

Checklist of birds seen on the Langtang Trek, Nepal,
during 19th-30th October 1990.

c/o Mark G. R. Hannay, Cardoness Estate Office,
Cardoness, Gatehouse-of-Fleet, Kirkcudbrightshire DG7
2EP.

HANNAY (1990)

Introduction.

This report provides a summary of the birds recorded during a two week trek in the Langtang Valley in northern Nepal in late October 1990. During this time we identified 127 species of birds amidst the most spectacular scenery, and enjoyed excellent weather conditions.

Itinery.

18th October--Kathmandu to Dhunche (bus).
19th October--Dhunche to Syabru.
20th October--Syabru to Evening View Lodge.
21st October--Evening View to Ghoda Tabela.
22nd October--Ghoda Tabela to Sindum.
23rd October--Sindum to Kyanjin.
24th October--Kyanjin to Yala Peak, descending to Sindum.
25th October--Sindum to Ghoda Tabela.
26th October--Ghoda Tabela to Syabru.
27th October--Syabru to Singompa.
28th October--Singompa to Laurevina.
29th October--Laurevina to Gosainkund and back.
30th October--Laurevina to Dhunche.
31st October--Dhunche to Kathmandu (bus).

Trekking.

Trekking is tremendous fun and can be as strenuous or as sedate as one desires. Each day can contain as much walking as you want, and we found we actually saw most birds from the path as we trekked along. Porters can be hired from Kathmandu or no doubt elsewhere, but if you are young and reasonably fit then they are superfluous and could be a burden. For the Langtang, a guide is totally unnecessary, no matter what the trekking offices may tell you. However, if you stay at the Langtang "Hotel" in Dhunche for your first night, the owner, the local school teacher provides trekkers with copies of an extremely good sketch map with accurate estimates of walking times between lodges and accurate information as to where lodges and tea rooms are. You cant really get lost; the track is too good. Basic (but surprisingly good when you're tired!) food and accomodation are available along the entire route. On average we were spending Rs 250 (@ £5) each per day.

Weather.

It was sunny and dry for the entire trek. The mainly cloudless skies allowed for excellent clear views of the mountains. We were, however, told that during the week prior to our visit the weather was cloudy with some persistent rain, probably representing the tail end of the monsoon. At lower altitudes it was generally quite hot during the day, but tended to become chilly at night. At the highest altitudes (Kyanjin Ghompa and Laurevina) it was cool even during the day becoming very cold at night, with hard frosts.

Equipment.

Warm clothing and a good sleeping bag were essential for the high parts of the trek. Lower down, shorts and tee shirts were adequate during the day, though more layers were needed at night and in the early morning. Good sunglasses and a sunblock for high altitude were essential. Having an adequate supply of water while high up was a must—the atmosphere may be cold, but it is also extremely dry and one needs to drink far more water than one thinks. Sterotabs/iodine are most important to sterilise drinking water, no matter how pure it may seem. Nepal appears to be the no. 1. blackspot in the world for *giardia*; it was the only health problem that we encountered and may be virtually unavoidable. Just take plenty of flagil/tiniba with you.

For footwear, a pair of lightweight walking boots is sufficient. A lightweight waterproof such as a cagoule, or a small umbrella to keep binoculars dry in the rain would be a wise precaution in early October. We didn't take 'scopes, and although there were a few occasions when they would have been handy, we don't feel that they would have been worth the carry. A good camera is a must, especially since the light can be so good, but remember to take plenty of film, as it cannot be purchased along the trek, unlike other basics.

In general the key is to travel as light as possible. Clothes can be washed en-route, so one only needs to carry enough changes for several days.

Checklist.

The names used in the ensuing list follow Inskipp (1988).

Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus*--seen in the vicinities of Laurevina and Kyanjin. Views at the latter were distant, but at Laurevina extremely close views were had, even on the ground.

Himalayan Griffon *Gyps himalayensis*--seen in the upper part of the valley, from about Ghoda Tabela upwards, and also around Laurevina.

