paddy before leaving. The more distant paddyfields contained 3 Lesser Adjutants, and a closer look revealed a mix of Pintail & Common Snipe. Over the rice paddies, *hirundines* gradually built up in number, and were found to have a mix of Streak-throated Swallows and Little Swifts in with the Red-rumped Swallows.



SPECIES SEEN

Little Grebe

Tachybaptus ruficollis

The only location that these were seen was at Carambolin Lake, where there were only ~6 birds

Little Cormorant

Phalacrocorax niger

Only seen in small numbers, with most birds (~12) at the Carambolin Lake area



Darter

Anhinga melanogaster melanogaster

This Asian subspecies was seen in flight twice over the Beira Mar, and one on the floating vegetation of Carambolin Lake

Grey Heron

Ardea cinerea

A surprisingly uncommon bird, with probably only half a dozen or so all week. 2 of the birds at Carambolin Lake were interesting, since they had a buffy edge to the forewings when sat

Purple Heron

Ardea purpurea

As with the Grey Heron, only small numbers seen (7). One of the birds at Carambolin Lake was sunning itself, with wings turned almost in on themselves. A most unusual sight



White Egrets

These are abundant throughout Goa. Once each of the species had been identified, it was too much hassle to continue to separate the species, so numbers are very approximate. All birds apart from a single Great White Egret were seen on the coastal lowlands.

Great Egret

Ardea alba

Particularly common on the flooded fields near Carambolin, where there were perhaps over 100

Intermediate Egret

Egretta intermedia

The first one to be specifically identified was on the open fields opposite Baga Forest / Cabana Club entrance. Probably the least common of the 3 white egrets



Little Egret

Egretta garzetta

Again, most birds seem to have been in the Carambolin area

Western Reef-Heron*Egretta gularis*

6 separate birds were seen, all but one being dark phase, although it is likely that a lot of white phase birds were missed

Indian Pond-Heron*Ardeola grayii*

Abundant in almost all coastal areas, with 3 in the Backwoods area

**Cattle Egret***Bubulcus ibis*

Abundant everywhere

Striated Heron*Butorides striata*

Only seen next to rivers - singles on the Baga River next to the Lagoa Azul hotel, Backwoods river stop, and Marina Douradha paddies

Night Heron*Nycticorax nycticorax*

1 on the Baga River next to the Lagoa Azul hotel, and 3 over the Beira Mar at dusk

Cinnamon Bittern*Ixobrychus cinnamomeus*

2 males were directly below the pool balcony of the Beira Mar on the first visit, with one on the third visit. Both appeared as the light was starting to fade

**Asian Openbill***Anastomus oscitans*

6 birds flew from the Ciba-Geigy factory, with an additional 4 over Carambolin Lake

Woolly-necked Stork*Ciconia episcopus*

The first 3 birds were circling over the Club Cabana entrance, with a further 20 over the Carambolin Owl wood, 14 of which landed in a nearby field, and 3 were at the Tikana lagoon (they flew off in the late afternoon)

**Lesser Adjutant***Leptoptilus javanicus*

The first 3 birds were picked up circling over the Carambolin Owl wood, and another 3 were feeding in the rice paddies at Tikana (they flew off in the late afternoon)

Glossy Ibis*Plegadis falcinellus*

A group of 44 was at Tikana Lagoon

Lesser Whistling-Duck*Dendrocygna javanica*

Over 1000 on Carambolin Lake

Comb Duck*Sarkidiornis melanotos*

2 groups of 4 on Carambolin Lake, none of which were knobbed males

Cotton Pygmy-goose*Nettapus coromandelianus*

~40 birds were dotted around Carambolin Lake either in singles or small groups. Unfortunately, none of the males were in breeding plumage, although some of the birds in flight displayed the white and emerald green wing pattern

