



BHUTAN BIRDING REPORT

29 MARCH - 15 APRIL 2005

With Cathy on sabbatical for the 2004-05 academic year, we decided to take a birding trip to somewhere best visited in the spring, a time of year during which we ordinarily cannot travel for any extended period. We were both intrigued by the idea of birding the Himalayas and set our sights on Bhutan, a remote mountain kingdom that is becoming a popular birding destination – unlike neighbors Nepal and India, Bhutan is politically stable, relatively free from western influences, and the natural environment is still largely intact. Bhutan regulates tourism by charging a flat rate of \$200/person/day to stay in the country (all accommodations, food and local transportation are covered by this fee), and requires tourists to be accompanied by a Bhutanese guide at all times. We assumed initially that the only feasible way to bird the country would be to join a regularly scheduled group trip run by one of the major American or British birding tour companies, most of whom have Bhutan on their schedules. We were, however, reluctant to do this – we dislike group birding and also prefer that the money we spend traveling go directly to the residents of the countries we visit rather than into the pockets of western tour operators. Happily, a bit of exploration on the web turned up three Bhutanese tour agencies advertising custom birding tours led by Bhutanese guides. We requested further information, and ultimately chose Karma Jamtsho's company Nature Tourism-Bhutan (<http://www.naturetourism-bhutan.com/>; nattouri@druknet.bt), whose sample itinerary was virtually identical to that followed by the major birding companies. We were very pleased with this choice and highly recommend Nature-Tourism to anyone wishing to bird Bhutan on their own. Karma runs an extremely professional operation and we never experienced even a minor hitch in any of our travel or housing arrangements – not at all the usual third world travel experience! Even with a \$30/person/day small-group surcharge imposed by the Bhutanese government, our total cost (including airfare from Los Angeles to Bangkok) came to just \$5000/person, a savings of over \$3000/person compared to the fees charged by most major birding companies.

While in Bhutan we were guided by Tshering Phuntsho, whom we highly recommend. Although Tshering has only been leading birding tours for a few years, he is already a very accomplished guide – he knows where and how to find all of the Bhutanese specialties, has incredible eyes and ears, and was patient when the birds often remained invisible to us. His English, like that of most other Bhutanese tour guides we met, is excellent, and communication was never a problem. Our transportation was a very comfortable, brand new Nissan X-Terra 4WD vehicle complete with the ultimate birding extra – a sunroof. Our driver, whose name was also Tshering (promptly dubbed Tshering-2), had never driven for a birding group before, but he quickly got the hang of it and within a few days was spotting birds for us as he drove, prompting us to have to teach him not to slam on the brakes for every Blue Whistling-Thrush and Large-billed Crow! He also began playing with our spotting scope at every opportunity and thus scored the coup of getting on a male Ward's Trogon before the rest of us had seen it! By the end of the trip Tshering-2 had asked Karma for a pair of binoculars so that he too could begin learning the birds. The two Tsherings looked after us very well and were good company throughout the trip.

Our accommodations ranged from hotels that would rival many upscale American mountain lodges in furnishings and comfort to very rustic farmhouse stays in the eastern part of the country where tourist facilities are non-existent. Traditionally, birding groups have camped along the roadside in Sengor and Yonkhola, but Karma has begun arranging instead for small groups to stay at local "guesthouses" in these villages, a means of sharing some tourist revenue with the local residents and encouraging them to develop additional tourism infrastructure. We were the guinea pigs for this farmhouse stay venture, and although it required some cultural adjustments both on our part and that of our local hosts, in general we

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were very happy with the arrangement. In particular, we enjoyed experiencing directly how most “real” Bhutanese live, an opportunity most tourists don’t get. Moreover, it snowed in Sengor and rained every evening in Yonkhola, so we were also thankful to have a dry roof over our heads and a warm kitchen to sit in. Although neither guesthouse had indoor plumbing to speak of, the arrangements were no less primitive than if we had been camping.

Food was plentiful and very good. Staple dishes were red rice, fiddlehead ferns cooked in a cheese sauce, and a potato dish reminiscent of spicy scalloped potatoes. Chicken or pork was also usually served in the tourist hotels, but in the villages meat generally came only in the form of dried beef or pork added to other dishes. The Bhutanese eat very hot green chili peppers with everything. Because the food is too hot for many westerners, the hotels have taken to leaving out the chilis, which then results in the food being somewhat bland. To remedy this, Tshering usually gave us a few spoonfuls of whatever he was eating to mix into our rice, which generally heated things up to a just-tolerable level. During our farmhouse stays in the east Tshering did the bulk of the cooking, and the food he prepared for us was both more authentic and considerably tastier than the usual hotel fare. Most of our lunches were picnics eaten at a folding camp table set up along the roadside. Lunches prepared by the hotels generally consisted of cheese sandwiches, cold chicken, roast potatoes and hard-boiled eggs. We much preferred the hot lunches prepared by Tshering – steaming metal bowls of rice, ferns, potatoes and other fare that would emerge from a large thermos-like contraption. Hotel breakfasts followed the usual formula of cornflakes, toast and eggs; while in the east we adjusted to breakfasts of curry served with chapatis or buckwheat pancakes.

National Highway 2, the main (and only) road from Thimphu in the west to Trashigang in the east, is the main birding route in Bhutan. This narrow, winding, vertigo-inducing road traverses the near-vertical terrain and provides an excellent vantage point for birding – in fact, in most places it is nearly impossible to bird anywhere other than on the road as the hillsides are very steep and the understory vegetation virtually impenetrable. Unfortunately, both commercial traffic and construction on this road have increased greatly in the last few years as a result of guerilla activity in the Assam region of India, previously the main trade route between west and east. While the traffic is still very light by western standards, gone are the days when traffic on the Lingmethang road consisted of “5 or 6 trucks a day” (as advertised to us); 5 or 6 trucks an hour is now the norm, and a large truck or bus always seemed to materialize just as we had glimpsed a good bird on the roadside. There is ongoing construction (general maintenance as well as road-widening projects) along the entire stretch of road from Trongsa to Yonkhola, making it difficult to find places to bird where the roadside is not torn up. We saw very few birds in these high elevation areas, and cannot help wondering to what degree their absence was due to this disturbance along the road.

29 March: Paro to Thimphu

Our early-morning flight from Bangkok to Paro via Kolkata was uneventful and delayed only slightly, a result of the ground crew’s difficulties loading excess baggage that included, among other things, a full-sized refrigerator. Although the Bangkok-Paro route is less scenic than the flight from Delhi via Nepal, we nonetheless had a clear but distant view of Mt. Everest and stunning views of the surrounding Bhutanese Himalayas as we dropped into the Paro Valley. After receiving our visas and clearing customs we were met by the Tsherings, and within minutes were birding along the Paro River. Beneath the footbridge to the imposing Paro Dzong we saw the ubiquitous Plumbeous Water Redstarts, White Wagtail and several Brown Dippers, and slightly further up the river found our first Ibisbill, River Lapwing and a Green Sandpiper. Along the river banks were Hodgson’s Redstart, Common Stonechat, Grey-backed Shrike, and small flocks of Rosy Pipits and Little Buntings. In the surrounding cultivated areas we saw Eurasian Kestrel and Common Buzzard, and speculated that a distant perched buzzard with a very light head might be a Long-legged Buzzard. We also became acquainted with the common species typical of inhabited areas throughout Bhutan: Oriental Turtle Dove, Russet and Eurasian Tree Sparrows, Large-billed Crow, Red-billed Chough, and the delightful Eurasian Hoopoe. After lunch in a small restaurant in



Paro we headed for the capitol of Thimphu, stopping along the way to view Great Cormorants nesting on a cliff over the Paro River, and a colony of what Tshering described as “the original Rock Pigeon”, i.e. a native rather than feral population. As we approached Thimphu we stopped at an overlook above the sewage ponds and through our spotting scope had very distant views of some late wintering waterfowl, including a single Bar-headed Goose and pairs of Ruddy Shelduck, Eurasian Wigeon, Tufted Duck, Common Pochard and Gadwall. The Tsherings dropped us off at the River View Hotel in Thimphu at about 3:30 p.m. and went off to get our brand-new car registered and insured. We amused ourselves by watching an informal archery tournament along the river below the hotel and finding a few more of the most common birds: Blue Whistling-Thrush, Green-backed Tit, Black Bulbul, and Rufous Sibia (all of which we would see almost daily), as well as a Rufous-breasted Accentor. Karma and Tshering both joined us for dinner at the hotel and we reviewed the details of our itinerary prior to the morning’s departure.

