

Rann and Melghat Jan 2009 Trip Report

India : January 26 to February 3, 2009

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My dad and I spent from January 26 – February 3, 2009 in India. We had initially planned to go to Israel during this time but when war broke out in Gaza in December 2008, we opted for another destination.

For both of us, this was of our first trip to India . We opted for the state of Gujarat (Great Rann of Kutch and Little Rann of Kutch) and Melghat Tiger Reserve as opposed to the classic India birding trips for several reasons. First, as this was last minute, we were concerned about last minute reservations, but this was not a big problem. Second, I have always wanted to see Forest Owlet since its rediscovery in 1997. Finally, it is a perfect time of the year for both locations. As the locations are very different, I have provided two species list below: one list for the state of Gujarat (including Greater Rann of Kutch , Badreshwar (Bhadreswar), Naliya Grasslands and Little Rann of Kutch) and a second list for the Melghat Tiger Reserve area.

Primary Locations:

Badreshwar (Bhadreswar): Small area on the Gulf of Kutch , about 2 hour drive southeast of Bhuj. Excellent for shorebirds and a reliable spot for Crab Plover. You will need local assistance to find the site.

Great Rann of Kutch : This area is northwest of Nakhatrana and is seasonally flooded. Nearest airport/train station is Bhuj. The drive from Bhuj to Nakhatrana is about 45 minutes. It is another 20-30 minute drive from Nakhatrana to the village of Fulay and the actual Great Rann of Kutch (Banni Grasslands and Chhari Dhand). There is lodging in Bhuj and at Nakhatrana.

Thorny Forest : There is thorny forest (I believe it is near the town of Ramper). It is about a 30 minute drive from Nakhatrana.

Naliya Grasslands: (including the Lala Bustard Sanctuary): This is the area southeast of Naliya. Nearest airport is Bhuj. It is over a 1 hour drive from Nakhatrana to this area.

Little Rann of Kutch : This area includes the Wild Ass Sanctuary. Nearest airport/train station is Ahmedabad. Lodging is at Dasada or Zainabad and it is 100km and a 2 hour drive from Ahmedabad to Dasada.

Melghat Tiger Reserve and adjacent forest: The reserve is located in the District of Amravati in the state of Maharashtra . Most people stay in Chikhaldara. The nearest airport is Nagpur . It is 225km from Nagpur to Chikhaldara (a 4.5 – 5 hour drive from Nagpur to Chikhaldara). From Chikhaldara it is a short distance to the Melghat Tiger Reserve, however, it was a 1:45 drive from Chikhaldara to the Forest Owlet location.

Itinerary:

We arrived on January 25 at Mumbai (BOM) airport at 8:25pm on a non-stop Delta airlines flight from Atlanta . We spent one night in Mumbai.

Jan 25: Night in Mumbai

Jan 26: Kingfisher airlines flight from Mumbai to Bhuj (BHU), arriving in Bhuj at 1:30pm . We drove directly to Badreshwar and birded there and then drove to Nakhatrana. Lodging at CEDO

Jan 27: Great Rann of Kutch. Night at CEDO

Jan 28: Thorny forest and Naliya Grasslands. Night at CEDO

Jan 29: Transfer to Dasada and the Little Rann of Kutch . Night at Rann Riders

Jan 30: Little Rann. Night at Rann Riders

Jan 31: Little Rann. Night at Rann Riders

Feb 1: Travel Day/no birding. Early departure to Ahmedabad for flight from Ahmedabad (AMD) to Nagpur (NAG) (via Mumbai airport with a 4 hour layover in Mumbai). On arrival to Nagpur we drove to Chikhaldara (4.5 hour drive). Night at Hotel

Harshwardhan in Chikhaldara

Feb 2: Dry forest adjacent to Melghat Tiger Reserve (Forest Owlet spot), night at Hotel Harshwardhan

Feb 3: Melghat Tiger Reserve in the morning, afternoon drive to Nagpur and evening flight from Nagpur to Mumbai

Feb 4: depart at 0010am from Mumbai to Atlanta on non-stop flight with Delta airlines

Birds and Reference material:

We used the field guide “Birds of the India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives” by Richard Grimmett and others, published in 1999 (Princeton Field Guides). It adequately depicts the expected species. The maps are often on different pages than the depicted species (which is not user friendly) and I am not sure if the maps are completely reliable.

