



Birding Rajasthan

Desert National Park, Tal Chhapar

20–28 November 2020

Trip Report

<https://bubobirding.com/rajasthan-desert-national-park-tal-chhapar-trip-report-november-2020/>



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Logistics: [Asian Adventures](#)

Summary

The third in our series of short “Looking up from lockdown” tours to top Indian birding destinations, taking advantage of a relaxation in COVID-19 restrictions. Itineraries were designed to be easy-paced, minimising travel, and using established bases that we knew to be implementing sensible health precautions. Overall birding was as usual fantastic, and we definitely felt safer being in outside environments in remote and uncrowded places, than stuck at home in towns and cities hardly getting out!

Driving from Delhi, we spent two nights near Tal Chhapar Wildlife Sanctuary, one at Bikaner, and three at Sam in the Thar Desert. Whilst we would normally fly back from Jodhpur, we decided instead to do the long drive back, and spent a further night in Pushkar. Mohit, founder of [Asian Adventures](#), and Vivek Menon, founder of [Wildlife Trust of India](#), joined us for the first part of the tour. Digvijay Singh Rathore and his son Vijayaditya were present for most of the trip, finishing in Jodhpur where they live. Being Rajasthan residents, they knew most of the area better than we did, and we probably tapped their knowledge as much as they did ours! It was great to have such entertaining and educating discussions on birds and conservation in Rajasthan. Of course, with Vivek and Mohit both present until Bikaner, we actually probably discussed most hot Indian conservation topics in the course of the trip!

Altogether we saw 209 species in just over a week, including travel days. Rajasthan has spectacular birding and, more than just the species numbers, the birding experiences were wonderful. It’s hard to single out a highlight, but to end up seeing 10 different Great Indian Bustards—almost 10% of the remaining global population—was up there of course. Vivek and Mohit had left by then so missed out on this but, not to be outdone, caught up with unprecedented numbers of wintering Long- and Short-eared Owls.

This tour involved quite a lot of travel for short trip—we would normally have at least a couple more days for just the [Rajasthan highlights](#), and there are numerous options to do the state justice, including taking in the best of Gujarat as we do on our [main tour of this region](#). There is still plenty of scope for exploring and discovering new birding spots in Rajasthan, so do [contact us](#) if you are interested in joining us for this!



Indian Spotted Creeper © Vivek Menon

View the web version of this trip report, with many more images, at <https://bubobirding.com/rajasthan-desert-national-park-tal-chhapar-trip-report-november-2020/>.

Tour Diary

Delhi to Tal Chhapar

The first day was predominantly a travel day, but we planned to arrive in the late afternoon at some thorn scrub forest near Nechwa, near Salasar, to look for Spotted Creeper. We left early from Delhi to give us time for a couple of ad-hoc stops in promising habitat before this. Our first birding surprise was at an early morning chai stop: whilst enjoying the warming tea on a chilly and slightly foggy morning, we came across an interesting leucistic Large Grey Babbler in a flock of normally plumaged birds: it was mostly white except for brownish-black wings and central tail feathers, and flecking on the head, and had a pale pink bill and yellow eye.

Our first exploratory stop was at Raiwasa Lake, in Sikar district. This is a huge area, and with just a short stop we could not check it thoroughly. As it happened, the area we decided to investigate was predominantly dry, but a small pool held a large flock of Spotted Redshanks, some Pied Avocets, Little Stints and, most significantly here, a single Northern Lapwing. A juvenile Bonelli's Eagle in flight was good to see, and the surrounds gave us Great Grey Shrike, White-browed Fantail, Rufous-tailed and Crested Larks, Isabelline and Desert Wheatears, and Tawny Pipit. We could easily have spent a day here to cover the entire area!

<https://ebird.org/india/checklist/S76436284>

Although we were short of time, an extensive area of thorn scrub on the map looked worth exploring, particularly for Marshall's Iora, White-naped Tit and White-bellied Minivet. With less than an hour here in the middle of the day our chances were slim, so we were delighted when we found a pair of minivets, and a decent selection of overall birds. We will definitely come back here for longer on a future trip.

<https://ebird.org/india/checklist/S76436299>

<https://ebird.org/india/checklist/S76436367>

Spotted Creeper is an uncommon Indian endemic, found mainly in stands of *khejri* (*Prosopis cineraria*) trees. It has never been common and is thinly distributed throughout its known range, with so little data that its status is "data deficient" according to [State of India's Birds](#). However, it has definitely disappeared from some previously regular sites, and is almost certainly declining and threatened. We spent some time looking



Large Grey Babbler © Mike Prince



Great Grey Shrike © Mike Prince

for it around Nechwa without success, although did find Rufous-fronted Prinias and White-capped Buntings. Never mind, we had another site to try over the next couple of days...