30 March: Thimphu to Punakha via Dochu La

We left Thimphu at 4:30 a.m. in order to be at Dochu La pass at sunrise, and were rewarded with good looks at a Grey Nightjar on the road above Thimphu. It was a very cold dawn at the 3115 m pass, with frost on the ground in places. We climbed a trail above the pass looking for Satyr Tragopan, but had no response to our tape. As the sun and temperature gradually rose the small bird activity around us picked up, and we saw Coal Tit, Yellow-browed Tit, Rusty-flanked Treecreeper, Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher, Blue-fronted Redstart, White-browed Fulvetta, Long-tailed Minivet, Hume’s Warbler, distant Nepal House Martins, and the two high-elevation corvids, Yellow-billed Blue Magpie and Spotted Nutcracker. We breakfasted at the restaurant below the pass, and then hiked down the old Punakha to Thimphu footpath, still traveled each year by the monks as they move between their winter and summer residences. Along this path we began to encounter mixed feeding flocks of Rufous-vented and Stripe-throated Yuhinas, Pale-rumped and Ashy-throated Warblers, White-tailed Nuthatch, the dazzling trio of Green-tailed, Mrs. Gould’s and Fire-tailed Sunbirds, and a migrating flock of about a dozen Fire-tailed Myzornis. We also found White-collared Blackbird and Plain-backed Thrush, female White-browed and Dark-breasted Rosefinches, and a perched Eurasian Sparrowhawk. After returning to the main road we had to walk several more kilometers to the spot where Tshering-2 was waiting for us with the car and lunch, the result of a miscommunication between the two Tsherings regarding pick-up locations. There was good birding all along the road, however, and we picked up Rufous-bellied Woodpecker, Great Barbet, Black and Ashy Drongos, Verditer Flycatcher, Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher, Himalayan Swiftlet and Fork-tailed Swift, White-capped Water Redstart, Chestnut-crowned Warbler, Rufous-fronted Tit, Green Shrike-Babbler, and Olive-backed Pipit, as well as our first mammal, a Muntjac (Barking Deer) grazing unconcernedly on the slope below the road. After lunch we worked our way down the main road to lower elevations, finding White-throated and Striated Laughingthrushes, Grey-winged Blackbird, White-throated Fantail, Grey Bushchat, and a mixed feeding flock full of lovely, little yellow birds, including Yellow-cheeked Tit, Black-eared Shrike-Babbler, Chestnut-tailed Minla and Golden-breasted Fulvetta. We spent a considerable amount of time trying unsuccessfully to see a Large Hawk-Cuckoo that was calling loudly over our heads and an equally invisible Mountain (?) Scops-Owl hidden somewhere on the bank above the road. As we drove towards Punakha at sunset, a pair of Kalij Pheasants crossed the road in front of us and then slowly worked their way up the adjacent hillside as we watched from the sunroof. The first Spotted Doves and Common Mynas appeared as we entered the cultivated areas on the outskirts of Punakha, and we finally reached the beautiful Meri Puensum resort at dusk, with barely enough time to shower before dinner.

31 March: Punakha to Tashithang (Jigme Dorji NP)

Our first stop after a 5 a.m. departure from the hotel was a large tree along the river in Punakha where we found a pair of roosting Tawny Fish Owls. Another stop near the Punakha Dzong produced Crested Kingfisher along with our first Red-vented Bulbul, a species that turned out to be very common in lower elevation cultivated areas. We spent the day working our way up the beautiful Tashithang valley into



Jigme Dorji National Park, birding in broad-leaved forest bordering the rushing Mo Chhu. As we passed through the small villages and cultivated areas on the outskirts of the park we saw Long-tailed Shrike, Blue Rock Thrush, Oriental Magpie-Robin, Orange-bellied Leafbird, Grey Treepie, Bay Woodpecker, Black-winged Cuckooshrike, Oriental White-eye, a Golden-throated Barbet sitting beside a Slender-billed Oriole, a perched Crested Serpent-Eagle, and a Peregrine Falcon having breakfast (Blue Whistling-Thrush?) atop a dead tree. An Asian Barred Owlet perched conspicuously in the open caught our eye as we drove through a stand of small deciduous trees, and sat patiently while we photographed it and showed it to a passing group of Bhutanese environmental trainees. As we entered the park we began to encounter mixed feeding flocks in the dense roadside shrubbery, and quickly picked up Nepal Fulvetta, Grey-hooded and Yellow-vented Warblers, Rufous-capped and Golden Babblers, Mountain Bulbul, Whiskered and White-bellied Yuhinas, and Rusty-fronted Barwing. We also surprised two male Kalij Pheasants fighting, and watched as they pursued one another down the hill towards the river. At several stream crossings we found both Slaty-backed and Little Forktails along with the ever-present Plumbeous and White-capped Water Redstarts. A flock of Red-tailed Minlas was a little too distant for a really satisfying look, but the same tree held Greater Yellownape and a very yellow-rumped female Scarlet Finch. After a picnic lunch and a brief nap (interrupted by the appearance overhead of three Mountain Hawk-Eagles), we began working the dense roadside vegetation for the supreme skulkers. First, we managed to coax a pair of Slaty-bellied Tesias into the open for good views. Next, we patiently stalked a Scaly-breasted Wren-Babbler as it worked along the fern-covered bank above us, eventually showing well as it crossed an open rock face. Finally, after spending a long time trying to lure a singing Pygmy Wren-Babbler out of a dense thicket and getting only brief flight views, we discovered the bird's mate perched on a log beside the road. Upon seeing us, she flew into a bare shrub and froze on a small branch, remaining absolutely motionless for nearly 10 minutes as we photographed her from every possible angle. Satisfied with these efforts and with the light fading we headed back to Punakha, stopping only to watch a troop of Assamese Macaques sitting in pine trees alongside the road, eating cones and grooming one another. A Grey Nightjar flushed from the road near Punakha was testimony to another post-sunset return to the hotel.

01 April: Punakha to Phobjhika

Another pre-dawn departure, this time to work our way along the river looking for the extremely rare White-bellied Heron. At the herons' favored feeding site we found flocks of Ruddy Shelducks and Great Cormorants, Ibisbill, White-throated Kingfisher, and, perched majestically in pines along the shore, an adult Pallas' Fish Eagle – but, unfortunately, no sign of herons. An "informant" of Tshering's whose house overlooks the site told him that the herons had not been seen feeding along the river for a week, meaning they had probably started breeding and were staying on small mountain streams closer to the nesting area. Disappointed, we walked along the road and birded the farmyards, finding Rusty-cheeked Scimitar-Babbler, Scaly-breasted Munia, a pair of Ultramarine Flycatchers, and a very out-of-place Snow Pigeon. We drove on to Wangdue Phodrang for a late breakfast at the Dragon's Nest Resort, and then scoped the sandy river edge below the dzong, finding Common Sandpiper and a Pied Avocet, a rarity in Bhutan. Stopping along the road periodically as we climbed the valley out of Wangdue we found Chestnut-bellied and Blue-capped Rock Thrushes, Striated Prinia, Blue-throated Barbet, Wedge-tailed Green Pigeon, Scarlet Minivet, Fire-breasted Flowerpecker, and Crested Bunting. At a cliff with several bee-hives we found a Yellow-rumped Honeyguide perched proprietorially on a branch overhanging the hives, and watched Fork-tailed Swifts flying in and out of nest holes in the cliff. The sun had already gone behind a ridge and there was a chill in the air when we reached Lawa La and began the descent into the Phobjhika Valley. Hovering over the heath-like expanses of dwarf bamboo was a puzzling raptor that we finally identified as an immature Bonelli's Eagle – it was eventually joined by another difficult raptor that we concluded was most likely an Upland Buzzard. Brown Parrotbills, a lovely pink White-browed Rosefinch, and a Grey-sided Bush-Warbler in the bamboo along the roadside were the last birds of the day as the sun set and we (yet again!) arrived at our accommodations – the brand-new, upscale Dewachen Hotel – in the dark. Our hotel room was so beautifully furnished and comfortable (with the first truly modern



bathroom we had seen) we wished we had an additional day to stay in Phobjhika just to relax and enjoy the place! Although Karma and Tshering had told us previously that the wintering Black-necked Cranes had already left Phobjhika, our hopes of seeing this species were buoyed by the hotel owner, who told us there had still been three cranes present just 3 days earlier. Tshering put in a call to the Crane Observation Center, however, and they dashed our hopes by telling him that the cranes had since left “on an auspicious day in the Buddhist calendar”, information that sounded to us suspiciously like a local publicity ploy. Despite Tshering’s desire to get an early start to Pele La, we told him that we wanted to stop at the crane roosting and feeding areas the next morning to see for ourselves that no stragglers remained.

