

Bhutan

14 March–1 April 2026

Participants

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Himalayan Monal

Leader Chubzang Tangbi

Saturday 14th March

I booked on a Birdfinders trip to Bhutan, a small kingdom nestled in the Himalayas between NE India and Tibet. Due to the recent activities in the Middle East, our plans to fly via Qatar had been scuppered. Fortunately Birdfinders were on the case and their travel agents booked us a new route, although it did mean flying out a day earlier. We all met at Heathrow for the overnight Malaysian Airlines flight to KL departing at 21.25, but one of our party had to be rebooked on an alternative route due to visa issues.

Sunday 15th March

We landed at KL the following evening, with just enough daylight left to see a few birds from the terminal before boarding the 21.35 flight to Kolkata. It landed in India at 23.10 and we were soon through immigration and picked up our bags, apart from one which had failed to arrive. We jumped in a taxi for the short journey to our airport hotel for a much needed, albeit short, sleep.

Monday 16th March

We had to be up early and I had asked reception to provide packed breakfast for us as we had to leave before breakfast started. We got a couple of taxis back to the airport and checked in for our flight to Paro in Bhutan.

The final approach was rather hair-raising once we dipped below the clouds as we flew low through a valley with what seemed barely a wing's length space to the mountainside. Arrived in Bhutan on time at 10am and stepped into bright sunshine and it felt much warmer than the actual temperature of 8 degrees. The airport was beautifully ornate, even the luggage carousels and we whisked through immigration and waited for our luggage, taking the opportunity to buy some local currency.

We met our guide outside and waiting for us was our missing colleague who had to bypass India and take a flight via Bangkok. We were soon on our way and barely drove a mile outside the airport before stopping by the Paro River. Feral Pigeon made into our Bhutan list as our first bird seen but a few minutes later the quality ramped up as our target bird was found – Ibisbill! This was a key bird for

many of the group and although I'd seen them several times before it's always a special bird to see. Some of the birds here are resident breeders while some breeds high up in the Himalayas and winter at lower elevations. We saw three birds here. There was also a variety of redstarts seen with White-capped, Plumbeous and Hodgson's, the latter being my only new bird today.

Joining the waterbirds were several White Wagtails of two different races, Common Sandpiper and a Brown Dipper that shot past and then showed distantly. A flock of about 150 Plain Mountain-Finches flew over, a Rosy Pipit fed with the wagtails and a few Russet Sparrows perched in bushes or on overhead wires.

We drove into town and had lunch at a nice restaurant before carrying on and making another riverside stop. Here were six Ruddy Shelducks and a few other ducks as well as another Ibisbill. However, our main quarry was in the rocky hill on the other side of the path. Our driver was first to spot it – a Wallcreeper, another breeding bird of high elevations that winters down lower. We had prolonged views of it, a female and a bit further along was a pair.

Birds appeared all around us with River Lapwings on the shingle bed in the river, our first Oriental Turtle-dove roosting in a tree by the path, Hodgson's Redstarts on top of the hillside, Rufous-breasted Accentor on the hill and the first of three Hoopoes sat on a pile of felled trees.

We drove further along by the river, pausing to get everyone on to a Great Cormorant roosting up on the hillside when someone spotted a Goral higher up. We all bundled out of the bus to watch it and a minute later someone else found a Himalayan Black Bear on the same hillside. It was very fortuitous that we had stopped for the cormorant otherwise we would have missed both mammals.

Our hotel was an hour's drive away and had time to relax before the log and dinner with plans made for an early start the following morning.

Tuesday 17th

We left the hotel at 5.45 for our first full day's birding in Bhutan. Thirty minutes later we reached a mountain pass at 3,150 metres and started our birding just down the road with a Great Parrotbill, a particularly striking bird. Over the course of the trip we would see several more representatives of this Asian family.

As we carried on we started to encounter more of the birds of this region including several species of Laughingthrush – Black-faced, Striated and Chestnut-crowned as well as sibilias, yuhinas and rosefinches.

We took breakfast in the field, a crew of three followed us around for the rest of the trip, setting up a picnic tables and chairs and preparing breakfast and lunch every day. It worked really well as often we were in remote locations where there simply wasn't anywhere to eat for miles around. We did find however that meals frequently got interrupted when a good bird suddenly appeared!

We visited Lampelri National Park after breakfast, a popular tourist spot but we were there before most people arrived. This gave us another selection of Asian birds including Alpine and Chestnut Thrushes, White-collared Blackbird, White-browed Fulvetta and two more species of laughingthrush.