Pintail*Anas acuta*

Carambolin Lake - 2 males

Garganey*Anas querquedula*

~20 at Carambolin Lake

Shoveler*Anas clypeata*

1 female at Carambolin Lake

Osprey*Pandion haliaetus*

Only one bird was seen perched from the bus on the return to the airport

Oriental Honey-buzzard*Pernis ptilorhynchus*

Both types were seen - dark coverts and rufous coverts. First was over the airport on arrival, with 1 displaying at Backwoods, 2 the next day over Backwoods, and 3 over Baga Forest

Black-shouldered Kite*Elanus caeruleus*

What were presumably 2 birds were at Carambolin Owl site with one perched in the clearing where the taxi was parked, and then 2 on the wires next to the marsh

**Black Kite***Milvus migrans govinda*

Very common on the coastal lowlands, with a great variation in depth of colour

Brahminy Kite*Haliastur indus*

Very common in the coastal lowlands, with a good proportion being young birds

**White-bellied Sea-Eagle***Haliaeetus leucogaster*

The first bird was seen almost from the aeroplane, with another from the bus on the way to the hotel. Only 2 other birds were seen - at Baga Forest, where the massive was obvious

Short-toed Eagle*Circaetus gallicus*

1 over Baga Forest

Crested Serpent-Eagle*Spilornis cheela*

3 at Backwoods, 1 at Baga Forest, and 1 at Carambolin Lake. All birds were in flight

Marsh Harrier*Circus aeruginosus*

4 in the Carambolin area, 2 at Maem Lake, and 1 at Tikana. Only 1 male amongst them

Crested Goshawk*Accipiter trivirgatus*

1 over the large clearing at Tamdi Surla

Shikra*Accipiter badius*

Seen fairly regularly, with a total of 7

White-eyed Buzzard*Butastur teesa*

3 perched birds seen - 2 at Backwoods and 1 at Soligao Zor

Lesser Spotted Eagle*Aquila pomarina*

The adult bird which was originally perched on a bush at Tikana flew to reveal the light coverts and body, contrasting with dark remiges and white primary base flashes

Greater Spotted Eagle*Aquila clanga*

A single adult bird was repeatedly over the marsh next to the Carambolin Owl wood. This was an all dark bird with no primary flashes - much broader wings than Lesser Spotted

Bonelli's Eagle*Aquila fasciata*

An immature seen on a few occasions at Carambolin Marsh

Booted Eagle *Aquila pennata*

4 over Baga Forest, 2 over Soligao Zor

Rufous-bellied Eagle *Aquila kienerii*

A rather shabby and poorly marked bird circled over the Backwoods camp

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Single females at Baga and Baga Forest

White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus*

Beira Mar marsh (3), Fort Aguada (3), Soligao Zor (1), Baga River (1), Baga (1)

**Ruddy-breasted Crake** *Porzana fusca*

1 kept under cover on one occasion in the wet marsh directly under the Beira Mar pool balcony, about ¾ hour before dark

Purple Swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio*

Hundreds of the Asian subspecies at Carambolin Lake, and 1 on Beira Mar marsh

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

~100 at Carambolin Lake

Coot *Fulica atra*

~100 at Carambolin Lake

Pheasant-tailed Jacana *Hydrophasianus chirurgus*

~50 at Carambolin Lake. None were in breeding plumage, although a few were slightly better marked, suggesting the onset of plumage change

**Bronze-winged Jacana** *Metopidius indicus*

~50 at Carambolin Lake. A stunning bird, which seems to glisten all over in the sun

Small Pratincole *Glareola lactea*

~50 birds flew very close in past Morji Beach; 3 were on a small causeway at Tikana Lagoon

Greater Painted-snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*

A mix of males and females in a group of ~6 were regulars under the pool balcony at the Beira Mar. They usually kept under cover of the bushes, usually venturing out as darkness fell

**Red-wattled Lapwing** *Vanellus indicus*

Very common in most wet areas, and some dry, mainly on the coastal lowlands (although

there were 2 near to Backwoods camp)

Pacific Golden-plover *Pluvialis fulva*

Carambolin Owl site (at least 3 on flooded field); Tikana (~10 next to the lagoon)