India has a large and varied bird list. Gujarat is located along the Pakistan border and allows easy access to certain desert (central Asia) species that otherwise may be difficult to access due to political issues (travelling to Pakistan , Afghanistan , Iraq , and Iran is currently quite difficult and not safe, plus Israel was involved in a war in Gaza at the time of our trip). Specialties of the area include: Dalmatian Pelican, Imperial Eagle, Lagger Falcon, Demoiselle Crane, Indian Bustard, Macqueen’s Bustard, Crab Plover,

Cream-colored Courser, Sociable Lapwing, Painted Sandgrouse, Indian (Eurasian) Eagle Owl, Syke's Nightjar, Hoopoe Lark, White-tailed (Marshall's) Iora, Hypocolius, Desert Warbler, White-browed (Stoliczka's) Bushchat, Red-tailed Wheatear, and White-winged (White-naped) Tit. We saw all but the Laggar Falcon and Sociable Lapwing. The group of Sociable Lapwings wintering at Little Rann was not reliable when we visited and we spent several hours driving around plowed fields without success.

The primary bird target at Melghat Tiger Reserve is the Forest Owlet. Otherwise, it is not that exciting from an ornithological standpoint, and tiger is difficult to see at this site. Also, getting there is difficult as it is time consuming.

Guides:

There are many companies that organize birding trips to the Gujarat area. This includes companies (Sunbird Tours and Birdquest) that have organized/scheduled tours. Many companies can put together trips with and without guides. As it was last minute, I contacted several different companies. We ultimately decided on having a guide with us for the entire trip. We were with Harkirat Sangha who runs Tragopan Tours [Tragopan Tours http://www.tragopantours.in/](http://www.tragopantours.in/) . He runs trips throughout northern India (including north, west, and northeast India) He can be contacted via his website and organize the trip directly with you via email (he can organize all the local guides that you need). He was friendly, knowledgeable and easy to get along with. I highly recommend him.

Timing of the trip:

The prime birding time for Gujarat is winter. The weather is also dry and comfortable at this time of year. The monsoon season starts in July and is the best time for Lesser Florican. I would recommend February as the best month for the Forest Owlet at the Melghat Tiger Reserve. The species is found in open dry forest (primarily teak trees). The teak trees lose most of their leaves in February making it much easier to find the owlet. We were there on Feb 2 and some of the teak trees still had much of their leaves but most had lost them. Looking for the owlet would be difficult if the teak trees had all their leaves.

General Comments:

I found the people to be very friendly (especially in Gujarat) and helpful. We had a guide throughout the trip and he greatly assisted with logistics. I would recommend this method. The trip could be done without a guide. However, local guides (and a driver) are essential.

Driving and Rental Car:

We did not drive in either of these locations. We had drivers for the entire trip. Driving is on the left (steering wheel on the right side of the vehicle). Driving appeared dangerous

and roads were generally in fair condition but crowded (often with pedestrians, bicyclists, goats, dogs and livestock). The streets/highways are not well signed (or well lit at night) and many of the signs are not in English. I would strongly advise having a driver that is familiar with these areas. Also, note that the time to get from one place to another place is much longer than it appears by map. Although locations may appear close (by a map), speeds are slow due to the poor road conditions, traffic, animals on the road, etc. Plan on traveling 40 – 60 Km/hour on main roads.