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S76436402>

Tal Chhapar Wildlife Sanctuary

Tal Chhapar in Churu district of Rajasthan is a remarkable site for birding and other wildlife. The main sanctuary is just 9 sq km of grassland, with a large population of Blackbuck. In fact, too large, with currently more than 3,000 present with no natural predators, meaning that the Forest Department is likely to start a relocation programme to take many of them elsewhere. The recently retired Range Forest Officer, Surat Singh Poonia, is credited with restoring the habitat to the fine reserve it is today. He also happens to be a great birder! We were fortunate that he joined us for our stay here and we were able to get the benefit of his immense knowledge about birds here, and wider conservation issues. We were also joined for some of the time by Gobind Sagar Bhardwaj, Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and well-known conservationist in Rajasthan, so, together with Vivek and Mohit, we had no shortage of conversations about Tal Chhapar, bustards, floricans, tigers, cheetahs and almost every conservation issue in Rajasthan and elsewhere during the couple of days!

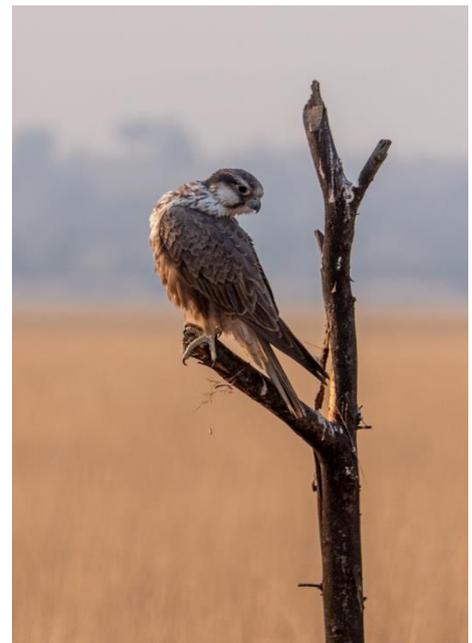


Blackbucks at Tal Chhapar © Mike Prince

At Tal Chhapar we were also joined by father and son birding duo Digvijay and Vijayaditya Singh Rathore, who are from Jodhpur and thus their knowledge of Rajasthan, birding and otherwise, was excellent. As well as being an exceptionally good photographer, Vijayaditya had recently published *Birds of Chandbagh*, a book with a detailed summary of the birds of the campus of The Doon School. Overall, therefore, we had a diverse and extremely knowledgeable and fun group for this tour.

Tal Chhapar sanctuary is best explored slowly by car, which allows close approach and excellent photographic opportunities for the Blackbuck, Chinkara and Nilgai, and the many raptors, larks, pipits and other desert specialists here. Large numbers gather on passage in September and October here, with a bit of a lull before winter peaks. Thankfully during this slightly quieter time of year there is still fantastic variety, if not so many birds.

Our first day inside the sanctuary produced three species of harrier, Eastern Imperial Eagle, Long-legged Buzzard, Black-winged Kite,



Laggar Falcon © Mike Prince

Laggar Falcon, Eurasian Sparrowhawk, and Common Kestrel, all giving fantastic views. A few Greater Short-toed Larks were seen (not the 5,000 I recorded on my last visit!) as well as Crested Lark and Indian Bushlark, Tawny Pipit and Long-billed Pipit. A flock of Common Cranes was slightly unusual, for Demoiselle are much more frequently encountered here. Chestnut-billed Sandgrouse were common.

One highlight was a Stoliczka's (White-browed) Bushchat—another little-known bird that is quite reliably found here—and a Red-tailed Wheatear another excellent find. Unfortunately, we just had flight views of two Yellow-eyed Pigeons, another key target species found in just a few Rajasthan sites, but we were confident of seeing more later in the trip.

There aren't too many options for a comfortable stay at Tal Chhapar. Whilst Vivek and Mohit had rooms in the impressive Forest Guest House there, the rest of us stayed at [Raptor's Inn](#), a simple and appropriately named homestay.



Stoliczka's Bushchat © Mike Prince

<https://ebird.org/india/checklist/S76475975>

<https://ebird.org/india/checklist/S76575419>

The top area for Spotted Creeper here is Gaushala, on the outskirts of the sanctuary. A brief visit here failed to find them, but did add Tawny and Steppe Eagles, Egyptian Vulture, and several Rufous-fronted Prinias. Remarkably, we managed to find males of the three forms of the aptly named Variable Wheatear, within just 30 minutes. These are often considered subspecies but are known to interbreed and may best be considered different morphs.

<https://ebird.org/india/checklist/S76575218>

<https://ebird.org/india/checklist/S76575426>



Variable Wheatears (left to right: picata, opisthoelua, capistrata) © Mike Prince

The second morning inside the sanctuary, produced more of the same, plus Common Quail, and Black Francolin, but another Gaushala visit for the Creeper was unsuccessful.