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

2 on paddies in front of Marina Douradha

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

~20 at Morji Beach

Lesser Sandplover *Charadrius mongolus*

~100 at Morji Beach



Greater Sandplover *Charadrius leschenaultii*

~15 in amongst Lesser Sandplovers at Morji Beach

Pintail Snipe *Galinago stenura*

~10 were with Common Snipe at Tikana, mainly well hidden on the ground. Flight views particularly showed distinctive lack of white trailing edge to wings and underwing pattern. Some eventually seen well on the ground

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

~10 with Pintail Snipe at Tikana

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*

The only one seen was on the Baga River next to the Lagoa Azul hotel on the first evening

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Up to 4 in a day

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Up to 24 in a day

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Up to 3 in a day

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*

2 on paddies in front of Marina Douradha; 1 at Tikana



Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Up to 3 in a day

Redshank *Tringa totanus*

Small numbers (up to 12 in a day) seen in wet areas

Heuglin's Gull *Larus heuglinii*

~20 of what is presumably a dark backed spp of Herring Gull at Morji Beach

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus micahellis*

~10 at Morji Beach

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*

Morji Beach (~100); Carambolin fields (~50)

Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei*

Morji Beach (3); Mandrum Beach (3)

Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus*

~10 at Morji Beach; ~70 at Mandrum Beach. A good proportion were with black hoods

**Brown-headed Gull***Larus brunnicephalus*

~20 at Morji Beach. These are not only distinctive in flight, but also on the ground. They are noticeably larger than Black-headed Gull when standing, with obvious white mirror on primaries, and more upright, "proud" stance. None with hoods

Little Tern*Sternula albifrons*

Morji Beach (~10)

Gull-billed Tern*Gelochelidon nilotica*

Regularly seen near both fresh and sea water, with highest numbers at the beaches (~60 in total)

Common Tern*Sterna hirundo*

Morji Beach (1)

Sandwich Tern*Sterna sandvicensis*

Beaches (~20)

Lesser Crested Tern*Sterna bengalensis*

Apart from good numbers at the beaches (~40 in total), the only other birds were singles at Ciba-Geigy and Carambolin flooded fields

Spotted Dove*Streptopelia chinensis*

The most common and widespread of the doves, but still in low numbers (highest 20 in a day)

Pompadour Green Pigeon*Treron pompadora*

2 separate males at Backwoods

Mountain Imperial Pigeon*Ducula badia*

14 birds on or over the wooded hillside at Templa Surdi

Rose-ringed Parakeet*Psittacula krameri*

Only seen for sure in the Baga area (4, including a mating pair near the hotel)

Plum-headed Parakeet*Psittacula cyanocephala*

Both males and females seen fairly regularly in both uplands and lowlands (at least 15 identified, with many more flypasts)

**Vernal Hanging-Parrot***Loriculus vernalis*

These Parrots are surprisingly small, and usually zip through. 5 were seen at Backwoods, with 2 feeding only metres away on a flowering tree

Asian Koel*Eudynamys scolopacea*

Regular and in small numbers - maximum no more than 6 in a day. Usually heard rather than seen



Common Hawk-Cuckoo*Cuculus varius*

A juvenile was seen quite close to at Backwoods

Banded Bay Cuckoo*Cacomantis sonneratii*

A single bird landed quite close to in the Carambolin Owl wood

Blue-faced Malkoha*Phaenicophaeus viridirostris*

2 at the Backwoods river stop were seen briefly flying over the track; a single bird at Soligao Zor was much more obliging

Greater Coucal*Centropus sinensis*

No more than 2 in a day on most days. They are usually shy and rather elusive

Barn Owl*Tyto alba*

1 at dusk at the Beira Mar

Spot-bellied Eagle Owl*Bubo nipalensis*

Only the chick was seen at the Backwoods nest hole

Brown Fish-Owl*Ketupa zeylonensis*

A single bird was in the nest in Baga Forest

**Brown Wood-Owl***Strix leptogrammica*

A pair of birds at Soligao Zor. One of the two was most impressive with a clean, light face and finely barred body and wings