Just down the road from the park we ran into a feeding flock which contained Green Shrike-babbler, Yellow-browed, Yellow-cheeked and Black-throated Tits among others. After lunch we saw our first primates of the trip – a group of Assam Macaques.

During the afternoon there was a large flock of Spot-winged Grosbeaks, as well as seeing Black Eagle, Pallas's Fish-eagle and Rusty-cheeked Scimitar-babbler. We spent some of the afternoon visiting one of the Dzongs. These are large fortifications that house both religious and administrative

buildings that govern each region. Typically they contain several temples where monks follow the Buddhist teachings. We arrived at our hotel at 5.30.

Wednesday 18th

We left the hotel at 6am and drove along the river valley where we saw some more Ruddy Shelducks, a group of Red-crested Pochards and some Pintails as well as Common and Crested Kingfishers. Further along we found another Wallcreeper as well. A call of 'martins' from the side and front of the bus gave us a flock of Eurasian Crag-martins flying beside us while up ahead on the rocks were two Yellow-throated Martens!

After breakfast in the field we continued along the montane road up through rhododendron forests towards Lawa La pass at 3,350m. We made several stops and walked along the road. There were plenty of birds in this habitat including woodpeckers (Grey-headed, Lesser Yellownap and Speckled Piculet), barbets (Great and Golden-throated), warblers (Blyth's Leaf and Grey-hooded), Small Niltava and Spotted Forktail.

We stopped by a bee colony in a cliff overhang where there was a Yellow-throated Honeyguide. After lunch we continued birding the high elevations and saw our second monkeys of the trip – Grey Langur. The list of birds continued to grow during the afternoon with plenty of forest birds like Black-browed and Grey-crested Tits as well as raptors with Mountain Hawk-Eagle, Crested Goshawk, Himalayan Buzzard and Hen Harrier all seen.

We arrived at our hotel in Phobjikha at 3,000 metres in the evening. After dinner we went for a short owling excursion and had good views of a Himalayan Owl.

Thursday 19th

An early start, leaving the hotel at 5.30 in the rain. It was already very cold and I was wearing seven layers. We headed up to the pass, pausing briefly to check for the cranes again but there was no sign; they had obviously all left early this year. It soon stopped raining which was just as well as this would have meant it was snowing where we were going.

There was already a light snow covering as we ascended and we checked all the roadside slopes for pheasantry things. First up was a female Himalayan Monal, one of our main target species. We walked on, looking for birds in the woodland as well and there were plenty to be seen despite the mountain chill. White-browed Rosefinch, White-winged Grosbeak, Red-headed Bullfinch and Hoary-throated Barwing were some of the new birds we encountered before our picnic breakfast.

We'd only just started tucking into our porridge when a Himalayan Monal suddenly appeared and started calling which we could see from our breakfast table. The light wasn't very good but eventually we could see some colour in the scope.

We continued walking upwards and almost immediately saw our number one target – Satyr Tragopan which crossed the track and went up a steep slope, disappearing fairly quickly. A small party of Southern Nutcrackers fed on the roadside verge and as we wandered back down, a pair of Fire-tailed Myzornis were seen fairly well but there was no sun out to turn the dull green into a bright emerald.

Further down the road we sent our driver into a meadow where he put up a Solitary Snipe which we then watched feeding in a small stream. A couple of flocks of Snow Pigeons flew past and a large flock of Plain Mountain-finches actually pitched down while we stopped at Tronga Stupa.

After another picnic lunch, the sun came out and we were able to shed some layers. We drove up and down a couple of times going through mountain passes and made a few more stops. New birds continued to be added with the likes of Himalayan Bluetail, Bhutan Laughingthrush, Brown Parrotbill and Rufous-vented Yuhina.

We arrived at our hotel just after six in the evening.

Friday 20th

Another early start as we left the hotel at 5.30. We spent most of the day at over 3,000 metres so it was pretty cold and we were all layered up again. We drove slowly along the road looking for ‘chickens’ and one of the first birds seen was a male Himalayan Monal. It was in good light albeit obscured behind bushes but it was our best sighting so far.

As we drove into a small settlement we got out of the bus for a walk and I finally caught up with Black-rumped Magpie after missing some yesterday [this is one of the four splits of Eurasian Magpie]. There was also Beautiful Rosefinch, Plain Mountain-finch and a small flock of Red Crossbills flew over. We carried on driving and saw several Common Pika, a small montane rodent. The first of several flocks of Blood Pheasant were seen, the first ones were inside the forest so difficult to see well but we later encountered two other flocks out in the open.

