

PILCHER (1990)



Not intended primarily as a birding trip, this visit was arranged at short notice to meet up with our daughter who, during a trans-Asian journey, was due back in Nepal about Easter. The uncertainty was compounded by pro-Democracy demonstrations in Kathmandu (delaying our arrival by 3 days) and the subsequent curfew imposed by the Army.

After 2 days in Kathmandu we took a Coach 200km N.W. to Pokhara - a start-point for trekking into the Annapurna region. At an elevation of 800 metres by the tranquil Lake Phewa, and with stunning early-morning views of the Himalayas, it proved to be a relaxing place to stay. The coach journey took almost 8 hours - including halts for refreshment and removal of dust from hair and clothes.

Reports of bad weather on the Jomsom trail, violent thunderstorms over the hills each evening and increasingly poor views of the high peaks in the mornings made us decide to stay near Pokhara and forget any trekking ourselves. We later heard that 2 hot-air balloon expeditions by British and Japanese teams to fly over the mountains had been cancelled! I explored the shores of the lake, the gorge of the Seti Khola river to the south and the dry wooded hills behind the dam in the S.E. corner of the lake.

During a final 2 days in Kathmandu a day visit was made to the Royal Botanical Gardens at Godaveri and the slopes of Pholchowki Hill 15km to the south of the city.

The English and Latin names used in the bird list follow the order in "The Birds of Nepal" (Fleming) 3rd Edition 1984.

1. Gray Heron (*Ardea cinerea*): one on N side of Lake Phewa, Pokhara - feeding in the shallows 15th April.
2. Little Green Heron (*Butorides striatus*): singles S.E. Lake Phewa and Seti Khola river valley on 4 days.
3. Pond Heron (*Ardeola grayii*): common in wet fields, Kathmandu to Pokhara.
4. Night Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*): one flying out of King's Palace Gardens early morning 23rd April.
5. Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*): (almost) everywhere.
6. \*Intermediate Egret (*Egretta intermedia*): 2 on paddyfields S. of Phewa lake dam on 14th April.  
\*Observer very familiar with this bird in West Africa.
7. Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*): fairly common in Pokhara area.
8. Eurasian Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*): single bird flying N.W. over Phewa lake at 6 a.m. on 17th April and again at about the same time on April 18th!
9. Common Pochard (*Aythya ferina*): single male on N. side of Phewa lake on 15th April
10. Tufted Pochard (*Aythya fuligula*): pair on N. side Phewa lake on 15th April.
11. Honey Kite (*Pernis ptilorhynchus*): 2 over wooded hillside N. of Phewa lake on 15th April.
12. Dark Kite (*Milvus migrans*): seen commonly everywhere.
13. Sparrow Hawk (*Accipiter nisus*): sitting bird on cliff bush near Seti Khola river on 15th April. (Larger size, no mesial throat stripe and 4 darkish tail-bands eliminated Shikra - well known to the observer in W. Africa).
14. Eurasian Buteo (*Buteo buteo*): single bird, with very pale crown, over S. Phewa lake hillside on 15th April.
15. Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*): single bird with recently caught fish in cliff-edge tree at Seti Khola river gorge on 15th April.
16. Black Vulture (*Torgos calvus*): Full adult at close range over hillside N. of Phewa lake on 15th April.
17. White-backed Vulture (*Gyps bengalensis*): over hillsides around Pokhara on most days.
18. Egyptian Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*): commonly seen around Pokhara. Up to 20 birds roosting in tall trees in Seti Khola river gorge.
19. Eurasian Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*): singles seen in Pokhara and Kathmandu areas.
20. Kalij Pheasant (*Lophura leucomelana*): 1 or 2 pairs located by listening for the rustling sounds as the birds foraged in dry leaves on the forest floor. Several species were found this way in the wooded area behind Phewa lake dam.
21. White-breasted Waterhen (*Amaurornis phoenicurus*): single secretive bird seen at the grassy edge at the S.E. corner of Phewa lake - early morning on 14th April.
22. Coot (*Fulica atra*): 6 birds N: side of Phewa lake on 15th April.