02 April: Phobjhika to Chamkhar via Pele La, Trongsa and Yutong La

The morning got off to an unhappy start when, despite the previous evening’s conversation, Tshering drove us past the crane site without stopping. By the time we realized this, we were already approaching Lawa La and a return trip to the valley would have cost us half an hour or more of prime birding time. Upset that we had not been given the chance to verify for ourselves that the cranes really were gone, we drove on to Pele La in low spirits. A crystal clear morning with views of 7314 m Jomolhari helped dissipate our ill tempers, however, as did a spectacular male Himalayan Monal who sat up on a stump for several minutes and slowly turned around so that we could admire him from all sides. As we walked the old road below Pele La a movement on the hillside caught Cathy’s eye and she got a quick look at a Hill Partridge that disappeared into a clump of bamboo before the others could get on it. Minutes later Tshering spotted a lovely pair of Blood Pheasants posing on the hill above us. Other birds we saw along the old road included Dark-throated Thrush, Eurasian Treecreeper, Grey-crested Tit, Rufous-bellied Woodpecker, Black-faced Laughingthrush, and several White-winged Grosbeaks singing from the tops of tall pines. As we descended from Pele La into the valley below we stopped briefly amid the bamboo while four Himalayan Griffons and a Northern Goshawk appeared overhead. Eventually we set off on the long drive to Bumthang satisfied with a good morning’s birding. We arrived in Trongsa in time for a late lunch at the Sherubling Lodge where we would stay on our return journey, and then continued on over Yutong La, keeping an eye on the roadside for mixed feeding flocks. Late in the afternoon we found one that included several species of tits and yuhinas, the very attractive Rufous-winged Fulvettas, Chestnut-tailed Minla, Hoary-throated Barwings, Pale-rumped, Ashy-throated and Golden-spectacled Warbler, and our only Goldcrest. As we descended into the valleys of the Bumthang district the local race of Eurasian Magpie appeared in the farmyards, along with the sparrows, choughs and shrikes we were learning to associate with human settlements. We stayed at the comfortable Mephram Guest Lodge, set on a hill overlooking the busy town of Chamkhar, an agricultural production and livestock-breeding center. It was a chilly evening and we were grateful for the woodstove in our room!

03 April: Chamkhar to Sengor via Ura and Thrumsing La

Breakfast at 4 a.m. and a 4:30 a.m. departure guaranteed we would reach the Shertang La pass by dawn. Along the way we flushed a Grey Nightjar from the roadside and also surprised a snipe standing in the road – based on our elevation, Tshering surmised it must be a Wood Snipe. As we approached the pass it started to snow, and we stopped for our first mixed flock amid fairly heavy flurries, seeing more White-winged Grosbeaks, assorted tits, Rosy Pipits, Rufous-breasted and Alpine Accentors, and small flocks of Black-faced and Spotted Laughingthrushes. At the pass itself we hiked into the snowy woods to look for pheasants, but only heard Himalayan Monal calling in the distance. Along the road, however, we found our first Orange-flanked Bush-Robins, beautiful little birds we would continue to see periodically at high elevations. After scanning the plowed fields in the village of Ura for Oriental Skylarks and finding none, we continued on up towards Thrumsing La, at 3750 m the highest pass on the main highway. Stops at several places along the road produced another two pairs of Blood Pheasants, Asian House Martins, our first Rufous-vented Tits, a probable female Golden Bush-Robin seen by Cathy only, and another elusive robin that we concluded was either an Indian Blue Robin or White-browed Bush-Robin. The snow began falling heavily again as we negotiated the very muddy road over Thrumsing La, and had turned to



sleet by the time we reached the small village of Sengor. After a brief stop at our lodgings we continued 10 km down the road into prime Satyr Tragopan territory. Here the sleet turned to rain, and after an hour's wet and cold birding that turned up little other than a couple of Red-headed Bullfinches we headed back up to Sengor. We stayed in a guest room above the Tshering Dolma Restaurant & Bar, a dirt-floored establishment with a few wooden tables in the front room, no running water, and solar power for only a few hours each evening. Our room was simple and unheated but nonetheless drier and warmer than a tent would have been, and a porcelain commode located across the hall meant we didn't need to leave the house at night. We spent the evening downstairs in the kitchen, warming ourselves beside the wood stove used for cooking. The two women who ran the place were very shy and didn't seem to know quite what to do with us, so Tshering took over most of the cooking and also acted as both language and cultural interpreter.

04 April: Sengor

At first light we headed back down the road to the Satyr Tragopan area, and soon heard several individuals calling from the steep hillsides above and below the road. We taped one calling bird to within a few meters of the car, but he stayed hidden in the understory and was dissuaded from coming any closer by calls of a rival male across the road. The latter bird flew along the open cliff face above us at one point, but that was the best and only look we would get at this species. Eventually we returned to the guesthouse for breakfast and then birded along the road above Sengor until lunch; after lunch we went back to the tragopan area and spent the afternoon listening to invisible birds calling from the impenetrable hillsides. Several times during the day we encountered mixed flocks, and added to our species list Buff-barred Warbler, Blyth's Leaf-Warbler, Yellow-bellied Fantail, Dark-rumped Rosefinch, Winter Wren and Darjeeling Woodpecker. We also enjoyed nice second looks at Fire-tailed Sunbird, Eurasian and Rusty-flanked Treecreepers, a flock of Snow Pigeons wheeling against the forested hillside, and a Spotted Laughingthrush who very obligingly sat up on a shrub and, prompted by Tshering's imitation, sang his wonderful song for the video camera. In the late afternoon the clouds came down and it began to rain again, so we once more gave up on the tragopans and returned to our perches beside the woodstove in the guesthouse kitchen.

05 April: Sengor to Yonkhola

A final early-morning search for tragopans yielded no better success than the previous day, so after a last breakfast in Sengor we headed down in elevation to warmer weather in Yonkhola. Along the way we saw a soaring Rufous-bellied Eagle, several Gold-naped Finches, a briefly glimpsed Chestnut-headed Tesia, Large-billed Leaf-Warbler, White-naped Yuhina, Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush, and while stopped for lunch finally managed a good look at a Large Hawk-Cuckoo calling incessantly from a tree above our picnic site. A late afternoon stop just above Yonkhola produced a Speckled Wood-Pigeon, Little Pied-Flycatchers, the first of many Grey-cheeked Warblers and Yellow-throated Fulvettas, and a pair of Blue-bearded Bee-eaters perched close to their nest hole in the sandy road embankment. We reached our guesthouse – the local grocery store – in Yonkhola as the clouds came down and it started to drizzle. This establishment was slightly more modern than the one in Sengor, with around-the-clock electricity and a kitchen equipped with propane burners and an electric rice cooker, but still no running water or interior plumbing. A visit to the outhouse required an obstacle-riddled trek around the buildings, down a porch ladder and out a muddy path into the rear pasture. After inspecting this route Tshering pronounced it “too complicated” for us and informed the landlord we would need an easier alternative. Within an hour the entire village (or so it seemed!) was engaged in building us our own private outhouse on the side of the road adjacent to the house – not the most private location, but far easier to find in the dark!