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*--a pair was observed on two consecutive days near Laurevina.

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*--sightings of single birds at Ghoda Tabela, just above Langtang village, and also at Laurevina.

Northern Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*--quite a few sightings, as high as Laurevina.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*--a few seen in the area between Syabru and Singompa.

Steppe Eagle *Aquila rapax nipalensis*--a pair seen just above Singompa.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*--two sightings of single birds, from Evening View Lodge and Ghoda Tabela.

Mountain Hawk Eagle *Spizaetus nipalensis*--a pair near Singompa.

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*--the most frequently seen bird of prey, recorded from Dhunche up as high as 5000m at Yala and Gosainkund.

Snow Partridge *Lerwa lerwa*--a particularly confiding covey of about 20 birds were seen at Laurevina on two consecutive mornings, just above the settlement.

Tibetan Snowcock *Tetraogallus tibetanus*--a pair were seen in the boulder scree just below the summit of Yala Peak

Common Hill Partridge *Arborophila torqueola*--one seen well in broad-leaved forest near Dhunche.

Satyr Tragopan *Tragopan satyra* one male seen well in forest just below the tea hut of Phoprang, between Syabru and Singompa.

Kalij Pheasant *Lophura leucomelana*--singles seen near Dhunche, Syabru and Singompa.

Himalayan Monal *Lophophorus impejanus*--a male and female in the same area as the Satyr Tragopan. To see pheasants one really has to leave the main trails and get into the forest. At Phoprang, follow the small woodcutter's path into the trees behind the tea hut, and continue on down the slope until the path fades out. Monal and Tragopan were both in this area.

Despite extensive searching we were unable to locate Monal near Langtang although their "curlew" like call could be heard in the mornings in the scrub above Sindum. Blood Pheasant eluded us on the Langtang trek, but we discovered afterwards that the place to see them is in the birch scrub on the other side of the river from Kyanjin.

Ibisbill *Ibidorhyncha struthersii*--at least six were seen on the gravel pan above Kyanjin, adjacent to the airfield. They were quite wary, but we eventually obtained very good views even without 'scopes.

Rock Dove *Columba livia*--a flock of about thirty at Syabru, but nowhere else. The Rock Doves in Nepal have dark rumps.

Snow Pigeon *Columba leuconata*--the largest flock encountered was of about 400 birds, seen several times at Sindum. A most impressive sight. Smaller flocks were noted at Syabru and around Kyanjin.

Rufous Turtle Dove *Streptopelia tranquebarica*--several were seen in fields around Sindum.

Himalayan Swiftlet *Collocalia blevis*--about 20 feeding in the river gorge at Evening View Lodge one evening.

Great (Himalayan) Barbet *Megalaima virens*--one seen in the woods below Syabru.

Golden-throated Barbet *Megalaima franklinii*--one seen among scrub by the landslip between Syabru and Evening View.

Darjeeling Pied Woodpecker *Dendrocopus darjellensis*--recorded in small numbers around Ghoda Tabela and above Syabru

Rufous-bellied Pied Woodpecker *Dendrocopus hyperythus*--several seen in the woods at Ghoda Tabela.

Brown-fronted Pied Woodpecker *Dendrocopus auriceps*--a few seen between Dhunche and Syabru.

x **Hume's Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella acutirostris*--two seen on the gravel pan above Kyanjin.

Oriental Skylark *Alauda gulgula*--a group of three at Laurevina.

y **Black Swift** *Apus apus*--one bird seen flying up the valley at Syabru.

Nepal House Martin *Delichon nipalensis*--a large flock was seen around a breeding cliff just outside Dhunche.

x **Common House Martin** *Delichon urbica*--a flock of about 30 were seen along the valley wall near Sindum.

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*--small groups seen in woodland clearings.

Rosy Pipit *Anthus roseatus*--quite common on the gravel pan above Kyanjin.

Upland Pipit *Anthus sylvanus*--only one definite sighting, in a field outside Dhunche. Short tail is noticeable.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*--several were seen along streams lower down.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*--quite a few presumed migrants on the gravel pan above Kyanjin.