23. Bronze-winged Jacana (*Metopidius indicus*): single bird on floating vegetation, N side of lake Phewa on 15th April.
24. Spur-winged Lapwing (*Vanellus spinosus*): pair in Seti Khola river gorge on 20th April
25. Green Sandpiper (*Tringa ochropus*): single bird at Seti Khola river on 20th April.
26. Common Sandpiper (*Tringa hypoleucos*): 1 or 2 birds on 3 days around Phewa lake.
27. Bengal Green Pigeon (*Treron phoenicoptera*): 6 birds at Seti Khola river on 20th April
28. Hill Pigeon (*Columba rupestris*): common in rocky gorge areas around Pokhara.
29. Blue Rock Pigeon (*Columba livia*): common in the towns.
30. Rufous Turtle Dove (*Streptopelia orientalis*): fairly common in woodland areas around Pokhara.
31. Spotted Dove (*Streptopelia chinensis*): fairly common in open fields around Pokhara.
32. Rose-ringed Parakeet (*Psittacula krameri*): small parties flying noisily over wooded hillsides at dawn on most days in the Pokhara area.
33. Eurasian Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*): seen and heard most days around Pokhara.
34. Himalayan Cuckoo (*Cuculus saturatus*): seen and heard every day at Pokhara. Single birds flying around calling throughout the hours of darkness.
35. Koel Cuckoo (*Eudynamys scolopacea*): Heard every day in the hills around Pokhara. Calls often persisted from 15 to 30 minutes but the birds were never seen!
36. Spotted Owlet (*Athene brama*): Heard most evenings. Single bird found hunting insects around a street lamp in Pokhara on 21st April.
37. Indian Roller (*Coracias benghalensis*): single bird in a dead tree, Seti Khola river gorge on 20th April.
38. Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*): single bird near marble quarry at Godaveri on 23rd April.
39. Small Pied Kingfisher (*Ceryle rudis*): fairly common around Phewa lake at Pokhara.
40. Eurasian Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*): single birds on 3 days at Phewa lake outflow dykes.
41. White-breasted Kingfisher (*Halcyon smyrnensis*): common in most Pokhara habitats.
42. Chestnut-headed Bee-eater (*Merops leschnaulti*): 4 birds in dead tree in Seti Khola river gorge on 20th April.
43. Great Himalayan Barbet (*Megalaima virens*): single bird in trees near Fish Tail Lodge at Pokhara on 15th April.
44. Blue-throated Barbet (*Megalaima asiatica*): single birds on 3 days in woods around Pokhara.
45. Crimson-breasted Barbet (*Megalaima haemacephala*): single birds on 2 days in Pokhara woodland areas.
46. Gray-crowned Pygmy Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos canicapillus*): pair in the woods behind Phewa lake dam on 19th April.
47. Black-naped Woodpecker (*Picus canus*): fairly common in woods behind Phewa dam.
48. Large Yellow-naped Woodpecker (*Picus flavinuca*): fairly common in woods behind Phewa lake dam.
49. Himalayan Pied Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos himalayensis*): single bird in big tree on hilltop behind Phewa dam on 16th April. Distinctive face pattern and black gular stripe well seen. (Bird at apparently lower-than-expected altitude?).
50. House Swift (*Apus affinis*): common in all built-up areas.
51. Alpine Swift (*Apus melba*): 10 birds at Coach halt half way to Pokhara from Kathmandu on 13th April.
52. Sand Martin (*Riparia paludicola*): over 100 birds wheeling S ahead of evening northerly thunderstorm at Seti Khola gorge Pokhara on 15th April
53. (Barn) Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*): common around Pokhara and in Kathmandu city.
54. Striated Swallow (*Hirundo daurica*): seen on most days at Pokhara usually over smaller stream beds.
55. Black-headed or Rufous-backed Shrike (*Lanius schach*): single birds (of both forms) in fields around Pokhara on most days.
56. Golden Oriole (*Oriolus oriolus*): seen (and heard often) on 3 days in lake-edge woods at Pokhara.
57. Maroon Oriole (*Oriolus traillii*): 1 or 2 calling on most days in woods above Phewa lake dam. Difficult to see but white eye-ring and dark maroon tail confirmed on two days.
58. Hair-crested Drongo (*Dicrurus hottentottus*): fairly common in damper park areas around Phewa lake.
59. Ashy Drongo (*Dicrurus leucophaeus*): 2 birds in garden of Fish Tail Lodge, Phewa lake on 15th April.
60. Black Drongo (*Dicrurus adsimilis*): very common almost everywhere.
61. Gray-headed Myna (*Sturnus malabaricus*): small parties of these birds in open fields on 17th April and in Seti Khola river gorge, Pokhara on 20th April.