06 April: Yonkhola

Paul had been fighting a respiratory virus for several days and decided to stay in bed while Cathy and Tshering spent the early morning hours birding the roadside about 10 km above Yonkhola. Activity was high all along the road, and we saw Bay Woodpecker, Grey-chinned and Short-billed Minivets, Fire-tailed



Myzornis, Black-throated Tit, Striated Bulbul, both Grey-sided and Brownish-flanked Bush Warblers, Black-faced Warbler, Cutia, White-browed Shrike-Babbler, Streaked Laughingthrush, Black-throated Sunbird, and a number of mixed flocks consisting primarily of Rufous-capped and Golden Babblers, White-throated Fantails, and Yellow-throated Fulvettas. We spent a considerable amount of time trying to lure into view a singing Grey-bellied Tesia and White-browed Shortwing, but managed only a very brief glimpse of the latter species flying away into a dense thicket. A flock of Grey-sided Laughingthrushes was equally elusive, moving rapidly through the understory without giving us a look at much other than backs and tails. We went back to the guesthouse for breakfast, picked up Paul, and then returned to the same area, getting Paul on most of the birds he had missed in the morning. Not far above Yonkhola we had stupendous looks at a male Rufous-necked Hornbill perched directly above the road, and Paul and Tshering-2 had a close encounter with a Black Eagle flying low down the road towards them. Over lunch we tracked down a singing Large Niltava, and late in the afternoon found a pair of Maroon Orioles among a mixed flock of Cutias and White-browed Shrike-Babblers. Throughout the day Tshering had been playing the Ward's Trogon tape periodically, but it wasn't until we reached a somewhat higher elevation area at about 4 p.m. that we finally heard a response. The calling bird was high on the hillside above the road, and we finally located a female Ward's Trogon feeding in a large tree. Mother Nature played a cruel trick on us, however, and as we tried to get the distant trogon in the scope dense clouds came down all around us – within 30 seconds the entire hillside had disappeared in a blanket of fog! As we retreated to lower elevations the low clouds and steady rain followed us, effectively ending the day's birding. On the way down we did, however, enjoy good looks at a rather damp and morose-looking Capped Langur sitting in a tree beside the road. Upon our return to the guesthouse we found that the owners had rigged up a "bath tent" for us on the kitchen porch – tarps hung over a wooden frame and enclosing a huge iron washtub. Buckets of water were heated on a wood stove, and we enjoyed a much-needed "shower" by standing in the washtub and pouring hot water over one another!

07 April: Yonkhola

At dawn we were back at the trogon site where visibility was only slightly better than it had been the previous afternoon. The trogons were calling, and we quickly got much better looks at the female perched quite close to the road. As we walked the roadside trying to find a vantage point from which to see the calling male, Tshering-2 excitedly beckoned us to the scope. Never sure what to expect (on one occasion he had played a joke on us and focused on a chicken in a nearby farmyard) we nonetheless went over to take a look, and there was the male Ward's Trogon in full frontal view. The bird sat motionless for nearly 10 minutes as we tried to photograph it in the terrible light. The clouds came down once again as we descended to lower elevations, and for a while we played a game of now-you-see-it now-you-don't as trees and hillsides were clear one minute and shrouded in fog the next. Our view of a stunning Common Green Magpie was rapidly obliterated by a curtain of fog, as were our attempts to get the scope on an Oriental Cuckoo, a species we had been hearing almost daily and were now finally seeing. In the midst of this frustrating weather we hit upon a big mixed flock that included Yellow-cheeked and Sultan Tits, Blue-winged Minla, Brown-throated Treecreeper, Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo, Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch, and a half-dozen Grey-chinned Minivets. After breakfast back at the guesthouse we walked along the road through Yonkhola village, finding Streaked and Rufous-necked Laughingthrushes, Rusty-cheeked Scimitar-Babbler, several Tickell's Leaf-Warblers, a pair of Small Niltavas, and a noisy flock of White-crested Laughingthrushes. We spent the rest of the day working our way down the road towards Lingmethang. The scrubby fields and secondary growth along the road were very productive, and we saw Common Tailorbird, Striated and Rufescent Prinias, Hair-crested Drongo, Bronzed Drongo, Green-billed Malkoha, Greater Yellownape, White-bellied and Striated Yuhinas, a female Black Redstart, several ragged, molting Yellow-breasted Greenfinches, and many Crested Buntings. We also finally caught up with Spotted Wren-Babbler, eventually luring a singing individual into view. After a picnic lunch in a terraced field we hiked a trail along the river, where we encountered Mountain and Ashy Bulbuls, Black-chinned Yuhina, Bar-winged Flycatcher-Shrike, and glimpsed what was most likely a Blue-throated Flycatcher. Tshering picked a large bag of fiddlehead ferns that we would have for dinner that night. As



we returned along the trail it began to drizzle, and by the time we reached the car it was raining steadily and we were quite wet. Unfortunately, the rain and limited visibility stopped play for the day and we returned to Yonkhola, disappointed that we had not made it down as far as the village of Lingmethang and wishing that we had an additional day to explore this rich area.

08 April: Yonkhola to Chamkhar via Thrumsing La

Leaving Yonkhola early, we headed back up the road towards Sengor. The morning started well, first with a Chestnut-headed Tesia that spontaneously hopped up onto a roadside shrub, next a Kalij Pheasant on the road embankment, and finally crippling views of a fantastic Slender-billed Scimitar-Babbler lured out of a bamboo thicket. We also saw two very attractive Yellow-throated Martens climbing a large pine above the road. The same tragopans were still calling from their still-invisible perches below Sengor, and a female that crossed the road well in front of the car was seen by Tshering only. The roadsides were very quiet above Sengor and over Thrumsing La, and we reached Chamkhar in the late afternoon without having seen anything new. We spent some time photographing an Ibisbill on the Bumthang River and then checked some local expanses of bamboo, hoping for Great Parrotbill, but finding only Brown Parrotbills. At sunset we explored the bustling main street of Chamkhar briefly before retiring to the Mephram Guest Lodge for a very welcome hot shower and dinner.

09 April: Chamkhar to Trongsa via Yutong La

This day was the least productive of our trip, and in retrospect we decided that it would have been more profitable to drive all the way to Shemgang rather than stopping in Trongsa. We spent the first few hours of the morning birding the cultivated fields along the Bumthang River. Although we did not see the Japanese Quail Tshering had hoped to find, we did encounter a flock of Beautiful Rosefinches, and had very distant views of what was probably an Oriental Skylark. As we left Bumthang and headed up towards Yutong La we stopped to check numerous stands of bamboo, but the parrotbills continued to elude us. We did, however, finally get a look at the skulking Yellowish-bellied Bush Warbler, a species whose very strange and characteristic song we had heard on several previous occasions. We spent most of the afternoon in the area around Yutong La, hoping to find some of the high elevation flycatchers and bush-robins we had not yet encountered, but there was construction along this entire stretch of road and we saw very few birds. We were, however, surprised to see an Otter climbing a waterfall above the road, and also had a Wild Boar cross the road in front of us. As we approached Trongsa a flock of Speckled Wood Pigeons flew over, but all in all it had been a pretty slow day's birding and we were looking forward to heading south to Shemgang the next day. We spent the night at the Sherubling Lodge, an older but comfortable establishment that overlooks the very impressive Trongsa Dzong.

10 April: Trongsa to Shemgang

We set off for Shemgang on a clear morning with stunning views of mountain peaks covered with fresh snow from a thunderstorm that had awoken us during the night. With its terraced fields, rushing river and waterfalls cascading onto the road, the Mangde Chhu valley south of Trongsa was one of the scenic highlights of our trip. Not far below Trongsa we encountered several pairs of Spotted Forktails, the only one of the three forktail species we had not yet seen. Other good roadside sightings were a singing Eurasian Cuckoo perched in the open atop a dead tree, an Orange-headed Thrush flushed from the roadside, two Grey Wagtails beside a small stream that flowed across the road, and a small flock of Spot-winged Starlings feeding in a flowering coral tree. The latter species is a rarity in Bhutan, but Tshering had seen them once previously at this same location. As we drove south we also began to encounter groups of the lovely Golden Langurs that are endemic to Bhutan and northern Assam – we saw many of these monkeys over the next two days, often licking salt from exposed rocks along the embankments or scattering wildly from the road as we came around a corner. We reached the hilltop town of Shemgang in the mid-afternoon. After leaving our luggage at the “Kuenzang Guest House cum Internet Cafe” we continued about 10 km further south into Beautiful Nuthatch territory. Although we neither saw nor heard any Beautiful Nuthatches, we did find Crimson-breasted Woodpecker, Large Niltava, White-browed



Shrike-Babbler, Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush, Streaked Spiderhunter, and a pair of Hill Prinias who scolded us from the road embankment. We also discovered a work crew dynamiting boulders alongside the road, and after experiencing several explosions at close range we were not surprised by the relative lack of bird activity in the area. At dusk we returned to the guesthouse, which although not a tourist hotel was nonetheless a proper guesthouse with a comfortably furnished room, indoor plumbing that included a hot shower, and downstairs a cafe-style dining room. "cum Internet Cafe" turned out to be either false advertising or wishful thinking, as there was no evidence of any computer facilities on the premises!