Spotted Owlet*Athene brama*

A pair at the nest hole in Carambolin Owl wood

**Jungle Owlet***Glaucidium radiatum*

A single bird was roosting in Carambolin Owl wood, showing the more rufous plumage of the southern Indian form

Ceylon Frogmouth*Batrachostomus monoliger*

Much smaller, but equally as odd, as expected. A pair of birds were huddled side by side at a stakeout in Backwoods

**Jungle Nightjar***Caprimulgus indicus*

A single bird was seen on subsequent nights at Tamdi Surla clearing, with further single birds found roosting through the day at Baga Forest and Maem Lake. The bird usually seems silent at dusk

Jerdon's Nightjar*Caprimulgus atripennis*

More easily heard than seen, 1 was eventually located with a lamp at Tamdi Surla

Indian Swift*Aerodramus unicolor*

Seen in small numbers at Backwoods (3), Morji (3), Beira Mar (5), and Soligao Zor (5)

Asian Palm-Swift*Cypsiurus balasiensis*

Baga Fields (6); Maem Lake (6)

Little Swift*Apus affinis*

Backwoods (3); Baga (2); Tikana (6)

Malabar Trogon*Harpactes fasciatus*

A single bird was tracked down in Backwoods forest

Kingfisher*Alcedo atthis*

Up to 10 seen on most days (none at Backwoods)

Blue-eared Kingfisher*Alcedo meninting*

Apparently a difficult to see species, 1 was on the over water on the mainly dry river bed upstream from Tamdi Surla temple. Although the blue ear seems a subtle difference from Kingfisher, it is a much more dapper bird

Stork-billed Kingfisher*Pelargopsis capensis*

3 sightings of possibly the same bird opposite Marina Douradha, 1 over Tamdi Surla river bed, 2 on the Baga River next to the Lagoa Azul on the last morning

**White-throated Kingfisher***Halcyon smyrensis*

Quite easily the most regularly seen kingfisher, with up to 30 seen in various habitats each day (fewer in Backwoods area)

Black-capped Kingfisher*Halcyon pileata*

A single bird on Marina Douradha paddies, and what is apparently a regular on Beira Mar marsh on the third visit

Pied Kingfisher*Ceryle rudis*

Baga (3); Carambolin marsh (2); Tikana (2)

Blue-bearded Bee-eater*Nyctyornis athertoni*

A difficult and irregular bird for the area. 1 was seen at a clearing at Backwoods

Green Bee-eater*Merops orientalis beludschicus*

Very common, with up to 30 seen on almost every day

**Blue-tailed Bee-eater***Merops philippinus*

Beira Mar marsh (4); 1 from ferry from Morji Beach; 2 at Carambolin; Soligao Zor (5); Tikana (5)

Chestnut-headed Bee-eater*Merops leschenaultii*

Flock of 9 over clearing at backwoods, and 2 closely perched birds at Backwoods river stop

Malabar Grey Hornbill*Ocyrceros griseus*

3 pairs of 2 seen on separate occasions at Backwoods, including 2 in the camp

Malabar Pied Hornbill*Anthracosceros coronatus*

A pair over flew over Backwoods Forest while sitting at a river bed, and another pair over the camp

Indian Roller*Coracias benghalensis*

At least 7 seen through the week on wires in open country

**Hoopoe***Upupa epops*

Small numbers seen each day, mainly in the coastal lowlands (only 2 seen at Backwoods). Highest number ~12 birds, most in a feeding group, at Carambolin marsh

White-cheeked Barbet*Megalaima viridis*

These were only seen in the coastal lowlands area. 1 was on Baga Hill, 2 at Soligao Zor, and 2 in the Lagoa Azul vicinity on the last morning. What were initially thought to be 2 Brown-headed Barbets on the first day in the same area may have been White-cheeked (they were unfortunately not checked thoroughly enough, and the brown appearance of the head even of the latter could have caused confusion)

Coppersmith Barbet*Megalaima haemacephala*

It is probable that this is the small barbet of the lowlands, with Crimson-fronted in the Western Ghats. Singles were seen in Baga and Carambolin Owl wood area, with a concentration of at least 6 birds in one tree in Maem woods