Air travel:

India has several low cost airlines and we sampled many of them. We flew Kingfisher Air from Mumbai to Bhuj (US \$105/person one way). We flew Spicejet from Ahmedabad to Mumbai (US \$50/person one way). We flew Indigo airlines from Mumbai to Nagpur (US \$50/person one way). We flew Jet Lite from Nagpur to Mumbai (US \$55/person one way). Note, there was no good connection for us to go from Ahmedabad to Nagpur, thus we had to purchase one ticket from Ahmedabad to Mumbai, wait 4 hours in the Mumbai airport, then purchase another flight from Mumbai to Nagpur (total cost from Ahmedabad to Nagpur was thus \$100/person). We had no problems with any of the airlines. Kingfisher provided good food. The low cost airlines (Jet Lite, Spicejet and Indigo) all had food/drinks for sale. Note that the international terminal and the domestic terminals are separated by several kilometers and a potential 30+ minute drive. If you are coming in from a domestic flight and then departing on an international flight, you will need to transfer terminals. The airport offers free transfer between domestic and international terminals, but you must get on the bus (leaves every 30 minutes) before you exit the baggage claim area. The information desk (where you get your ticket for the bus to the international terminal) is located adjacent to the baggage carousels. They will answer all questions, but you must show them evidence of an international departure ticket to get the free bus to the international terminal. As the bus travels through the airport property and does not get on the crowded streets of Mumbai, this bus is much faster than transfer via the streets.

Money:

Currency is the Indian Rupee. I did not see an ATM at the Mumbai international terminal or the old domestic terminal at Mumbai. There were a couple ATMs at the new domestic terminal in Mumbai. I did not see an ATM at the Nagpur, Bhuj, or Ahmedabad airports (despite looking at all these airports).

Lodging and Food:

Food was excellent (I like Indian food). We did not drink the water (except for the hotel in Mumbai). We drank bottled water for the remainder of the trip.

We stayed at the following locations:

Ramada Powai (Mumbai): Provided airport transfer and breakfast for two in the price (US\$ 150/night). It is only 10km from the airport, but this turns out to be 30 minutes when driving in Mumbai. There are much closer hotel options to the airport. The Ramada Powai has a small stream with a few trees on the side of the hotel. Birds seen at the hotel gardens included: Indian Cormorant, Intermediate Egret, Little Egret, Indian Pond-Heron, Cattle Egret, Black Kite, Common Greenshank, Wood Sandpiper, Rock Pigeon, Rose-ringed Parakeet, Asian Palm-Swift, White-throated Kingfisher, Coppersmith Barbet, Dusky Crag-Martin, Red-vented Bulbul, Oriental Magpie-Robin, Tawny-breasted Wren-Babbler, Eurasian Golden Oriole, House Crow, Common Myna, and Asian Pied Starling

Center for Desert and Ocean - CEDO (Nakhatrana): This was our place to stay in the Greater Rann of Kutch. It is owned by a birder who knows the area and frequently runs tours in the area. It is somewhat basic but there is hot water and food is vegetarian. Note, there is no alcohol in Gujarat state.

Rann Riders (Dasada): This was our place to stay in the Little Rann of Kutch. It has excellent food. There was a problem one night with hot water but otherwise the room was very nice. Look at the photos on their website.

Desert Coursers at Zainabad: This is the other location that birders stay at the Little Rann of Kutch. The owner is a birder. During the winter of 2008-2009, two Pallid Scops Owls were wintering at the lodge. I had read a prior trip report that was very complimentary of this location, but we did not stay at this lodge.

Hotel Harshwardhan (Chikaldara): This is where we stayed for access to the Melghat Tiger Reserve. The room was ok.

Directions:

As we had a guide, I will not provide specific directions. However, I would strongly advise a guide for these areas of India . If you are self driving and do not have specific directions, this area would be very difficult. At a minimum, a good local guide is an absolute must.

Departure Tax:

It is 500 Rupees and generally included in the price of your departure ticket.