11 April: Shemgang to Tingtibi

We started the morning back along the same stretch of road as the previous evening where there was still no sign of Beautiful Nuthatch. While walking along the road we did, however, come upon a very impressive, 2-1/2 m long Cobra. The snake had just crossed the road, and we watched as it made its way up a rock face and steep slope, spreading its hood once to confirm our initial identification. We also found a very aptly named Black Giant Squirrel draped over a tree limb, and watched while he finished eating something and then apparently fell asleep without changing his posture. Eventually we moved on, driving another 20 km south to Tingtibi to a site where birding groups often camp. Here we found a Lesser Necklaced Laughingthrush that very nicely sat up in a tree and ate a worm for the camera, a Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker, Bronzed Drongo, and a mixed flock of Mountain and White-throated Bulbuls. After lunch at a small village restaurant in Tingtibi we stopped at the bridge over the river, where Crested, White-throated and Common Kingfishers were all present. The roadsides were very quiet as we drove back up towards Shemgang, although at a stop in the same area as the previous evening (accompanied by more dynamite explosions) we found Cutia, the striking Silver-eared Mesia, and a mixed flock of babblers and fulvetas that included Grey-throated Babbler. Near dusk we heard rustling in the leaf litter on the slope below the road and Paul got a brief look at a Rufous-throated Partridge, a species whose bobwhite-like calls we had been hearing in the area.

12 April: Shemgang to Trongsa

Before breakfast we made one last attempt to find Beautiful Nuthatch, but came up empty-handed again and were forced to conclude that they simply were not frequenting the same area as in past years, perhaps a consequence of the ongoing blasting. On our way to the site Cathy saw a White-tailed Robin fly up off the verge, and for the second morning in a row a Crested Serpent-Eagle was perched at eye level beside the road. There was a brief flurry of early-morning activity during which we saw Long-tailed Broadbill, a pair of Pale Blue-Flycatchers, Dark-sided Flycatcher, Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo, and what may have been Brown Bullfinches silhouetted against the morning sky. It was now Cathy and Tshering's turn to get good looks at a pair of Rufous-throated Partridges, presumably the same ones Paul had seen at the same spot the previous evening. After breakfast at the guesthouse, where we watched a Shikra soaring overhead, we headed back towards Trongsa. Stops at a forest track below Shemgang and along the road gave us excellent looks at Small Niltava, Blue-bearded Bee-eaters, two more Silver-eared Mesias, and two dazzling male Scarlet Finches. We found the Spot-winged Starlings in the same trees they had been in two days earlier (this time a flock of about 20), and at the bridge below Trongsa saw another Yellow-rumped Honeyguide sitting on a beehive. Four Rufous-necked Hornbills gliding raptor-like down the valley were an odd sight. Along the well-vegetated roadside several kilometers below Trongsa we stopped to look for laughingthrushes. Tshering's tape soon brought in a pair of Scaly Laughingthrushes, and with them appeared another Slender-billed Scimitar-Babbler and a Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babbler. A mixed flock that moved through consisted mostly of Red-tailed Minlas and Oriental White-eyes, but also included a Sapphire Flycatcher. We stayed once more at the Sherubling Lodge in Trongsa, but this time we were given the royal suite where the king of Bhutan has stayed. This large room included a well-furnished sitting area complete with TV, so after dinner we watched some videos Tshering had taken last year of unidentified snipe and other rarities such as Ruddy-breasted Crake.



13 April: Trongsa to Thimphu

Today was a driving day, as we had to cover 200 km, a journey that would take about 8 hrs. We did stop a few times on the way up Pele La to scan the bamboo, but once again found no parrotbills other than Brown Parrotbill. We also walked along the road below Dochu La, but the only mixed flock we encountered was composed of the usual high-elevation warblers, tits, White-browed Fulvetta and Chestnut-tailed Minla. Although we saw no new bird species today, we did see a new mammal, several Grey Langurs sitting in trees along the road west of Pele La. We arrived in Thimphu in the late afternoon with enough time to stroll through the business district and buy some souvenirs. Both Tsherings and Karma joined us for dinner at the River View Hotel, and we all drank to a very successful trip.

14 April: Thimphu to Paro via Chele La

Not yet finished birding, we rose early and drove to a wetland area near the Thimphu sewage ponds in search of crakes. We pulled up to a small, marshy patch beside the road and there on top of the reeds stood a Black-tailed Crake, busily preening itself. We watched the bird for many minutes as it continued to preen and then eventually jumped down onto the mud to forage, where it was joined by a second bird. This has to have been the easiest and most cooperative crake we've ever seen! We returned to the hotel for breakfast and then said our farewells to Tshering who was staying in Thimphu to meet another birding group that was arriving later in the day. Tshering-2 drove us to Paro and then up to the 3900 m Chele La pass for lunch. Unfortunately it was cloudy so we didn't get the spectacular view of the Himalayas that is possible from this spot on a clear day. Although we saw a few high-elevation species such as White-winged Grosbeak and Orange-flanked Bush-Robin, in general it was pretty quiet and we saw none of the pheasants we had hoped we might find. We returned to Paro and spent the late afternoon site-seeing at the ruined Drukgyel Dzong and walked a short way up the trail leading to the cliff-hanging Tiger's Nest Monastery. At Drukgyel Dzong we saw our last new bird of the trip, a Eurasian Hobby perched in pines below the ruins.

15 April: Paro to Bangkok

Tshering-2 dropped us at the Paro airport at 5:30 a.m., and we eventually managed to negotiate the many arcane security checks on the way to the gate (including having to go out onto the runway to identify our checked baggage prior to it being loaded onto the plane – a procedure whose purpose totally mystified us). Finally we were on our way and were on the right side of the plane to have good views of Kanchenjunga and other high peaks of the Himalayas to the west. We arrived uneventfully in Bangkok, still with a full day of birding ahead of us before our return to the U.S.

Despite having had difficulty finding certain groups of birds (most notably parrotbills and bush-robins) our final trip list came to a satisfying 259 species seen and heard during 17 days in Bhutan.

Cathy McFadden and Paul Clarke
Claremont, CA

Complete trip list:

(numbers in parentheses indicate number of days out of 17 on which a species was seen; H# = number of days on which a species was heard only)

Great Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*): fairly common along the larger rivers (4)
Bar-headed Goose (*Anser indicus*): one seen at Thimphu sewage ponds (1)
Ruddy Shelduck (*Tadorna ferruginea*): pair at Thimphu sewage ponds and a flock at Punakha (2)
Eurasian Wigeon (*Anas penelope*): pair at Thimphu sewage ponds (1)
Gadwall (*Anas strepera*): one at Thimphu sewage ponds (1)
Common Pochard (*Aythya ferina*): pair at Thimphu sewage ponds (1)