**Brown-capped Woodpecker***Dendrocopus moluccensis*

A single bird was picked out in the canopy of Backwoods forest on the first walk

Rufous Woodpecker*Celeus brachyurus*

As with the above, only one was seen, on the first outing into the Backwoods forest

Common Flameback*Dinopium javanense*

Conversely, far from the commonest flameback seen, with only a single bird identified with any conviction

Black-rumped Flameback*Dinopium benghalense*

Easily the most common woodpecker seen. 6 separate sightings in Backwoods, 1 seen better in Carambolin Owl wood, and 2 at Soligao Zor

Greater Flameback*Chrysolaptes lucidus*

Of the 4 or 5 possible birds seen fleetingly which were possibly this species, only 1 definite bird was identified. All possible birds were at Backwoods

Heart-spotted Woodpecker*Hemicircus canente*

This was probably the most enigmatic bird. It looks like a dwarf Pileated type bird, with an impossibly thin neck, and dapper plumage. 5 birds were seen at a distance near the canopy at Backwoods on the first full day, but the closest and best views were of a bird in lower and more open woodland on the second day at Backwoods

**Indian Pitta***Pitta brachyura*

This is one of the most sought after species in Goa, and is certainly well worth the effort. We had heard many bad reports about the vile area that is as much an outdoor toilet as a bird site, but apart from the odd pile worth avoiding, it wasn't nearly so bad at the track side undergrowth that needs to be watched to see the Pitta. We saw the bird twice just after first light at around 7am, but a bird an hour later on the other side of the track

may substantiate the claims for a second bird being present. We were surprised at how big the Pitta is in life, and its distinctive plumage makes the discomfort more bearable

Short-toed Lark*Calandrella brachydactyla*

6 birds were seen on the first day on the open field at Baga

Malabar Lark*Galerida malabarica*

Once the Crested Lark type of call was taken notice of, this Lark was found to be reasonably easy to see, with a maximum of ~20 birds at Carambolin paddy fields. The birds seen were a lot less buff in colour than the books suggest for the region

**Swallow***Hirundo rustica*

This was surprisingly not very common. Up to 20 birds were noticed at Baga on the first day, with very few subsequent to that

Wire-tailed Swallow*Hirundo smithii*

Quite a common *hirundine*, usually mixed in with the more numerous Red-rumped Swallows, and it was good to see that quite a few had the tail streamers. All birds seen were in the coastal lowlands, with a maximum of 20 in a day

House Martin*Delichon urbicum*

Another species which unfortunately didn't receive much attention. 20 or so individuals were seen from the bus from the airport, and more were seen as the week progressed

Red-rumped Swallow*Cecropis daurica*

Quite easily the most common *hirundine* seen. Maxima of 40 birds in a day were probably a lot lower than the actual amount of birds present

Streak-throated Swallow*Petrochelidon fluvicola*

These birds can be easily missed. ~12 birds were seen at two places - Carambolin marsh and Tikana lagoon. However, even though they were undoubtedly with the other *hirundines* all along, it was some time before they were noticed. Plumage seems to vary a great deal, and a good number of birds need to be watched before the characteristic rusty cap, pale rump, and throat streaking can be spotted

Pipits

These were seen regularly throughout the week, and were in such numbers in some places, that once one or two were specifically identified, interest died and many were left unnoticed. Numbers quoted against species are thus much lower than reality would have shown

Richard's Pipit*Anthus richardi*

1 or 2 identified on all days spent in the coastal lowlands

Oriental Pipit*Anthus rufulus*

One or two birds were identified on most days in the coastal lowlands

**Tawny Pipit***Anthus campestris*

2 birds were in fields between Morji and Mandrum beaches, and a second 2 on the open area above Soligao Zor woods