Weather & Clothing:

January is the winter. It is also the dry season and we did not see any rain in Gujarat , nor was there any evidence of recent rain. Temperatures ranged from 55 to 85 F. It can be chilly in the morning and once the sun goes down at night. Both CEDO and Rann Riders have open air eating locations. You need a sweater or lightweight jacket. Also, Rann Riders operates open air vehicles. It can be cold in the morning and at night when driving

on the road in an open air vehicle.

It was very dry in the Melghat Tiger Reserve. No evidence of recent rain. Most of the teak trees had lost their leaves but the forest in the reserve proper was well leafed. It was warm in this area during the day 90F. Lows were 60F.

Biting animals:

Mosquitoes were not a problem in any place that we went. We never saw a snake. We had no problems with ticks or leeches. We brought malaria prophylaxis but did not take it.

Advice:

If you are planning a trip purely for birding and want to see the specialties of these areas, I would advise the following:

Great Rann of Kutch/Bhuj area: You need at least 2.5 days of birding. This equates to 3 nights. This allows for a half day to search for Crab Plover (Badreshwar). Then you have a full day in Fulay and the Chhari Dhand area. Then, you have a morning for the thorn forest specialties (White-winged Tit, Marshall's Iora and White-bellied Minivet) and late morning/full afternoon for Indian Bustard and White-browed Stonechat. I would advise staying at CEDO but some people stay at Bhuj. Bhuj apparently has nicer accommodations but it adds significant driving time to the birding areas.

Little Rann of Kutch : You need at least 1.5 days of birding. This equates to a minimum of 2 nights. I would, however, recommend 3 nights and 2.5 days of birding. With 1.5 days of birding, you would spend a morning for the Hoopoe Lark and McQueen's Bustard and the afternoon for Sociable Lapwing. The remaining half day can be spent at water areas in the Wild Ass Sanctuary. We spent 2.5 days and were still adding new birds at the end. I would recommend staying at either Rann Riders or Desert Coursers.

Melghat Tiger Reserve for the Forest Owlet: First, local guide help is a must. Then, I would recommend 2 nights in the area. Take an afternoon flight into Nagpur and drive to Chikaldara arriving at night, and the next morning make an early (0500) departure for the Forest Owlet site. You have a full morning and afternoon for Forest Owlet (you should be able to get the bird in the morning if your local guide knows active territories). Assuming you have seen the Forest Owlet, the following morning may be spent birding the reserve proper. In the afternoon, you can drive back to Nagpur for a late evening flight to either Delhi or Mumbai.

Traditional Gujarat trips also encompass GIR National Park and Velavadar National Park : These locations are primarily known for their mammals (Asiatic Lion at GIR NP and Blackbuck at Velavadar NP). Neither has specific birds that can not be found in other locations. However, GIR apparently has good forest and is a good location for Mottled

Wood Owl. We did not visit either site.

Species Lists

Trip List (per Clements taxonomy):

Gujarat list:

Little Grebe – several on drive from Greater Rann to Little Rann

Great White Pelican – common in Greater Rann and little Rann

Dalmatian Pelican – several at Chhari Dhand, along drive from Greater Rann to Little Rann, and at Little Rann

Indian Cormorant - common

Great Cormorant – multiple locations

Little Cormorant - common

Darter – along drive from Greater Rann to Little Rann

Gray Heron – common

Purple Heron – several at Little Rann

Great Egret - common

Intermediate Egret - common

Little Egret - common

Western Reef-Heron – common at Badreshwar

Indian Pond-Heron – very common

Cattle Egret - common

Painted Stork – several at both Greater Rann and Little Rann

Asian Openbill – one in a flooded ditch in Little Rann

Woolly-necked Stork – one on drive from Greater Rann to Little Rann and one at Little Rann

White Stork – one at Little Rann

Black-headed Ibis – common

Red-naped Ibis – several at Greater Rann and Nalilya Grasslands

Glossy Ibis – common Little Rann

Eurasian Spoonbill - common

Greater Flamingo – common

Lesser Flamingo – large group at Chhari Dhand in the Greater Rann and three at Badreshwar

Greylag Goose – common at Little Rann

Ruddy Shelduck – common at Little Rann

Common Shelduck – 13 at the Bajana area of the Little Rann, unusual in the area (we photographed them for documentation).