Topping these was bird of the day – a stunning male Satyr Tragopan that sat by the roadside long enough for everyone to get good views and many photos, even if it was slightly hiding. This was high on most people’s targets and after a less than satisfactory view yesterday it was great to see one properly. We also saw a pair of Himalayan Monals, the male was sat up on a rock but took flight before anyone managed to rattle off a photo.

A large flock of about 130 Snow Pigeons were feeding in a field and several Himalayan Griffons slowly cruised over. A pair of White-throated Redstarts were seen although we spent some time before we could see why they were named as such as the white throat on the male was a small dot only visible when viewing the bird head on. The first pass was crossed at 3,850 metres and we then descended just a few hundred metres.

The rest of the day continued in the same vein, driving along the virtually deserted road and walking sections of it looking for forest birds, as well as having our excellent breakfast and lunch in the field. It was rather cold for alfresco dining and we needed the shelter as there was a bit of light precipitation.

The afternoon highlights included two Little Forktails on about the fifth waterfall that we looked for them, Chestnut-crowned Warbler and a flock of at least 20 Black-throated Parrotbills that skulked inside a bamboo thicket before having to break cover and fly into the next one. We carried on birding until after 5pm as the road ahead was closed due to bridge repairs and arrived at our hotel in the rain at 6pm. We were going to be spending three nights here, a real luxury as we’d moved on every day so far.

Saturday 21st

It almost felt like a lie-in this morning as we met at 5.30 for coffee and biscuits before a 5.45 departure. We spent the whole day birding the local forests from the road, firstly a spur then the main highway which heads to eastern Bhutan. It’s not exactly like the M1 as there is usually very little traffic and the road was closed for much of the day due to bridge repairs.

There was low cloud and the occasional spell of light rain but it didn’t hamper us too much, although at times the light was fairly poor. We heard the ‘brain-fever bird’ before we left the hotel, AKA Large Hawk-cuckoo and passed a Kalij Pheasant as drove to our first stop.

During the day we’d randomly try different spots and walk for a bit before moving on. Several mixed flocks went through, typically led by a drongo. It could sometimes be difficult getting on everything in the fast-moving flocks but we caught up with most birds by the end of the day. We did try for a few skulking birds but didn’t have much luck as they refused to break cover.

It proved to be a very productive day with over thirty new birds for the trip including Rusty-fronted Barwing, White-crested Laughingthrush, Himalayan Cutia, Grey-headed and White-breasted Parrotbills, Nepal Fulvetta, Black-chinned Yuhina, Maroon-backed Accentor and Blue-bearded Bee-eater. The two best birds of the day are restricted to this part of the Himalayas: Ward's Trogon and Rufous-necked Hornbill and we got really long looks at both.

Another monkey was added to the trip list – Capped Langur. We got back at 5.30 and were the only guests in the hotel for dinner. We were also joined by Chris's missing luggage much to his relief.

Sunday 22nd

Our last full day at high elevation on this part of the trip; we had coffee and biscuits at 5.30 and left at 5.45. We drove up the road into the forest, making several stops and walking along the road. Being Sunday, the road wasn't closed for construction but there was still very little traffic.

The pair of Rufous-necked Hornbills were still in the same tree and Great Barbets perched up high calling continuously. A flock of Speckled Woodpigeons also perched up on the treetops before flying off to feed. Several bird flocks were encountered and at long last most of us managed decent looks at Golden Babbler. Black-chinned Prinia was new for the trip, as was a Rufous-bellied Eagle that soared over with a pair of Mountain Hawk-Eagles.

After lunch we drove down past the hotel to a more open area at a lower elevation. On the way we stopped at a viewpoint where we were entertained by a Common Green-magpie. Other new birds lower down included Rufous-necked Laughingthrush, Streaked Spiderhunter and a large flock of Himalayan Swiftlets. A vivid splash of colour was provided by very close views of a Crimson Sunbird.

We finished the day with a superb pair of Tawny Fish-owls, roosting high up in gallery forest and as we walked back to the bus, an obliging male Kalij Pheasant by the side of the track. After dinner some of us went out owling. We drove up the road a short way but only heard a Mountain Scops-owl. However, spotlighting found us two new mammals: a superb Leopard Cat that was busy scoffing down a newly caught squirrel and a Bhutan Giant Flying Squirrel.