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Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*): pair at Thimphu sewage ponds (1)
Pallas' Fish-Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucoryphus*): adult along river in Punakha (1)
Himalayan Griffon (*Gyps himalayensis*): 4 below Pele La (1)
Crested Serpent-Eagle (*Spilornis cheela*): frequently seen perched along roads (5)
Shikra (*Accipiter badius*): one in Shemgang (1)
Eurasian Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*): one at Dochu La, several other unconfirmed sightings along roads (3)
Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*): seen frequently at higher elevations (6)
Common (Eurasian) Buzzard (*Buteo buteo*): fairly common in cultivated areas in the west (5)
?Long-legged Buzzard (*Buteo rufinus*): one at Paro, uncertain ID (1)
Upland Buzzard (*Buteo hemilasius*): one at Lawa La (1)
Black Eagle (*Ictinaetus malayensis*): seen daily at lower elevations of Yonkhola and Shemgang (7)
Bonelli's Eagle (*Aquila fasciatus*): one immature at Lawa La (1)
Rufous-bellied Eagle (*Aquila kienerii*): one below Sengor (1)
Mountain Hawk-Eagle (*Spizaetus nipalensis*): seen frequently, usually at lower elevations (5)
Eurasian Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*): common in cultivated areas (7)
Eurasian Hobby (*Falco subbuteo*): one at Drukgyel Dzong (1)
Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*): one in Tashithang valley (1)
Hill Partridge (*Arborophila torqueola*): one seen by Cathy at Pele La; heard on most days (1, H12)
Rufous-throated Partridge (*Arborophila rufogularis*): pair seen at Shemgang, also heard at Sengor (2, H3)
Blood Pheasant (*Ithaginis cruentus*): pairs seen at Pele La and below Thrumsing La (2)
Satyr Tragopan (*Tragopan satyra*): flight views and heard at Sengor (1, 2H)
Himalayan Monal (*Lophophorus impejanus*): male seen at Pele La, heard at Shertang La (1, H1)
Kalij Pheasant (*Lophura leucomelanos*): pairs seen along roads on several occasions (4)
Black-tailed Crane (*Amaurornis bicolor*): pair near Thimphu sewage ponds (1)
Ibisbill (*Ibidorhyncha struthersii*): individuals seen on larger rivers (3)
Pied Avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta*): one at Wangdue Phodrang (1)
River Lapwing (*Vanellus duvaucelii*): small numbers along larger rivers (4)
Green Sandpiper (*Tringa ochropus*): one at Paro (1)
Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*): individuals at Wangdue Phodrang and Bumthang (2)
Rock Pigeon (*Columba livia*): feral birds common in towns, wild population near Paro (11)
Snow Pigeon (*Columba leuconota*): small flocks seen at higher elevations in east (4)
Speckled Wood-Pigeon (*Columba hodgsonii*): one at Yonkhola and small flock near Trongsa (2)
Oriental Turtle-Dove (*Streptopelia orientalis*): very common everywhere (16)
Spotted Dove (*Streptopelia chinensis*): present in some cultivated areas (5)
Wedge-tailed Green Pigeon (*Treron sphenura*): one near Wangdue Phodrang (1)
Large Hawk-Cuckoo (*Cuculus sparveroides*): one seen above Yonkhola, heard daily at lower elevations (1, H8)
Indian Cuckoo (*Cuculus micropterus*): one heard at Shemgang (H1)
Eurasian (Common) Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*): one seen below Trongsa, heard at Yonkhola and Shemgang (1, H4)
Oriental Cuckoo (*Cuculus saturatus*): heard frequently and seen on a number of occasions (4, H5)
Drongo Cuckoo (*Surniculus lugubris*): heard only at Yonkhola (H2)
Green-billed Malkoha (*Phaenicophaeus tristis*): several seen below Yonkhola (1)
Tawny Fish-Owl (*Ketupa flavipes*): pair at Punakha (1)
?Mountain Scops-Owl (*Otus spilocephalus*): one heard at Dochu La (species ID uncertain) (H1)
Collared Owlet (*Glaucidium brodiei*): heard on numerous occasions but never seen (H6)
Asian Barred Owlet (*Glaucidium cuculoides*): seen at Jigme Dorji NP, heard at Yonkhola and Shemgang (1, H3)
Grey (Jungle) Nightjar (*Caprimulgus indicus*): flushed from roads on several occasions (3, H1)
Himalayan Swiftlet (*Aerodramus brevirostris*): fairly common at lower elevations (5)



Fork-tailed Swift (*Apus pacificus*): common (10)
Ward's Trogon (*Harpactes wardi*): pair above Yonkhola (2)
Common Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*): one at Tingtibi (1)
White-throated Kingfisher (*Halcyon smyrnensis*): seen near rivers and cultivated areas (4)
Crested Kingfisher (*Megaceryle lugubris*): seen along larger rivers (3)
Blue-bearded Bee-eater (*Nyctornis athertoni*): pairs at Yonkhola and Shemgang (3)
Eurasian Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*): fairly common around human settlements (4)
Rufous-necked Hornbill (*Aceros nipalensis*): pairs seen several times at Yonkhola and Shemgang (4)
Great Barbet (*Megalaima virens*): common at all but the highest elevations (7, H4)
Golden-throated Barbet (*Megalaima franklinii*): common at lower elevations (5, H3)
Blue-throated Barbet (*Megalaima asiatica*): seen occasionally at lower elevations (4, H1)
Yellow-rumped Honeyguide (*Indicator xanthonotus*): individuals seen at beehives near Wangdue and Trongsa (2)
Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos canicapillus*): one at Tingtibi (1)
Rufous-bellied Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos hyperythrus*): individuals at Dochu La and Pele La (2)
Darjeeling Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos darjellensis*): seen on several occasions, mostly in east (4)
Crimson-breasted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos cathpharius*): one at Shemgang (1)
Greater Yellownape (*Picus flavinucha*): individuals or pairs seen at Jigme Dorji, Yonkhola, Shemgang (3)
?Grey-headed Woodpecker (*Picus canus*): uncertain sighting near Tingtibi (1)
Bay Woodpecker (*Blythipicus pyrrhotis*): individuals at Tashithang and Yonkhola (2)
Long-tailed Broadbill (*Psarismomus dalhousiae*): one at Shemgang (1)
?Oriental Skylark (*Alauda gulgula*): uncertain (very distant) sighting at Bumthang (1)
Asian House Martin (*Delichon dasypus*): one flock seen below Thrumsing La (1)
Nepal House Martin (*Delichon nipalensis*): common (7)
White Wagtail (*Motacilla alba*): common along larger rivers, mostly in the west (5)
Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*): two seen above Shemgang (1)
Olive-backed Pipit (*Anthus hodgsoni*): common (10)
Rosy Pipit (*Anthus roseatus*): small flocks seen at Paro, Pele La and Shertang La (3)
Black-winged Cuckoo-shrike (*Coracina melaschistos*): seen occasionally in lower elevation broad-leaved areas (5)
Long-tailed Minivet (*Pericrocotus ethologus*): common at high elevations (7)
Short-billed Minivet (*Pericrocotus brevirostris*): a few seen at Yonkhola (2)
Scarlet Minivet (*Pericrocotus flammeus*): pairs seen on several occasions (3)
Grey-chinned Minivet (*Pericrocotus solaris*): common at Yonkhola and Shemgang (5)
Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike (*Hemipus picatus*): one below Yonkhola (1)
Striated Bulbul (*Pycnonotus striatus*): fairly common at Yonkhola and Shemgang (4)
?Black-crested Bulbul (*Pycnonotus melanicterus*): uncertain sighting near Yonkhola
Red-vented Bulbul (*Pycnonotus cafer*): very common in lower elevation cultivated areas (8)
White-throated Bulbul (*Alophoixus flaveolus*): several seen at Tingtibi (1)
Mountain Bulbul (*Ixos mcclllandii*): small numbers seen at low elevation sites (4)
Ashy Bulbul (*Hemixos flavala*): a few seen below Yonkhola and Shemgang (2)
Black Bulbul (*Hypsipetes leucocephalus*): very common (11)
Goldcrest (*Regulus regulus*): one in mixed flock at Yutong La (1)
Orange-bellied Leafbird (*Chloropsis hardwickii*): a few seen at lower elevations (4)
Brown Dipper (*Cinclus pallasii*): seen along some larger rivers (3)
Winter Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*): one above Sengor (1)
Alpine Accentor (*Prunella collaris*): several near Shertang La (1)
Rufous-breasted Accentor (*Prunella strophiata*): seen fairly frequently at higher elevations (8)
Blue-capped Rock-Thrush (*Monticola cinclorhynchus*): fairly common at lower elevations (6)
Chestnut-bellied Rock-Thrush (*Monticola rufiventris*): fairly common at lower elevations (8)
Blue Rock-Thrush (*Monticola solitarius*): individuals seen on several occasions (3)