Comb Duck – one at the Little Rann

Eurasian Wigeon - common

Gadwall – common at Little Rann

Eurasian Teal – very common

Spot-billed Duck – common (more common at Greater Rann area)

Northern Pintail - common

Garganey – a few at Little Rann

Northern Shoveler – very common

Marbled Teal – one at Little Rann

Red-crested Pochard – one male in a small lake in the Little Rann area

Common Pochard – several in the Little Rann area

Ferruginous Pochard – one male in a small lake in the Little Rann area

Tufted Duck – small group in the Little Rann area

Oriental Honey-buzzard – several on drive from Greater Rann to Little Rann

Black-shouldered Kite - common

Black Kite – a few at Little Rann

Eurasian Griffon – 15 in the Nalilya grasslands

Short-toed Eagle – one in the Greater Rann area

Western Marsh-Harrier – common at Little Rann

Pallid Harrier – several males in the Little Rann

Montagu's Harrier – one male in the Greater Rann (we had multiple female/immature harriers not identified to species)

Shikra - common

Eurasian Sparrowhawk – one in the Greater Rann

White-eyed Buzzard – one in the Little Rann

Long-legged Buzzard – common in the Greater Rann

Indian Lesser Spotted Eagle – one seen and photographed as if flew over the Rann Riders hotel in the Little Rann

Greater Spotted Eagle – several in the Little Rann area

Tawny Eagle – several in the Greater Rann area/Nalilya Grasslands

Steppe Eagle – common in the Greater Rann area

Imperial Eagle – one in the Little Rann area, photographed

Eurasian Kestrel – common

Red-necked Falcon – one Chhari Dhand of Greater Rann

Peregrine Falcon: multiple birds at Little Rann

Black Francolin: in the Naliya grasslands

Gray Francolin: very common

Common Quail: a pair seen near Fulay

Indian Peafowl: common

Demoiselle Crane: large flock at a lake in the Little Rann

Sarus Crane: one heard only at the Little Rann

Common Crane: very common, large flocks seen

Purple Swamphen: common at lakes in the Little Rann

Common Moorhen: common

Eurasian Coot: common

Indian Bustard: We had a lot of trouble with this species and spent hours driving around the Naliya grasslands. Finally, we had two birds at dusk (after we had essentially given up).

Macqueen's Bustard: two birds in the Little Rann area

Crab Plover: 350 at Badreshwar at high tide

Eurasian Oystercatcher: common at Badreshwar

Black-winged Stilt: very common

Pied Avocet: common

Cream-colored Courser: four at the Chhari Dhand in the Greater Rann

Indian Courser: small numbers at both the Greater Rann and Little Rann

Collared Pratincole: 24 birds in one flock at a lake in the Little Rann

Yellow-wattled Lapwing: several birds in the Naliya Grasslands while looking for Indian