Forest Wagtail*Dendronanthus indicus*

This is quite a unique Wagtail in some ways, since it generally difficult to see, has a strange slow motion gait, and wags its tail horizontally. We were lucky that one individual

spent 2 days in Backwoods camp



White-browed Wagtail

Motacilla maderaspatensis

All birds seen were in the coastal lowlands - Baga fields (3); Beira Mar marsh (2); Morji ferry (2); Baga (1); Tikana ferry (1); Carambolin (2)

Yellow Wagtail

Motacilla flava

Tikana (3); Carambolin Lake (2)

Grey Wagtail

Motacilla cinererea

3 birds seen in the Backwoods area

Black-headed Cuckoo-shrike

Coracina melanoptera

All 3 birds seen were females - 2 in sparse woodland at Backwoods, and 1 at Maem Lake

Small Minivet

Pericroctus cinnamomeus

A mix of males and females - 5 at Backwoods in 3 days, and 4 at Baga Forest (including at least one juvenile)



Scarlet Minivet

Pericroctus flammeus

2 males on the first day in Backwoods, and a pair on the second day there

Grey-headed Bulbul

Pycnonotus priocephalus

This is another of those apparently difficult to catch up with species - singles were at the stream bed (Tamdi Surla) and Soligao Zor

Black-crested Bulbul

Pycnonotus melanicterus

3 birds were on each of 2 days at Backwoods, and 6 in Baga Forest. All were of the local race which does not actually have a crest, but do have an obvious red throat

Red-whiskered Bulbul

Pycnonotus jocosus

This was one of the more common Bulbuls, and quite a character with its forward pointing crest and obvious red cheek patch and vent. Seen in small numbers (up to 6) at Backwoods, 2 were on Baga Hill and probably ~25 very active birds in a group at Maem Lake



Red-vented Bulbul

Pycnonotus cafer

Backwoods forest (12,4,4), Carambolin woods, Maem Lake (3)

Yellow-browed Bulbul

Iole indica

These were only seen in the Backwoods area, and are reasonably common and usually vocal (20 in total)



White-browed Bulbul *Pycnonotus luteolus*

These are more of a lowland coastal species, and were only seen at Soligao Zor, where they are quite common (~20 seen)

Black Bulbul *Hypsipetes leucocapalus ganeesa*

Quite a few flying birds were identified by Pramod at Backwoods, but only one, at the top of a tree near the Spot-bellied Eagle-Owl site, could be seen as Black Bulbul by the rest of the group

Blue-winged Leafbird *Chloropsis cochinchinensis jerdoni*

6 were in Baga Forest, and 1 at Soligao Zor. All but 1 were females, which have the diagnostic blue throat. Blue on the wings and tail was absent - a characteristic of this race

Golden-fronted Leafbird *Chloropsis aurifrons*

4 separate birds were at Backwoods Forest

Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia*

Small numbers (up to 5 in one day) were seen on most days

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius*

A single male was at the open fields between Morji and Mandrum Beaches

Malabar Whistling-Thrush *Myiophonus horsfieldii*

An elusive bird was seen on the dry river bed at Tamdi Surla, with others calling (whistling) at Soligao Zor and the track at the Backwoods river stop

Orange-headed Thrush *Zoothera citrina cyanotus*

This is a beautiful and daintily built thrush, with black and white facial stripes on the local subspecies. They are also very approachable, with all but one (at the Pitta site at Aguada) of the 16 or so seen being at Backwoods. 2 of these were regulars within the actual camp

**Blackbird** *Turdus merula*

This can be a surprisingly confusing species, since there is some variation in the possible subspecies present, and always the possibility of Tickell's Thrush. The brief version of Inskipp does not help wholly in separating these birds, and close inspection of the head pattern is needed, as well as overall structure. A mid grey bird in Backwoods camp was almost identical to the illustration of Tickell's Thrush, but had the larger jizz of Blackbird, and isolated yellow eye ring without darker cap. Another bird at Maem Lake was a darker slate grey, with black cap, and flash of yellow behind the eye. This was likely to be the Nilgiri Blackbird subspecies, which apparently has the potential for full species in the future

Grey-breasted Prinia *Prinia hodgsonii*

2 breeding plumaged birds were at the beginning of the track at the Backwoods river stop