62. Common Myna (*Acridotheres tristis*): very common everywhere.
63. Jungle Myna (*Acridotheres fuscus*): seen on most days but less common than Common Myna.
64. Green Magpie (*Cissa chinensis*): seen nearly every visit to the woods above Phewa lake dam at Pokhara. A spectacular bird! All except one (seen catching a 5" green lizard), had plumage faded or varying from the bright green depicted in Fleming's book, to shades of pale turquoise.
65. Red-billed Blue Magpie (*Cissa erythrorhynca*): seen on 3 days - parties of up to 6 birds - in the woods above Phewa lake dam and in Godaveri Botanical Gardens.
66. Himalayan Tree Pie (*Dendrocitta formosae*): Common in the woods above Phewa lake dam. N.B. No Indian Tree Pies were seen in the area.
67. House Crow (*Corvus splendens*): Common everywhere.
68. Jungle Crow (*Corvus macrorhynchos*): Also fairly common but less frequent near human habitation.
69. Large Cuckoo-Shrike (*Coracina novaehollandiae*): 1 or 2 pairs in tall trees around Fish Tail Lodge, Pokhara and the surrounding hills. Classic views of perched birds calling and raising alternate wings at the same time.
70. Dark Cuckoo-Shrike (*Coracina melaschistos*): smaller than the above and seen singly in lower woods at Pokhara on several days and at Godaveri on 23rd April.
71. Scarlet Minivet (*Pericocrotus flammeus*): seen on 3 days in the woods above Phewa lake dam and at Godaveri on 23rd April.
72. Orange-bellied Leaf Bird (*Chloropsis hardwickii*): single birds and an occasional pair on most days in the hills around Pokhara.
73. White-cheeked Bulbul (*Pycnonotus leucogenys*): 4 birds on 14th April and 1 on 20th near Phewa lake dam outflow. Single bird at Godaveri School on 23rd April.
74. Red-vented Bulbul (*Pycnonotus cafer*): Common around human habitation at Pokhara and in Kathmandu gardens.
75. Brown-eared Bulbul (*Hypsipetes flavalus*): single bird in tall tree near Phewa lake dam on 21st April.
76. White-throated Laughing Thrush (*Garrulax albogularis*): single bird seen in dense mixed woodland at approx. 5000 ft on Pholchowki Hill on 23rd April.
77. White-crested Laughing Thrush (*Garrulax leucolophus*): parties of 6 to 8 of these striking birds seen on 2 days in the woods above Phewa lake dam, moving through the trees and keeping up a chorus of low contact notes.
78. Brown Flycatcher (*Muscicapa latirostris*): single bird, considered to be of this species, seen near Phewa lake dam on 14th April. Appeared quite bulky and was completely pale on the underparts (no breast band).
79. White-browed Blue Flycatcher (*Muscicapa superciliaris*): Pair seen in tall trees near Botanical Gardens, Godaveri on 23rd April, considered to be of this species.
80. Blue-throated Flycatcher (*Muscicapa rubeculoides*): Pair holding territory in lower hill woodland behind Phewa lake dam - seen in the same place on 3 days.
81. Zitting Cisticola (*Cisticola juncidis*): single birds calling in flight on 2 days over rice paddies near Pokhara.
82. Tailor Bird (*Graminicola bengalensis*): Around gardens and hotel hedges, on most days at Pokhara.
83. Plain Leaf Warbler (*Phylloscopus inornatus*): Fairly common in low hillside trees around Pokhara.
84. Gray-headed Warbler (*Seicercus xanthoschistos*): Also fairly common throughout the forested hills around Pokhara.
85. Chestnut-crowned Warbler (*Seicercus castaniceps*): Pair well seen in trees near Fish Tail Lodge, Pokhara on 15th April. White eye-ring very noticeable.
86. Robin Dayal (Magpie Robin) (*Copsychus saularis*): Commonest singing garden bird in Nepal.
87. White-capped River Chat (*Chaimarrornis leucocephalus*): Pair on 2 days in grassy areas of the Seti Khola river gorge.
88. Plumbeous Redstart (*Rhynacornis fuliginosus*): Breeding pair by Phewa lake dam outflow. Another pair in Seti Khola river gorge on 20th April.
89. Collared Bush Chat (Stonechat) (*Saxicola torquata*): Pair in Seti Khola river gorge on 20th April.
90. Pied Bush Chat (*Saxicola caprata*): Fairly common, mostly pairs, on rough scrub areas around fields at Pokhara.
91. Blue Rock Thrush (*Monticola solitarius*): Male seen at close range on large rocks in upper half of Seti Khola gorge on 20th April.
92. Orange-headed Ground Thrush (*Zoothera citrina*): Pair seen on 2 days feeding on leafy forest floor in hills behind Phewa lake dam, Pokhara.