Long-tailed Minivet *Pericrocolus ethologus*--fairly numerous in small flocks in woodland, especially around pines.

White-cheeked Bulbul *Pycnonotus leucogenys*--recorded in the cultivations around Dhunche and Syabru.

Black Bulbul *Hypsipetes madagascariensis*--a small flock was seen near Dhunche.

Brown Dipper *Cinclus pallasii*--at least 10 along the river above Kyanjin, and a single up at Gosainkund

Northern Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*--very dark individuals were seen among high altitude scrub and boulders.

Rufous-breasted Accentor *Prunella strophiata*--quite numerous in the scrub around Sindum. Singles also seen near Singompa and at Gosainkund.

Altai Accentor *Prunella himalayana*--small parties seen around Kyanjin, on Yala Peak, at Singompa, and at Gosainkund.

Alpine Accentor *Prunella collaris*--five very confiding individuals around the yak shelters at Gosainkund, plus a few more in the surrounding open country.

Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*--small numbers noted around Ghoda Tabela, Singompa and Laurevina. Included some superb adult males.

Hodgson's Redstart *Phoenicurus hodgsoni*--seen in small numbers up as far as Ghoda Tabela.

Blue-fronted Redstart *Phoenicurus frontalis*--numerous at higher altitudes, frequenting scrub and fields, from Ghoda Tabela to Kyanjin, and around Laurevina.

White-throated Redstart *Phoenicurus schisticeps*--a single male near Laurevina amongst scrub and small pines with Blue-fronted Redstarts.

Guldenstadt's Redstart *Phoenicurus erythrogaster*--small numbers observed around Kyanjin and on Yala Peak.

Plumbeous Redstart *Phoenicurus fuliginosus*--numerous along the Langtang Kola and its tributaries, tending to prefer lower altitudes.

Grandala *Grandala coelicolor*--small flocks of up to 20 birds seen in flight along the cliffs beyond Kyanjin, on Yala Peak, and above Gosainkund.

Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*--noted in the cultivations around Dhunche.

Grey Bushchat *Saxicola ferrae*--seen in clearings and cultivation around Dhunche and Syabru.

White-capped Riverchat *Chaimarrornis leucocephalus*--quite numerous along the Langtang Khola, up as far as the gravel pan at Kyanjin.

Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush *Monticola rufiventris*--one male seen in the forest just above Dhunche, on the track up to Singompa.

Blue Whistling Thrush *Myiophonus caeruleus*--frequent along the Langtang Khola and in adjacent forest.

White-collared Blackbird *Turdus albocinctus*--a flock of about 10 were encountered near Phoprang.

Little Forktail *Ericurus scouleri*--our only sighting was of a pair by a bridge over the Trisuli Khola, just above Dhunche.

Spotted Forktail *Ericurus maculatus*--several sightings in forest beside the Langtang Khola, especially where small streams crossed the path.

Grey-sided Bush Warbler *Cettia brunnifrons*--several sightings, in clearings or on the forest edge. A real skulker, usually traced by call.

Hill Prinia *Prinia atrogularis*--a few in the cultivation around Syabru.

Golden-spectacled Warbler *Seicercus burkii*--small numbers seen in the forests, at various altitudes.

Grey-hooded Warbler *Seicercus xanthoschistos*--a few seen in the lower woods.

Blyth's Crowned Warbler *Phylloscopus reguloides*--small numbers in mixed species flocks.

Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*--common in the forests, one of the main constituents of mixed species flocks.

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*--fairly frequent in mixed species flocks, but much less common than Pallas's.

1) **Dusky Warbler** *Phylloscopus fuscatus*--quite numerous in clearings, especially around Evening View Lodge. Also at Ghoda Tabela and Sindum.

Tickell's Warbler *Phylloscopus affinis*--a few seen in forest clearings at Syabru.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*--small numbers were noted in the coniferous forest around Singompa and between there and Laurevina.

Rufous-bellied Niltava *Niltava sundera*--a single male, in bamboo thickets below Syabru.