Ashy Prinia *Prinia socialis*

The most obvious of the Prinias when seen. 1 was at the Pitta site (Aguada), and a second at Tikana

Plain Prinia *Prinia inornata*

The white supercilium and lack of white outer tail feathers help distinguish these from Jungle Prinia - Carambolin Marsh (1); Tikana reedbed (2)

Blyth's Reed-Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*

The first 2 birds were seen in Backwoods camp while eating breakfast, with ones and twos seen regularly in various habitats thereafter

Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius*

Baga fields (1); Backwoods (1 on each day); Carambolin wood (2)

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

2 separate birds were at Backwoods Greenish Warbler 2 separate birds at Backwoods, 1 on Baga Hill, and 2 in Baga Forest

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*

Only 2-3 birds seen in Backwoods area

Western Crowned Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus occipitalis*

These were regularly seen in Backwoods, with 10 on the first day, and singles on the second and third days

Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica*

1 in Backwoods Forest

Brown-breasted Flycatcher *Muscicapa muttui*

2 separate birds were at Tamdi Surla dry river bed - characteristically near water

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva parva*

Backwoods (4); Baga Forest (1); Carambolin Wood (1). Some of these were males, but all of the nominate (western) race seen in Europe

**Verditer Flycatcher** *Eumyias thalassina*

1 was on the river bed at Tamdi Surla

Tickell's Blue Flycatcher *Cyornis tickelliae*

3 singles each day at Backwoods

**Bluethroat** *Luscinia svecica*

1 female in a roadside ditch near the Marina Douradha hotel

Oriental Magpie-Robin *Copsychus saularis*

Regularly seen every day, with some birds singing in prominent positions, with a maximum of 6 in a day. Most seen were males

**White-rumped Shama** *Copsychus malabaricus*

3 in Backwoods Forest on the first day

Indian Robin *Saxicoloides fulicatus*

Open fields between Morji and Mandrum Beaches (2 males and a female together); Carambolin area (1); Tikana (1)

**Stonechat** *Saxicola rubicola*

2 pairs at Carambolin paddyfields; 1 pair at Tikana

Pied Bushchat *Saxicola caprata*

The white on the wings of the male can vary widely - some have none through to those with a large patch similar to Collared Flycatcher. Baga (1); open fields between Morji and Mandrum Beaches (3); Carambolin paddyfields (2); Lagoa Azul area (3)

White-throated Fantail*Rhipidura albicollis albogularis*

3 singles of the light-bellied, dark spotted race were on Baga Hill, Baga Forest, and Tikana

Black-naped Monarch*Hypothymis azurea*

These are not quite as impressive as imagined from illustrations, being darker and at first resembling White-bellied Flycatcher. 3 separate birds were in Backwoods Forest

Asian Paradise-Flycatcher*Tersiphone paradisi*

Seen on every day apart from Baga Forest, 15 were seen in total. 5 light grey birds were seen, all with full tails, all others being rufous birds with short tails

Puff-throated Babbler*Pellorneum ruficeps*

When first seen, these are reminiscent of Northern Waterthrush, in both looks and habits. Backwoods Camp (2); Baga Forest (1)

Tawny-bellied Babbler*Dumetia hyperythra*

Backwoods track river stop (3); Soligao Zor (1)

Dark-fronted Babbler*Rhopocichla atriceps atriceps*

All birds seen at Backwoods Forest were of the dark capped subspecies (15,10,3)

Jungle Babbler*Turdoides striata*

Backwoods (1,3,3); Soligao Zor (10)

**Brown-cheeked Fulvetta***Alcippe poiocephala*

Backwoods (12,10,2); Baga Forest (2)

Black-lored Tit*Parus xanthogenys*

Lagoa Azul (2); Baga Forest (2); Carambolin Wood (1); Soligao Zor (1); Maem Lake (1)

Velvet-fronted Nuthatch*Sitta frontalis*

Backwoods - 3 on the first 2 days were near distant, but a pair on the third day were nest building and very approachable