Bustard

Red-wattled Lapwing: very common

White-tailed Lapwing: several birds in a marsh area at the Little Rann

Black-bellied Plover: one at Badreshwar

Little Ringed Plover: Great Rann

Snowy Plover: Great Rann

Lesser Sandplover: common at Badreshwar

Greater Sandplover: Badreshwar

Common Snipe: many birds at Little Rann and a few at Greater Rann

Black-tailed Godwit: common

Bar-tailed Godwit: Badreshwar

Eurasian Curlew: multiple sites

Common Sandpiper: multiple birds at both Little Rann and Greater Rann

Green Sandpiper: multiple birds at both Little Rann and Greater Rann

Common Greenshank: multiple birds at both Little Rann and Greater Rann

Marsh Sandpiper: multiple birds at both Little Rann and Badreshwar

Wood Sandpiper: multiple birds at both Little Rann and Greater Rann

Common Redshank: very common

Ruddy Turnstone: Badreshwar

Sanderling: Badreshwar

Little Stint: very common

Temminck's Stint: multiple birds at both Little Rann and Greater Rann

Curlew Sandpiper: common

Ruff: very common

Heuglin's Gull: Badreshwar

Great Black-headed Gull: several at Badreshwar and one at Little Rann

Brown-headed Gull: multiple locations

Slender-billed Gull: multiple birds at Badreshwar

Little Tern: Badreshwar

Gull-billed Tern: very common at Badreshwar

Whiskered Tern: a few in the Little Rann

Lesser Crested Tern: Badreshwar

Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse: common in the Naliya grassland area

Painted Sandgrouse: 2 males and 2 females seen in the Greater Rann area

Rock Pigeon: very common

Eurasian Collared-Dove: very common

Red Collared-Dove: one bird in the Naliya grasslands

Laughing Dove: common

Rose-ringed Parakeet: very common

Sirkeer Malkoha: one bird in the thorny forest in the Greater Rann area

Greater Coucal: one bird in the thorny forest in the Greater Rann area and also at the Little Rann

Pallid Scops-Owl: two birds were wintering at the Desert Coursers lodge in the Little Rann area. We were able to stop and photograph the two birds.

Eurasian (Indian) Eagle-Owl: One bird found roosting on the ground in the Chhari Dhand area of the Greater Rann.

Spotted Owlet: Two birds in the Greater Rann

Sykes's Nightjar: We saw two birds while driving in the dark, including one that we had excellent looks at on the ground and flying around in the Greater Rann area. This bird is typically looked for in the Little Rann area but we did not try as we had seen it well in the Greater Rann.

Indian Nightjar: heard and seen in the Greater Rann

House Swift: several soaring over a village in the Little Rann area

Common Kingfisher: several in the Little Rann

White-throated Kingfisher: common

Pied Kingfisher: several in the Little Rann area

Green Bee-eater: very common

Indian Roller: very common

Eurasian Hoopoe: common

Yellow-crowned Woodpecker: one in the thorny forest

Indian Bushlark: several birds in the Greater Rann area

Greater Hoopoe-Lark: one bird found in the flat desert of the Little Rann area

Ashy-crowned Sparrow-Lark: several flocks at both the Greater Rann and Little Rann

Rufous-tailed Lark: common

Bimaculated Lark: flock of 20 birds in the Naliya grassland area

Greater Short-toed Lark: very common

Sand Lark: several at the beach at Badreshwar

Crested Lark: common

Tawny Lark (Syke's Lark): only one in the Greater Rann area

Oriental Skylark: one at the Little Rann

Barn Swallow: several different groups

Wire-tailed Swallow: both Greater Rann and Little Rann

Dusky Crag-Martin: at the Greater Rann

Red-rumped Swallow: Greater Rann area

Oriental Pipit: Little Rann area

Long-billed Pipit: Little Rann area

Tawny Pipit: at both Greater Rann and Little Rann

White Wagtail: common

Yellow Wagtail: common

Citrine Wagtail: one in the Little Rann

Small Minivet: common at the thorny forest

White-bellied Minivet: male and female at the thorny forest

White-cheeked Bulbul: common

Red-vented Bulbul: common

White-tailed (Marshall's) Iora: two birds at the thorny forest, calling and easily found

Hypocolius: 2 males seen near the village of Fulay at the traditional wintering area in the Greater Rann. Later in the morning another group saw 8 birds in this area. Local guide assistance (CEDO) is needed to find this site.