93. Speckled Mountain Thrush (*Zoothera dauma*): single birds seen on 3 days in the same areas as the previous species, vigorously turning over leaf-mould whilst feeding.
94. Whistling Thrush (*Myiophonus caeruleus*): Large, Jackdaw-like on the ground. Common in rocky areas near water at Pokhara. Most noticeable loud whistling song away from human habitation.
95. Gray Tit (*Parus major*): single bird on slopes up to Monkey Temple, Kathmandu on 12th April. (A grey washed-out looking Great Tit).
96. Green-backed Tit (*Parus monticolus*): single "great tit" with bright yellow underparts and white cheeks at approx. 6000 ft. on Pholchowki Hill on 23rd April.
97. Yellow-cheeked Tit (*Parus xanthogenys*): very common in all forest areas around Pokhara. Several family parties with fully-fledged young showing no black on their plain fawn upperparts; dull whitish below; yellowish mantle and tail and fawn crest and wings.
98. Red-headed Tit (*Aegithalos concinnus*): several of these active, striking birds in tall trees near the Botanical Gardens, Godaveri on 23rd April.
99. Velvet-fronted Nuthatch (*Sitta frontalis*): seen on 3 days in woods behind Phewa lake dam, Pokhara.
100. Paddyfield Pipit (*Anthus novaeseelandiae*): Common in paddyfields near Pokhara.
101. Gray Wagtail (*Motacilla caspica*): single bird 17th April and a pair on 20th April in the Seti Khola gorge.
102. Pied Wagtail (*Motacilla alba*): single bird on 14th April on the shore of Phewa lake.
103. Large Pied Wagtail (*Motacilla maderaspatensis*): single bird on Seti Khola river bank on 20th April.
104. Scarlet-breasted Sunbird (*Aethopyga siparaja*): Pair visiting Hibiscus flowers in hotel garden every day at Pokhara. Also in the Botanical Gardens, Godaveri on 23rd April.
105. White-eye (*Zosterops palpebrosa*): Fairly common in wooded areas around Pokhara and Godaveri.
106. House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*): Common around human habitation.
107. Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*): Nearly as common as House Sparrow and in the same habitat.
108. Sharp-tailed Munia (*Lonchura striata*): Party of 6 to 10 birds visited hotel garden in Pokhara on most days.
109. Allied Grosbeak (*Mycerobas affinis*); 4 birds (all females or juveniles) feeding in a conifer at approx. 6000 ft. on Pholchowki Hill, Godaveri on 23rd April. (Lower than expected altitude?).
110. Crested Bunting (*Melophus lathami*): 2 pairs in Seti Khola river gorge on 20th April.

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