Blue Whistling-Thrush (*Myophonus caeruleus*): very common, seen daily (16)
Orange-headed Thrush (*Zoothera citrina*): one above Shemgang (1)
Plain-backed Thrush (*Zoothera mollissima*): individuals seen at Dochu La and Sengor (2)
White-collared Blackbird (*Turdus albocinctus*): fairly common (8)
Grey-winged Blackbird (*Turdus boulboul*): only seen near Dochu La (1)
Dark-throated Thrush (*Turdus ruficollis*): several at Pele La and Shertang La (2)
White-browed Shortwing (*Brachypteryx montana*): heard and glimpsed above Yonkhola (1)
Striated Prinia (*Prinia criniger*): seen on several occasions, usually on dry hillsides (4)
Hill Prinia (*Prinia atrogularis*): pair below Shemgang (1)
Rufescent Prinia (*Prinia rufescens*): several pairs below Yonkhola (1)
Chestnut-headed Tesia (*Tesia castaneocoronata*): seen twice above Yonkhola (2)
Slaty-bellied Tesia (*Tesia olivea*): pair at Jigme Dorji NP (1)
Grey-bellied Tesia (*Tesia cyaniventer*): heard only near Yonkhola (H1)
Brownish-flanked Bush-Warbler (*Cettia fortipes*): seen at Yonkhola, heard on several occasions elsewhere (1, H3)
Yellowish-bellied Bush-Warbler (*Cettia acanthizoides*): seen at Yutong La, heard fairly often at high elevations (1, H4)
Grey-sided Bush-Warbler (*Cettia brunnifrons*): fairly common, especially near Sengor and Yonkhola (5)
Common Tailorbird (*Orthotomus sutorius*): several pairs seen in farmyards below Yonkhola (1)
Tickell's Leaf-Warbler (*Phylloscopus affinis*): common around Yonkhola village (2)
Buff-barred Warbler (*Phylloscopus pulcher*): a few seen at Sengor and Yonkhola (3)
Ashy-throated Warbler (*Phylloscopus maculipennis*): common, esp. at higher elevations (9)
Pale-rumped Warbler (*Phylloscopus chloronotus*): common, esp. at higher elevations (11)
Hume's Warbler (*Phylloscopus humei*): one at Dochu La, also possibly seen elsewhere (2)
Large-billed Leaf-Warbler (*Phylloscopus magnirostris*): fairly common, especially around Sengor (3)
Blyth's Leaf-Warbler (*Phylloscopus reguloides*): one in mixed flock at Sengor (1)
Yellow-vented Warbler (*Phylloscopus cantator*): fairly common at lower elevations (3)
Golden-spectacled Warbler (*Seicercus burkii*): common in mixed flocks (9)
Grey-hooded Warbler (*Seicercus xanthoschistos*): common at lower elevations (6)
Grey-cheeked Warbler (*Seicercus poliogenys*): common around Yonkhola (3)
Chestnut-crowned Warbler (*Seicercus castaniceps*): fairly common in small numbers everywhere (7)
Black-faced Warbler (*Abroscopus schisticeps*): several small groups seen above Yonkhola (1)
Dark-sided (Siberian) Flycatcher (*Muscicapa sibirica*): individuals seen twice (2)
Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher (*Ficedula strophliata*): common at high elevations (9)
Little Pied Flycatcher (*Ficedula westermanni*): fairly common at Yonkhola and Shemgang (6)
Ultramarine Flycatcher (*Ficedula superciliaris*): pair at Punakha and one at Jigme Dorji (2)
Sapphire Flycatcher (*Ficedula sapphira*): one below Trongsa (1)
Verditer Flycatcher (*Eumyias thalassina*): common at lower elevations (10)
Large Niltava (*Niltava grandis*): several seen and heard at Yonkhola and Shemgang (2, H2)
Small Niltava (*Niltava macgrigoriae*): pairs seen at Yonkhola and Shemgang (3)
Pale Blue-Flycatcher (*Cyornis unicolor*): pair at Shemgang (1)
?Blue-throated Flycatcher (*Cyornis rubeculoides*): uncertain sighting below Yonkhola (1)
Gray-headed Canary-flycatcher (*Culicicapa ceylonensis*): fairly common at lower elevations (6)
?Indian Blue Robin (*Luscinia brunnea*): uncertain sighting below Thrumsing La (1)
Orange-flanked Bush-Robin (Red-flanked Bluetail) (*Tarsiger cyanurus*): seen in small numbers at high elevations (5)
?Golden Bush-Robin (*Tarsiger chrysaeus*): possible female below Thrumsing La (1)
Oriental Magpie-Robin (*Copsychus saularis*): fairly common around human habitation (4)
Black Redstart (*Phoenicurus ochruros*): several females seen near cultivated areas (4)
Hodgson's Redstart (*Phoenicurus hodgsoni*): fairly common in cultivated areas of west (4)
Blue-fronted Redstart (*Phoenicurus frontalis*): fairly common at high elevations (8)



White-capped Water Redstart (*Chaimarrornis leucocephalus*): seen along most streams (14)
Plumbeous Water Redstart (*Rhyacornis fuliginosus*): seen along most streams and rivers (13)
White-tailed Robin (*Cinclidium leucurum*): one seen by Cathy at Shemgang (1, H1)
Little Forktail (*Enicurus scouleri*): several pairs seen at Jigme Dorji NP and near Trongsa (2)
Slaty-backed Forktail (*Enicurus schistaceus*): seen at Jigme Dorji NP only (1)
Spotted Forktail (*Enicurus maculatus*): several pairs below Trongsa (1)
Common Stonechat (*Saxicola rubicola*): seen occasionally in cultivated areas (4)
Grey Bushchat (*Saxicola ferrea*): fairly common in cultivated areas (10)
Yellow-bellied Fantail (*Rhipidura hypoxantha*): common in the east (8)
White-throated Fantail (*Rhipidura albicollis*): fairly common, mostly at lower elevations (5)
White-throated Laughingthrush (*Garrulax albogularis*): fairly common, usually in large flocks (9)
White-crested Laughingthrush (*Garrulax leucolophus*): flocks seen at Yonkhola and Shemgang (2, H1)
Lesser Necklaced Laughingthrush (*Garrulax monileger*): one at Tingtibi (1)
Striated Laughingthrush (*Garrulax striatus*): common in small numbers at lower elevations (6)
Rufous-necked Laughingthrush (*Garrulax ruficollis*): flock seen at Yonkhola village (1)
Spotted Laughingthrush (*Garrulax ocellatus*): flock and several individuals seen at Shertang La and Sengor (2)
Grey-sided Laughingthrush (*Garrulax caerulatus*): flocks seen poorly above Yonkhola (2)
Streaked Laughingthrush (*Garrulax lineatus*): seen in small numbers at Yonkhola and Shemgang (3)
Scaly Laughingthrush (*Garrulax subunicolor*): pair below Trongsa (1)
Black-faced Laughingthrush (*Garrulax affinis*): seen fairly frequently at higher elevations (5)
Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush (*Garrulax erythrocephalus*): small flocks seen fairly frequently (5)
Rusty-cheeked Scimitar-Babbler (*Pomatorhinus erythrocyneus*): seen in farmyards at Punakha and Yonkhola (2)
Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babbler (*Pomatorhinus ruficollis*): one below Trongsa (1)
Slender-billed Scimitar-Babbler (*Xiphirhynchus superciliosus*): individuals seen below Sengor and Trongsa (2)
Scaly-breasted Wren-Babbler (*Pnoepyga albiventer*): one at Jigme Dorji NP (1)
Pygmy Wren-Babbler (*Pnoepyga pusilla*): pair seen at Jigme Dorji NP, heard often (1, H6)
Spotted Wren-Babbler (*Spelaeornis formosus*): one seen below Yonkhola, also heard at Shemgang (1, H3)
Rufous-capped Babbler (*Stachyris ruficeps*): fairly common member of mixed flocks (7)
Golden Babbler (*Stachyris chrysaea*): fairly common in mixed flocks at lower elevations (5)
Grey-throated Babbler (*Stachyris nigriceps*): one at Shemgang (1)
Silver-eared Mesia (*Leiothrix argentauris*): two pairs seen at Shemgang (2)
Cutia (*Cutia nipalensis*): small flocks at Yonkhola and Shemgang (2)
White-browed Shrike-Babbler (*Pteruthius flaviscapis*): several pairs seen at Yonkhola and Shemgang (2)
Green Shrike-Babbler (*Pteruthius xanthochlorus*): individuals at Dochu La, Sengor and Shemgang (3)
Black-eared Shrike-Babbler (*Pteruthius melanotis*): seen at Dochu La and above Yonkhola (3)
Rusty-fronted Barwing (*Actinodura egertoni*): flocks seen frequently at lower elevations (4)
Hoary-throated Barwing (*Actinodura nipalensis*): flocks seen occasionally at high elevations (3)
Blue-winged Minla (*Minla cyanouroptera*): individuals at Yonkhola and Shemgang (2)
Chestnut-tailed Minla (*Minla strigula*): fairly common in mixed flocks at high elevations (5)
Red-tailed Minla (*Minla ignotincta*): flocks seen at Jigme Dorji and Trongsa (2)
Golden-breasted Fulvetta (*Alcippe chrysotis*): seen at Dochu La and above Yonkhola (2)
Yellow-throated Fulvetta (*Alcippe cinerea*): small flocks common at Yonkhola (2)
Rufous-winged Fulvetta (*Alcippe castaneiceps*): found occasionally in mixed flocks (5)
White-browed Fulvetta (*Alcippe vinipectus*): common, esp. at higher elevations (8)
Nepal Fulvetta (*Alcippe nipalensis*): fairly common in flocks at lower elevations (4)
Rufous Sibia (*Heterophasia capistrata*): common, seen almost daily (12)
Striated Yuhina (*Yuhina castaneiceps*): flocks below Yonkhola and Tingtibi (2)