Monday 23rd

We left the hotel at 5.45 with bags packed and headed up the road, making a few stops along the way. Barred Cuckoo-dove was the first new bird of the day and was later followed by Bar-throated Siva and an Asian Barred Owlet that flew over the road and perched up nicely for us.

We had to get past the bridge construction before work began at 8am and closed the road for three hours. After breakfast on the other side of the works, we slowly climbed up, making a few more stops. The weather was much better than on our descent three days earlier as there was no cloud.

At the first stop we heard a Pygmy Cupwing, a small skulking bird that likes to remain in the shadows, but eventually we all managed good views of it. Further stops were made for an Eurasian Wren and a Red-throated Thrush. However, we had a bigger target to look for so we moved on to the panda spot where we had tried before unsuccessfully.

This time we hit bullseye – a Red Panda curled up asleep on a branch. This was the mammal we all desperately wanted to see even though we knew it could be very difficult. We spent over half-an-hour with this beautiful creature, it occasionally stirred and glanced at us to see what all the fuss was about before dozing off again. Remarkably, another tour bus was in the area and they joined us as we watched the panda. Eventually, it decided to get up and climbed down the tree and disappeared.

We had a celebratory lunch shortly afterwards at 3,650 metres with snow lying on the ground. The afternoon was mainly a long drive as we had a fair way to go to Trongsa. We dropped down over 1,000 metres before we reached our hotel in the evening.

Tuesday 24th

We packed up and left the hotel at 6am. It was raining and it continued throughout the morning which did hamper our birding. Fortunately it wasn't a critical time as we'd seen most things at this elevation.

We drove down a little way and stopped for coffee and biscuits, then a little further and had an early breakfast. The rain had eased to a light drizzle so we did have a stroll down the road but the low cloud made for poor visibility.

A Sikkim Treecreeper showed well working its way up a close tree trunk and around this spot we saw Black-eared Shrike-babbler, Whiskered Yuhina and Crimson-naped Woodpecker. Further down were Golden-breasted Fulvetta, Brown Bullfinch and a flock of Tibetan Serins. There were a few feeding flocks, one of which held Fire-capped and Yellow-browed Tits.

As we drove down further a Spotted Forktail was seen on the edge of the road by a waterfall. We stopped for lunch, making use of a shelter where a local cat managed to persuade a few people in donating part of their meal.

It had stopped raining after lunch although the cloud kept coming and going. It meant we could do a bit more walking and see a bit more. New birds included Chestnut-tailed Starling, Grey-throated Babbler, a flypast Black Stork, Himalayan Bulbul, Striated Yuhina (thereby completing the set of Bhutanese Yuhinas) and Lesser Necklaced Laughingthrush.

We walked to our ecolodge, taking the bridge over the river while the bus went the long way around on the road.

Wednesday 25th

We met for coffee and biscuits at 5.15 and left at 5.30 as it was a bit of a way to drive to the first birding spot along the road. Along the way we saw Slaty-backed Forktail by the road. At our first stop there were some Ashy Woodswallows on a pylon and a flock of Long-tailed Sibilias.

As we walked down the road, it was warmer than it had been most mornings. There were also a different range of birds including Yellow-bellied Warbler, Chestnut-headed Tesia, Banded Bay Cuckoo, Pale-billed Parrotbill and White-hooded Babbler.

By the time we stopped for breakfast the sun was out and we were all shedding outer layers as the temperature was pleasantly warm. We continued along the road looking for bamboo specialists and found our two target birds: White-browed Piculet and Pale-headed Woodpecker – the latter was particularly hard to see but it did show well when it flew between patches of bamboo.

We kept searching the river for White-bellied Heron as this is one of the best places to see this declining and endangered species. Eagle-eyed Gill picked up one flying high along the river valley and several of us managed to get onto it before it disappeared out of view. More obliging was a Collared Falconet that sat up unmoving on a snag. A Crested Serpent-eagle also sat up, surprisingly the first one of our trip.

We carried on after lunch for a little while, seeing White-throated Bulbul and Small Niltava but the temperature had climbed to the mid-twenties and bird activity had died down so we returned to our lodge for a mid-afternoon break.

We went out again at 4, walking along the track behind the lodge up into the fields. Chestnut-headed Bee-eater perched on the power cables before we set off. Along the track we saw Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker and an Asian Barred Owlet flew over. Yet another Yellow-throated Marten was seen on the track, and one of the lodge's dogs that decided to join us for the walk picked up its scent and ran off after it.

A little group of Red Junglefowl was seen scurrying along and we ran into a nice range of open country birds including Slaty-backed Flycatcher and Hair-crested Drongo before it was time to head back to the hotel for dinner.