Verditer Flycatcher *Muscicapa thalassima*--a few sightings in and around forest clearings.

Asian Sooty Flycatcher *Muscicapa sibirica*--a few noted on the lower parts of the trek.

Slaty-blue Flycatcher *Ficedula tricolor*--a single male noted in the forest below Ghoda Tabela.

Orange-gorgetted Flycatcher *Ficedula strophiate*--the most commonly seen flycatcher, with many sightings in the forested parts of the trek.

Yellow-bellied Fantail *Rhipidura hypoxantha*--a frequent member of mixed species flocks.

White-throated Fantail *Rhipidura albicollis*--a single sighting, near the landslip up the valley from Syabru.

Streak-breasted Scimitor-Babbler *Pomatorhinus ruficollis*--a few sightings (usually in pairs) from around Syabru.

Greater Scaly-breasted Wren-Babbler *Prncepyga albiventer*--several noted by the forest track below Ghoda Tabela.

White-throated Laughingthrush *Garrulax albagularis*--seen in the lower woods, including one large flock by Evening View Lodge.

Striated Laughingthrush *Garrulax striatus*--a single bird seen near Syabru.

Variiegated Laughingthrush *Garrulax variegatus*--quite a few seen, mainly around forest clearings, at various altitudes, including as far up as Sindum.

Black-faced Laughingthrush *Garrulax affinis*--small groups were seen in the areas of Singompa and Laurevina.

2) **Scaly Laughingthrush** *Garrulax subunicolor*--most numerous at higher altitudes, especially around Sindum, but some also seen further down.

Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush *Garrulax erythrocephalus*--small numbers seen lower down.

Spotted Laughingthrush *Garrulax ocellatus*--a single sighting of two birds in the woods above Dhunche.

Green Shrike-Babbler *Pteruthius xanthochloris*--two sightings of single birds in mixed species flocks high up under the canopy, at Ghoda Tabela and above Dhunche. They are odd little birds, looking like dull, upright, stocky and slow moving *Phylloscopus*.

Chestnut-tailed Minla *Minla strigula*--small groups of these birds in clearings and around cultivation at Dhunche and Syabru.

White-browed Fulvetta *Alcippe vinipectus*--rather frequent in small flocks (alone or with other species) in the higher woods.

Black-capped Sibia *Heterophasia capistrata*--horribly common, noisy and conspicuous, often in mixed species flocks; mainly lower down.

Whiskered Yuhina *Yuhina flavicollis*--small flocks were encountered in the lower woods.

Rufous-vented Yuhina *Yuhina occipitalis*--seen in similar numbers and in the same areas as the above species.

White-bellied Yuhina *Yuhina zantholeuca*--one or two sightings in mixed flocks lower down.

Black-browed Tit *Aegithalos iouschistos*--one (at least) in a mixed species flock near Ghoda Tabela.

Black-throated Tit *Aegithalos concinnus*--noted in a few mixed species flocks in the lower woods.

Yellow-browed Tit *Sylviparus modestus*--one seen in a mixed species flock above Dhunche.

Grey-crested Tit *Parus dichrous*--common, usually in mixed species flocks in the higher (mainly coniferous) woods.

Rufous-vented Black Tit *Parus rubidiventris*--numerous in mixed species flocks in the higher woods, and also extending into the scrub as far up as Sindum and by Laurevina.

Coal Tit *Parus aler*--common in mixed species flocks in the higher coniferous woods, and sporting small crests!

Green-backed Tit *Parus monticolus*--noted in the lower woods.

White-tailed Nuthatch *Sitta himalayensis*--one definite sighting, of a single bird in a mixed species flock, near Ghoda Tabela.

Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch *Sitta castanea*--many sightings of this species in the lower woods.

Wallcreeper *Tichodroma murana*--surprisingly only one seen, but living up to its name as it flicked along the stone walls at Langtang village.

Rusty-flanked Treecreeper *Certhia nipalensis*--one seen in a mixed species flock in the lower woods above Syabru.