<https://ebird.org/india/checklist/S76575471>

We then decided to split up, with Vivek and Mohit especially keen for another attempt for Spotted Creeper, and others preferring to reach Jorbeer, near Bikaner, in time for a late afternoon raptor watching. Of course, even though we made the decision to leave, that didn't stop us being very jealous of the superb photos and

video that Vivek and Mohit were to show us of the Spotted Creeper—in the same tree that we had looked at at least three times—when we met again in the evening!

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S79917093>

Vivek and Mohit also visited a carcass dump that had a few Egyptian Vultures present, all being the resident Indian subspecies *griseocapillus* (with a pale tip to the bill).

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S79917092>

Jorbeer Conservation Reserve, Bikaner

Putting the Spotted Creeper disappointment to one side, the experience at Jorbeer was amazing. Now declared as a Vulture Sanctuary, this is a dumping ground for carcasses of cows, camels, and other animals. Whilst the stench and sight of decomposing bodies might not be the favourite memory of the trip—maybe I'm hardened to it however, since it wasn't as bad as I remembered from my last visit!—the incredibly close views of such large numbers of vultures, eagles, and other raptors, are unforgettable.

One advantage with an evening visit, rather than on a cool and often foggy morning, is that many birds are in flight, and the consequent views and photographic opportunities are unparalleled. Numbers build up to several thousand in mid-winter, but we were happy to make do with about 500 Egyptian Vultures, 50 Eurasian Griffons, 80 Steppe Eagles, many Black-eared Kites (the wintering *lineatus* subspecies of Black Kite) and smaller numbers of Cinereous Vulture (interestingly, one with a single white greater covert on each wing), Tawny Eagle, Eastern Imperial Eagle, plus a single Shikra and superb close views of Laggar Falcon.



Vultures at Jorbeer © Mike Prince

Interestingly all the Egyptian Vultures that we checked were of the migratory *percnopterus* subspecies, with a black-tipped yellow bill—in complete contrast to the birds near Tal Chhapar.

We also saw “Punjab” Raven, the *laurencei* subspecies of Common Raven, Isabelline Shrike, large flocks of both Rosy and European Starlings, Red-naped Ibis, and the incongruous sight of Eurasian Hoopoe feeding amongst the carcasses.

Jorbeer is usually the best location to see the wintering Yellow-eyed Pigeon, a severely declining species due to hunting and intense cultivation. Immediately on arrival I picked up a flock flying west, presumably to roost. Over the next 40 minutes, flocks continued to pour through. Although I started counting late and didn't count



Egyptian Vulture © Mike Prince

continuously as there were too many other birds I didn't want to miss, I still managed a remarkable count of at least 3,600 birds.



Tawny Eagle © Vijayaditya Singh Rathore



Steppe Eagle © Mike Prince



Eurasian Griffon © Vijayaditya Singh Rathore



Cinereous Vulture © Vijayaditya Singh Rathore



Red-naped Ibis © Vijayaditya Singh Rathore



Common Starling © Vijayaditya Singh Rathore

We stayed here until after dark, enjoying the wonderful sunset views, and even heard a Savanna Nightjar call as we left.

<https://ebird.org/india/checklist/S76575767>



Steppe Eagle, Egyptian Vulture, and Eurasian Griffon © Mike Prince

The following morning, now accompanied again by Vivek and Mohit, as well as local birder Jitu Solanki (some of us stayed at his simple homestay, Vinayak Guest House, while the rest used a more comfortable and conveniently located hotel), we first went to an area nearby to try to get closer views of the Yellow-eyed Pigeons. This we managed well, including seeing them perched together with Feral Pigeons, allowing a nice comparison of the clear differences. A Eurasian Wryneck and Desert Whitethroat were also seen well here.

<https://ebird.org/india/checklist/S76583413>

Once again, we split up, with Vivek and Mohit, and Digvijay and Vijayaditya heading to Jorbeer, whilst the rest of decided to explore a bit first, and went to Bhojan Shala, a waterbody nearby. There was a nice selection of waterbirds present, including Common Shelduck and Mallard, both fairly scarce species in India, plus Kentish Plover and Dunlin, a single Black-headed Gull, and a small flock of Greater Flamingo flew overhead several times before deciding not to settle here. A pair of Sind Sparrows were present in the single tree in the middle of an empty field.

Yellow-eyed Pigeons were here in huge numbers, with flocks coming down to drink, and perching on the overhead wires—interestingly each one sat an exact pigeon-sized space away from its neighbour, which I’ve never noticed with Feral Pigeons. Social distancing pigeon-style!

<https://ebird.org/india/checklist/S76583431>



Yellow-eyed Pigeon © Mike Prince

We then returned to the carcass dump, where there were similar numbers and variety of birds as the previous day.