Thursday 26th

We left the hotel at 6am with our bags loaded and slowly headed off back up the mountainside. A Slaty Forktail by the roadside was the first bird of the day, beating the usual Blue Whistling Thrush that seemed to hang out on every corner.

At our first stop a Large Hawk-cuckoo was seen along with Red Junglefowl, Ashy Woodswallow and Streaked Spiderhunter. As we began to climb to the pass at 1,860m it got a little bit colder and there was a little light drizzle but fortunately we were below the clouds.

At subsequent stops we added Hume's Warbler, Pale Blue Flycatcher and Black-winged Cuckooshrike to the trip list, all before another wonderful breakfast. The hot porridge was particularly welcome. We carried on ascending, seeing Red-headed Trogon before chancing on a vagrant Naumann's Thrush, which may well become the first properly documented record for Bhutan.

As we drove up a handsome Grey-winged Blackbird fed on one of the grassy verges and a Malayan Giant Squirrel was seen. We stopped by a cliff overhang where there were a lot of honeycombs which attracted the attention of two Yellow-throated Honeyguides and a Blue-bearded Bee-eater.

After lunch we started heading downhill and were able to shed a layer or two. A pair of bizarre-looking Long-tailed Broadbills was seen before we arrived at another construction site and had to wait for the road to open. Fortunately for us, the timing couldn't have been better as we found not one but three Beautiful Nuthatches, the last major target bird. Initially they were high in the treetops and we only had silhouetted views but eventually they dropped down to below eyelevel on some close trees giving us superb views of this difficult to find bird. They have recently declined in India and become hard to see so it was great to catch up with them here.

Once past the roadworks we stopped several more times, adding Blue-winged Minla and Red-faced Liocichla, albeit a typically skulking individual, and some more Red-headed Trogons. We scanned an area alongside the river and found a Brown Fish-owl roosting over the other side high in a tree but it chose that minute to fly down and perched on the riverbank much closer to us, flushing a Crested Kingfisher that was sat on a nearby rock. There was also Blue-bearded Bee-eater perching in the tree next to us so it was a good end to the day.

We didn't have much further to drive to our hotel in the town of Gelephu, our first taste of a town for over a week.

Friday 27th

We went out at 5.45 and before heading off, saw a Brown Boobook calling and perched in the treetop across the road. We then drove a short distance to some fields and had coffee and biscuits before going for a walk down to the local sewage ponds. The open grassland and settling tanks gave us a whole new range of birds. Although many of them are widespread across Asia, this is the only place you can find them in Bhutan as they frequent lowlands. We were right next to the border of India, being only half a kilometre away across the river.

New birds for the trip came thick and fast with large birds such as Asian Openbill, Lineated Barbet, Red-naped Ibis, Indian Peafowl and Black Baza for starters and plenty of small birds including Jungle Babbler, Black Redstart (of the Eastern red-bellied race), Alexandrine and Ring-necked Parakeets, Asian Pied Starling and Eastern Red-rumped Swallow.

We walked through the gates by the settling tanks where there were some egrets and Indian Pond Herons as well as a few waders. Greenshank and Little Ringed Plover were new as was a flock of 15 Grey-headed Lapwing. There were a few Little Grebes, some Lesser Whistling Ducks and a Pintail Snipe flew from one of the causeways.

In the adjacent scrub were Pin-striped Tit-Babbler and Puff-throated Babbler along with several Dusky Warblers. We drove back to the start of the area and had another filling breakfast.

We went down the track again, past the sewage works to a river that required a careful balancing act on large stones to cross. Fortunately no one fell in. Asian Palm Swifts flew over while up in the trees were Oriental Cuckooshrike, Rosy Minivet and Indochinese Roller.

Woodpeckers included Greater Flameback, Lesser Yellownappe and Fulvous-breasted Woodpecker. A White-throated Needletail zipped over and a Bar-headed Goose flew north towards the taller peaks of the Himalayas which they habitually cross on their migration earning them a place in the Guinness Book of Records as the highest flying birds.

We drove back for lunch and then had a three hour break as the bird activity had quietened down even though it was overcast and occasionally drizzly.

We met up at 4pm for a wander around the park opposite the hotel. Just before we headed out there was a Red-breasted Parakeet feeding in the hotel garden. The town is scheduled for a massive redevelopment over the next few years and although this park will be retained the area we visited in the morning is likely to be built on.

The park is mostly woodland and held a nice selection of birds including Grey-headed Woodpecker, Green Imperial-pigeon, Common Iora, Lineated and Coppersmith Barbets.