**Purple-rumped Sunbird***Leptocoma zeylonica*

Very common and heard regularly - up to 30 seen on any one day

Crimson-backed Sunbird*Leptocoma minima*

Probably seen more commonly at Backwoods, many more than the 4 or so birds identified there were likely to be of this species, with 2 at Baga Forest the only ones identified elsewhere

Purple Sunbird*Cinnyris asiaticus*

Seen every day except at Carambolin, with a maximum of 6 identified

Long-billed Sunbird*Cinnyris lotenius*

A male was in a clearing adjacent to Backwoods Forest

Little Spiderhunter*Arachnathera longirostra*

1 briefly on track at Backwoods river stop

Thick-billed Flowerpecker*Dicaeum agile*

Backwood river stop (1 on wires close in); Maem Lake (3)

Plain Flowerpecker*Dicaeum concolor*

Tamdi Surla (4); Backwoods (1); Baga Forest (3); Soligao Zor (3)

Golden Oriole*Oriolus oriolus*

Seen every day in small numbers, apart from at Soligao Zor where there were ~20 sightings

Black-hooded Oriole*Oriolus xanthornus*

Backwoods (1,1), Carambolin Wood (1); Soligao Zor (2)

Asian Fairy Bluebird*Irene puella*

1 only at Backwoods Camp

Long-tailed Shrike*Lanius schach*

Small numbers seen on every day but one - maximum 3

**Southern Shrike***Lanius meridionalis*

1 at Soligao Zor had less white in the wing than expected - confined to white fringes on median coverts and tertials

Large Woodshrike*Tephrodornis gularis*

A flock of ~10 birds followed an earlier singleton

Common Woodshrike*Tephrodornis pondicerianus*

Backwoods (1); Baga Forest (2)

Black Drongo*Dicrurus macrocercus*

Very common in open areas, particularly in the coastal lowlands

**Ashy Drongo***Dicrurus leucophaeus*

Another common drongo, preferring more sheltered habitat in trees than Black, and probably the commonest drongo in the Western Ghats

White-bellied Drongo*Dicrurus caerulescens*

Backwoods (1); Soligao Zor (3)

Bronzed Drongo*Dicrurus aeneus*

Backwoods Forest (12,10) - usually within wooded areas

Hair-crested Drongo*Dicrurus hottentotus*

Up to 3 in the open area near the minibus parking at Backwoods

**Greater Racket-tailed Drongo***Dicrurus paradiseus*

At least 12 seen in Backwoods Forest - all with full racquets on tails

Ashy Woodswallow*Artamus fuscus*

Backwoods (4,3); Carambolin (1)

Rufous Treepie*Dendrocitta vagabunda*

Lagoa Azul area (1); Backwoods (2)

Large-billed Crow*Corvus macrorhynchos*

Small numbers were at Backwoods, where it was the most common crow, with only 1 elsewhere (Lagoa Azul area)

House Crow*Corvus splendens*

Abundant

**Jungle Mynah***Acridotheres fuscus*

Common in the coastal lowlands, with up to 30 or 40 seen every day there

Common Mynah*Acridotheres tristis*

Not common at all - Marina Douradha paddies (1 with Jungle Mynahs); 2 near Morji Beach; 2 near Baga

Chestnut-tailed Starling*Sturnia malabarica*

4 birds at a clear area adjacent to Backwoods Forest

Brahminy Starling*Temenuchus pagodarum*

Baga Fields (20); Beira Mar (10); open land between Morji and Mandrum Beaches (6); Morji Beach (2)

**Rosy Starling***Sturnus roseus*

Beira Mar (2); Fort Aguada (2); Soligao Zor (15)

House Sparrow*Passer domesticus*

Baga Beach (6); Baga (6)

Chestnut-shouldered Petronia*Petronia xanthocollis*

Only seen at Backwoods - 2 each day

Baya Weaver*Ploceus philippinus*

10 at the Soligao Zor clearing

White-rumped Munia*Lonchura striata*

Lagoa Azul area (2); Backwoods (6 each day); Soligao Zor (10)

TOTAL SPECIES = 216