White-naped Yuhina (*Yuhina bakeri*): seen several times at Yonkhola and Shemgang (3)
 Whiskered Yuhina (*Yuhina flavicollis*): common (10)
 Stripe-throated Yuhina (*Yuhina gularis*): common at higher elevations (5)
 Rufous-vented Yuhina (*Yuhina occipitalis*): flocks common at high elevations (7)
 Black-chinned Yuhina (*Yuhina nigrimenta*): flocks seen at Yonkhola and Shemgang (4)
 White-bellied Yuhina (*Yuhina zantholeuca*): individuals at Jigme Dorji NP and Yonkhola (2)
 Fire-tailed Myzornis (*Myzornis pyrrhoura*): flock of 10-12 at Dochu La, one seen above Yonkhola (2)
 Brown Parrotbill (*Paradoxornis unicolor*): seen several times in high elevation bamboo (3)
 Black-throated Tit (*Aegithalos concinnus*): fairly common at Yonkhola and Shemgang (5)
 Rufous-fronted (Black-browed) Tit (*Aegithalos iouschistos*): common at high elevation (8)
 Coal Tit (*Periparus ater*): common at high elevations (7)
 Rufous-vented Tit (*Periparus rubiventris*): seen several times at high elevation (3)
 Grey-crested Tit (*Lophophanes dichrous*): fairly common at high elevations (6)
 Green-backed Tit (*Parus monticolus*): ubiquitous (16)
 Yellow-cheeked Tit (*Parus spilonotus*): seen in mixed flocks at lower elevations (5)
 Yellow-browed Tit (*Sylviparus modestus*): fairly common at high elevations (7)
 Sultan Tit (*Melanochlora sultanea*): a few seen at Yonkhola and Shemgang (3)
 Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch (*Sitta castanea*): seen at Yonkhola and Shemgang (3)
 White-tailed Nuthatch (*Sitta himalayensis*): a few seen at high elevations (3)
 Eurasian Treecreeper (*Certhia familiaris*): seen several times at high elevations (4)
 Rusty-flanked Treecreeper (*Certhia nipalensis*): a few seen at high elevations (3)
 Brown-throated Treecreeper (*Certhia discolor*): one at Yonkhola (1)
 Mrs. Gould's Sunbird (*Aethopyga gouldiae*): fairly common at high elevations (7)
 Green-tailed Sunbird (*Aethopyga nipalensis*): very common at high elevations (10)
 Black-throated Sunbird (*Aethopyga saturata*): fairly common at Yonkhola and Shemgang (5)
 Fire-tailed Sunbird (*Aethopyga ignicauda*): a few seen at Dochu La and Sengor (3)
 Streaked Spiderhunter (*Arachnothera magna*): one at Shemgang (2)
 Fire-breasted Flowerpecker (*Dicaeum ignipectus*): seen fairly frequently at low elevations (6)
 Oriental White-eye (*Zosterops palpebrosus*): flocks seen occasionally (5)
 Slender-billed Oriole (*Oriolus tenuirostris*): seen at Tashithang and Yonkhola (2)
 Maroon Oriole (*Oriolus traillii*): pairs at Yonkhola and Shemgang (3)
 Long-tailed Shrike (*Lanius schach*): fairly common in cultivated areas (5)
 Grey-backed Shrike (*Lanius tephronotus*): common in cultivated areas (12)
 Black Drongo (*Dicrurus macrocercus*): common everywhere (11)
 Ashy Drongo (*Dicrurus leucophaeus*): fairly common (6)
 Bronzed Drongo (*Dicrurus aeneus*): individuals seen at Yonkhola and Shemgang (3)
 Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo (*Dicrurus remifer*): seen at Yonkhola and Shemgang (3)
 Hair-crested (Spangled) Drongo (*Dicrurus hottentottus*): several at Yonkhola (1)
 Yellow-billed Blue (Gold-billed) Magpie (*Urocissa flavirostris*): fairly common (9)
 Common Green Magpie (*Cissa chinensis*): one at Yonkhola (1)
 Grey Treepie (*Dendrocitta formosae*): fairly common at lower elevations (6)
 Eurasian Magpie (*Pica pica*): common in Bumthang district (4)
 Spotted (Eurasian) Nutcracker (*Nucifraga caryocatactes*): common at high elevation (9)
 Red-billed Chough (*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*): common in cultivated areas (10)
 Large-billed Crow (*Corvus macrorhynchos*): common everywhere (16)
 Spot-winged Starling (*Saroglossa spiloptera*): flock of ~20 below Trongsa (2)
 Common Myna (*Acridotheres tristis*): common in cultivated areas in west and south (7)
 Russet Sparrow (*Passer rutilans*): common around human habitation (9)
 Eurasian Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*): common around human habitation (12)
 Scaly-breasted Munia (*Lonchura punctulata*): several seen at Punakha (1)
 Dark-breasted Rosefinch (*Carpodacus nipalensis*): females seen several times (3)



Beautiful Rosefinch (*Carpodacus pulcherrimus*): flock at Bumthang (1)
Dark-rumped Rosefinch (*Carpodacus edwardsii*): one at Sengor (1)
White-browed Rosefinch (*Carpodacus thura*): small numbers seen at high elevations in west (5)
Yellow-breasted Greenfinch (*Carduelis spinoides*): small flocks at Yonkhola and Shemgang (2)
?Brown Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula nipalensis*): uncertain ID of 3 at Shemgang (1)
Red-headed Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula erythrocephala*): a few seen daily at Sengor (3)
White-winged Grosbeak (*Mycerobas carripes*): small flocks seen several times at high elevation (3)
Gold-naped Finch (*Pyrrhoplectes epauletta*): several seen near Yonkhola (3)
Scarlet Finch (*Haematospiza sipahi*): several at Jigme Dorji NP and Shemgang (2)
Crested Bunting (*Melophus lathami*): common in fields below Yonkhola (3)
Little Bunting (*Emberiza pusilla*): small flocks seen several times (3)

Mammals:

Himalayan Pika (*Ochotona himalyana*)
Black Giant Squirrel (*Ratufa bicolor*)
Orange-bellied Himalayan Squirrel (*Dremomys lokriah*)
Himalayan Striped Squirrel (*Tamiops macclellandi*)
Otter (European or Smooth-coated?)
Yellow-throated Marten (*Martes flavigula*)
Grey Langur (*Presbytis hosei*)
Golden Langur (*Presbytis geei*)
Capped Langur (*Presbytis pileata*)
Assamese Macaque (*Macaca assamensis*)
Wild Boar (*Sus scrofa*)
Indian Muntjac (*Muntiacus muntjak*)