Zitting Cisticola: several birds at the Naliya grasslands

Rufous-fronted Prinia: Greater Rann area

Gray-breasted Prinia: Greater Rann area

Graceful Prinia: Little Rann area

Plain Prinia: Greater Rann area

Blyth 's Reed-Warbler: reedbed near the Naliya grasslands

Clamorous Reed-Warbler: two birds in a reedbed at the Rann Riders lodge. This is sometimes treated as Indian Reed-Warbler (*Acrocephalus [stentoreus] brunnescens*).

Common Tailorbird: several birds at the Rann Riders hotel

Common Chiffchaff: a few birds in scrub

Eastern Orphean Warbler: one bird in the thorny forest

Asian Desert Warbler: in the scrub at the Greater Rann

Lesser Whitethroat: birds at the thorny forest and in the scrub around the Greater Rann. We also had birds consistent with Desert Whitethroat (*Sylvia [curruca] minula*).

Red-breasted Flycatcher: a couple birds at the Rann Riders hotel grounds

Bluethroat: one bird at lake edge in the Little Rann area

Indian Robin: very common

Black Redstart: several birds in the Greater Rann

White-browed (Stoliczka's) Bushchat: one bird seen well and photographed at the Lala Bustard Sanctuary in the Naliya grasslands. This bird has a noticeably larger bill than the much more common Stonechat. This is not well depicted in the field guide.

European Stonechat: common

Pied Bushchat: several locations

Variable Wheatear: several locations

Red-tailed Wheatear: one in the Chhari Dhand area of the Greater Rann on a rocky outcropping

Desert Wheatear: common

Isabelline Wheatear: less common than Desert Wheatear but multiple seen

Common Babbler: very common

Jungle Babbler: a few seen in Little Rann

White-winged (White-naped) Tit: two birds seen shortly after arrival at the thorny forest area. This is a specialty of the area as it is only found here and in southern India .

Purple Sunbird: common

Rufous-tailed Shrike: common

Bay-backed Shrike: several birds in the Greater Rann area

Long-tailed Shrike: common

Southern Gray Shrike: common

Common Woodshrike: several birds in the thorny forest area

Black Drongo: very common

House Crow: very common

Bank Myna: small group in a town southeast of Bhuj

Common Myna: common

Brahminy Starling: a few birds at Little Rann

Rosy Starling: large flocks in Greater Rann and Little Rann

European Starling: Little Rann

House Sparrow: very common

Chestnut-shouldered Petronia: several birds in the Greater Rann area

White-throated Munia (Indian Silverbill): common

Gray-hooded Bunting: common in Greater Rann area

House Bunting: three birds in the Greater Rann area

Some of the mammals we saw in the area included: Wild Boar, Pallid Hedgehog, Grey Mongoose, Jungle Cat, Golden Jackal, Indian Wolf, Blue Bulls (Neelgai), Asiatic Wild Ass (Gudkhur), and Chinkara (Indian Gazelle).

Melghat Trip List:

list of species from Melghat Tiger Preserve and surrounding areas. We birded a morning in the reserve proper and spent a day in an area at the periphery of the reserve (area for

Forest Owlet):

Little Egret: a couple birds

Indian Pond-Heron: several birds

Striated Heron: two in the river on the periphery of the park

Crested Serpent-Eagle: one flyover near the Forest Owlet site

White-eyed Buzzard: one immature near the Forest Owlet site

Black Eagle: one bird soaring over the top of the forest in the reserve proper

Eurasian Kestrel

Indian Peafowl: several birds

Red-wattled Lapwing: only a couple of birds in a stream near the Forest Owlet

Spotted Dove: common in the Forest Owlet area

Alexandrine Parakeet: 8 seen in a single flock at the edge of the preserve was the only sighting, reportedly more common than we experienced

Rose-ringed Parakeet: common

Plum-headed Parakeet: common around the Forest Owlet site

Sirkeer Malkoha: one in the reserve proper

Greater Coucal: one near the Forest Owlet site

Jungle Owlet: two birds heard calling the first afternoon and then one seen the next morning in the reserve proper

Forest Owlet: We saw a pair within 1:15 of arriving in the area. A local guide took us to one territory where we were unsuccessful. Then, in a second territory, we found a pair and had great looks. Two birds were seen and heard calling to each other. Then one additional bird was heard in response to the two birds calling (perhaps a bird from the initial territory). The highlight of the Melghat area and certainly the reason to travel to this site. The location was 1 hour and 45 minute drive from Chinkadara. We did not have tape of the species.