After dinner we had a drive around town to look for owls: we saw three Brown Boobook, Spotted Owlet and Oriental Scops-Owl.

Saturday 28th

We packed up and left the hotel at 5.45, leaving the lowlands behind as we slowly climbed back up into the mountains. The first part of the morning was mostly seeing birds while driving with Brown Shrike being the only new addition. We made our first stop after an hour where we saw Wreathed Hornbill, Black-crested Bulbul and Mountain Imperial-pigeon (which was soon shortened to MIMP to go along with GIMP for Green Imperial-pigeon). We stopped along the road for another one of our fine breakfasts although the hoped-for porridge didn't materialise.

It rained for quite a lot of the morning so we did miss out on a few birds but we did eventually manage to catch up with one of the green-pigeons – Pin-tailed as a one perched up in a distant tree. Asian Pied and Wreathed Hornbills were also seen. As we neared the pass we made another stop and added a couple of Mountain Bulbuls.

Lunch was taken at the pass at 1,900m where we also had good views of Large Niltava and Grey Bushchat. We started to drop down and made a few stops along the way, seeing Hume's Bush-warbler and Rufous-throated Wren-babbler but failing to see a Spotted Elachura that sang for 20 minutes just in front of us.

We arrived at our hotel at 5pm and had a bit of time before dinner and log. Paul had purchased a bottle of Bhutanese peach wine that we sampled over dinner. Most of us managed to complete the e-arrivals card for our return to India in a few days' time before we walked down the road for some owl. We heard Collared Scops-owl calling from a dense patch of bamboo but there was no chance of us seeing it.

Sunday 29th

Bags were packed and we left at 6am to start our long drive back to Paro. We made a few stops shortly after departure, seeing some of the familiar birds by now of the area. Blue-winged Minla, Asian Barred Owllet, Yellow-bellied Warbler and Maroon Oriole were among the highlights before breakfast.

Further stops produced our only Velvet-fronted Nuthatch of the trip and a displaying Crested Goshawk. We spent some time at the White-bellied Heron Centre learning about this critically endangered bird and how they hope to save it. Our next stop was beside a river where there was a known breeding pair of herons and we saw both birds, the male flew up to the nest to feed the female while she incubated her three precious eggs.

At lunch we said goodbye to our catering crew as their work was completed for the trip. The afternoon was mostly spent driving but we did make a brief stop beside a reservoir where we saw a few new birds for the trip. We arrived at our hotel in Paro in the evening.

Monday 30th

We left the hotel in Paro at 5.30 for the long climb up to Chelela, picking up lunch along the way. As we climbed we saw Kalij Pheasant and a Blood Pheasant of a different race. A little higher up there was a superb male Himalayan Monal that posed for us, our best sighting of this species of the trip.

We made a few stops as we ascended with Himalayan Bluetail, White-winged Grosbeak, White-browed Rosefinch and two species of tit: Rufous-vented and Rufous-fronted all seen. We had breakfast at the pass at almost 4,000 metres. It was pretty cold and we were all layered up. With the catering crew gone we had a packed breakfast from the hotel which was pretty poor by comparison.

The sun was out where we were but there was cloud over the higher peaks restricting our view. There was a nearby mountain top where sky burials were still performed for children under the age of seven.

We continued birding around the pass, the best sighting was a Himalayan Serow, a type of goat. We worked our way back down during the morning and by the time we stopped for lunch we had to shed several layers as it had warmed up considerably. We stopped at a small picnic area for a lunch. There was way too much food for all of us so quite a bit was lobbed out to a party of grateful Yellow-billed Blue-magpies that swooped down and carried off various tit-bits and cached it.

We drove back to Paro and along to a little marshy area where we saw a pair of Black-tailed Crakes and brief views of a couple of Little Buntings, our last new birds of the trip. We had a bit of time to spare so walked down the main street, visiting various shops and cafes before returning to our hotel.

The final bird log was completed and we had a group total of 363 birds seen with many others only heard plus an impressive 21 species of mammal.

Tuesday 31st

There was only time today for a short wander around the hotel grounds before breakfast, the best bird being a White-collared Blackbird. Bags were packed for the last time and loaded onto the bus for the short transfer to Paro Airport. We left Bhutan at 10.35 and headed back to Kolkata where we had a

long wait until an evening flight to Mumbai and then a connecting flight to Heathrow on British Airways. We landed on time at 7am the following morning and made our way home.

Report compiled by Andrew Self.