Common Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*--several observed in the high coniferous forests around Singompa.

Mrs. Gould's Sunbird *Aethopyga gouldiae*--several sightings, as high as Evening View Lodge. Included a superb full summer plumaged male.

Fire-tailed Sunbird *Aethopyga ignicauda*--quite numerous lower down, usually around flowering bushes in clearings. A few males still retained reasonable tails.

Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosa*--a small group near Dhunche.

Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach*--several sightings from around the cultivations lower down.

Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocercus*--seen in the fields near Dhunche.

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*--one noted in the forests near Syabru.

- Yellow-billed Blue Magpie** *Urocissa flavirostris*--several sightings of small groups, as far up as Ghoda Tabela.
- Eurasian Nutcracker** *Nucifraga caryocostactes*--numerous in the forested areas, nearly always pines. Especially common around Syabru.
- Alpine Chough** *Pyrrhocorax graculus*--both Alpine and Red-billed Choughs were common in the higher parts of the valley, from just above Ghoda Tabela upwards. Mixed flocks of up to @150 birds were noted.
- Red-billed Chough** *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*--see above account for Alpine Chough.
- Jungle Crow** *Corvus macrorhynchos*--small numbers of this inappropriately named crow as far up as Kyanjin.
- Common Raven** *Corvus corax*--small numbers around Kyanjin.
- House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*--around Dhunche and Syabru.
- x **White-rumped Snowfinch** *Montifringilla taczanowskii*--a flock of 35 birds were seen well, feeding on a steep grassy slope below the summit of Yala Peak.
- Yellow-breasted (Himalayan) Greenfinch** *Carduelis spinoides*--common in forest clearings and around cultivations in the lower parts of the trek.
- Plain Mountain-Finch** *Leucosticte nemoricola*--several sizeable flocks were seen in the vicinity of Laurevina and Gosainkund.
- Dark-breasted Rosefinch** *Carpodacus nipalensis*--small groups in forest clearings and amongst scrub higher up.
- Beautiful Rosefinch** *Carpodacus pulcherrimus*--very common in the fields and scrub around Langtang and Sindum (mainly the very dull females and immatures). Smaller numbers also seen near Laurevina.
- Pink-browed Rosefinch** *Carpodacus modochrous*--several small groups noted in forest clearings.
- Spot-winged Rosefinch** *Carpodacus rhodopeplus*--two definite sightings, of a male between Syabru and Singompa, and a female in the scrub beside Evening View Lodge.
- White-browed Rosefinch** *Carpodacus thura*--quite numerous in the juniper and rhodedendrons between Singompa and Laurevina.
- Red-headed Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula erythrocephala*--small parties seen in the buckthorn scrub near Ghoda Tabela and in conifers near Laurevina.
- White-winged Grosbeak** *Mycerobius carniper*--several small flocks were seen in the juniper scrub and adjoining trees between Singompa and Laurevina.

Checklist of mammals.

Grey Langur *Presbytis entellus*--a large troop of about 20 animals were seen in the forest just above Dhunche, on the way down from Singompa. Also a smaller group below the road into the town. The first troop included at least two young babies.

Yellow-throated Martin *Marten flavigula*--two were seen together in the forest below Ghoda Tabela.

Wild Boar *Sus scrofa*--one seen extremely (!) briefly in the forest near Ghoda Tabela.

Himalayan Tahr *Hemitragus jemlaticus*--three together feeding on the cliff above Ghoda Tabela. Very agile, but also exceedingly difficult to make out, their dark brown tones blending into the rock.

pika sp. *ochotona*--seen on the boulder screes of Yala Peak. Also at Gosainkund, where a particularly tame individual was watched stealing food from a plate outside one of the lodges.

unidentified **squirrels**--numerous sightings in the forested areas.

References.

Ali. A Pictorial Guide to the birds of the Indian Subcontinent.

Fleming. Birds of Nepal.

Inskipp, C. (1988) A Birdwatcher's Guide to Nepal. Prion Ltd, Sandy.