Crested Treeswift: several flying over

White-throated Kingfisher: several birds

Green Bee-eater: only at the Forest Owlet site

Indian Roller: open areas around the reserve periphery

Indian Gray Hornbill: two birds seen in the reserve proper

Brown-headed Barbet: commonly heard in the reserve proper, we finally located one feeding in a fruiting tree

Coppersmith Barbet: two seen and several heard in the reserve proper

Brown-capped Woodpecker: several pairs seen in both the reserve proper and the Forest Owlet site

Yellow-crowned Woodpecker: two at the Forest Owlet site

Black-rumped Flameback: seen at both the Forest Owlet area and the reserve proper

White-naped Woodpecker: seen at both the Forest Owlet area and the reserve proper

Plain Martin: several flying over

House Martin: several flying over. The Grimmett book does not demonstrate it occurring in this area of India . Thus, we obtained identifiable photographs for documentation.

Olive-backed Pipit: several

Tree Pipit: common

Gray Wagtail: one in the stream near the Forest Owlet site

Large Cuckoo-shrike: one near the Forest Owlet site

Small Minivet: common

Red-whiskered Bulbul: several in the reserve proper

Red-vented Bulbul: common

Common Iora: several near the Forest Owlet site and the reserve proper

Eurasian Blackbird: one in the reserve proper

Gray-breasted Prinia: common

Ashy Prinia: one in the reserve proper

Common Tailorbird: common

Tickell's Leaf-Warbler: common

Sulphur-bellied Warbler: common in the reserve proper

Hume's Warbler: common, also seen at the hotel grounds in Chinkadara

Greenish Warbler: several

Red-breasted Flycatcher: common

Tickell's Blue-Flycatcher: several birds at both the Forest Owlet site and the reserve proper

Gray-headed Canary-Flycatcher: three birds in the reserve proper

Oriental Magpie-Robin: several birds

Indian Robin: a couple seen near the Forest Owlet site

Black Redstart: near the Forest Owlet site

European Stonechat: near the Forest Owlet site

Spot-breasted Fantail: several in the reserve proper

White-browed Fantail: common in the Forest Owlet site

Black-naped Monarch: one in the reserve proper

Asian Paradise-Flycatcher: a very nice male near the Forest Owlet site

Tawny-breasted Wren-Babbler: several birds seen

Yellow-eyed Babbler: one bird in the reserve proper

Jungle Babbler: very common

Brown-cheeked Fulvetta: one bird in the reserve proper

Great (Gray) Tit: very common.

Black-lored Tit: very common

Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch: several at the Forest Owlet site and the reserve proper

Velvet-fronted Nuthatch: several in the reserve proper

Purple Sunbird: common

Pale-billed Flowerpecker: 1 to 2 birds in each mixed species flock in the reserve proper

Oriental White-eye: very common

Eurasian Golden Oriole: at both the Forest Owlet site and the reserve proper

Common Woodshrike: common

Black Drongo: common

White-bellied Drongo: common

Rufous Treepie: common

House Crow: common around settlements

Large-billed Crow: common around settlements

Common Myna: common around settlements

House Sparrow: common around settlements

Chestnut-shouldered Petronia: at both the Forest Owlet site and the reserve proper

Common Rosefinch: multiple birds in the reserve proper

Total species for Gujarat state and Melghat Tiger preserve – 256.

Feel free to contact me with any questions.

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