<https://ebird.org/india/checklist/S76583438>

Bikaner to Jaisalmer, via Khichan

Leaving Bikaner, we started on the long drive to the camp in the desert near Sam, west of Jaisalmer, which was to be our base for the next three nights. We had a very quick stop at Diyatra, formerly one of the strongholds of Great Indian Bustard but with irregular sightings these days. Rather than explore here though, we wanted to concentrate on better habitat near Pokhran, and also check the Demoiselle Cranes at Khichan.

Khichan is a famous site and a must-visit on a tour of western Rajasthan. The wintering flock of several thousand Demoiselle Cranes are attracted to grain put out by the local villagers who welcome their arrival, and morning and evening feeding times are an amazing sight. Whilst we were at the wrong time for that, there are always flocks present in the surrounding area all day and we spent some time listening and watching a close group of 1,600 birds.



Demoiselle Cranes at Khichan © Mike Prince

<https://ebird.org/india/checklist/S76584660>

Vivek had to head back to Delhi rather than continue on to Desert National Park, so our group parted company at Khichan. Mohit and Vivek spent the night here, enjoying the spectacle of about 4,000 cranes feeding in the morning. They then drove back to Delhi, with a one-night stay near Surajgarh to break the journey and to do some birding with Surat Singh Poonia at some of his local patches. This included seeing an incredible number of both wintering Long- and

Short-eared Owls, the former especially unusual in India. Due to disturbance, particularly from photographers unfortunately, the exact location, which S S Poonia has watched for a number of years, needs to be kept secret. White-bellied Minivet was another notable find here.

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S79917094> (location incorrect to protect sensitive species)



Long-eared Owl © Vivek Menon

Short-eared Owl © Vivek Menon

The rest of us continued west, reaching an area near Pokhran for some birding before dark. Here we met local birder/photographer Divesh Kumar Saini, who on arrival told us about a Sociable Lapwing he'd found there a couple of weeks previously! Within a few minutes we were watching a fantastic juvenile bird, which allowed close approach and some excellent photos. Small numbers of this highly endangered species have recently been discovered to winter regularly in parts of Rajasthan and Gujarat.

With not much time before dark we were also able to enjoy a lovely flock of Cream-coloured Coursers, the first of several sightings over the next couple of days, together with a single Indian Courser. A small group of Water Pipits was also a nice find.



Sociable Lapwing © Vijayaditya Singh Rathore

<https://ebird.org/india/checklist/S76586684>

By the time we arrived at our comfortable camp in the desert near Sam, the Paddav "Luxury" Camp, it was quite late. We enjoyed a cold beer and an excellent dinner and discussed the plans for the next day.

Desert National Park

The [Desert National Park](#) in the Thar Desert is probably the best arid habitat in India, with several species difficult to see elsewhere. Star of course is the critically endangered [Great Indian Bustard](#), whose precarious hopes for survival hinge on increasing local conservation measures, particularly protection of habitat from development.

Our first priority was to visit the most likely area to find Great Indian Bustards, in and around the fenced enclosure at Sudasari. When we arrived, we saw a group of Eurasian Griffons at a carcass, and with them was one White-rumped Vulture, now a rare sighting anywhere. We also had excellent views of Bimaculated Larks, feeding with Greater Short-toed.

<https://ebird.org/india/checklist/S76673933>

Digvijay had arranged permission for us to drive in his 4x4 inside the enclosure, and we slowly went around, scanning constantly. The most abundant bird was House Sparrow, much of northwest India seeing large flocks of one of the wintering subspecies—these are often assumed to be *parkini*, “Kashmir House Sparrow” from the western Himalayas, but are likely to also include the completely migratory *bactrianus*, from further north into Central Asia. We flushed a Common Quail from the path, and more raptors included a few Cinerous Vultures, Tawny and Steppe Eagles, Eurasian Sparrowhawk, a first calendar-year Hen Harrier, and a pair of Laggar Falcons.

We waited near a watering hole for a while and were treated to close comparisons of Greater Short-toed and Bimaculated Larks really illustrating the significant size difference, plus Black-crowned Sparrow Larks and Red-tailed Wheatear.

A small flock of Yellow-eyed Pigeons circled a few times and landed nearby, but unfortunately didn't come in to drink—they really are quite shy birds, unsurprisingly considering the amount of hunting they are subjected to, and our presence, albeit a little distant from the water, was probably still enough to put them off at that time.



Bimaculated and Greater Short-toed Larks © Mike Prince

<https://ebird.org/india/checklist/S76674012>

Enjoyable though the birding was, we didn't see any bustards, so tried another area, this time west of the main road. The bird selection was similar, also including a lovely male Pallid Harrier and a Stoliczka's Bushchat. We slowly drive up a ridge which would give us an excellent vantage point to scan the vast area ahead and, immediately over the top, was an incredibly close pair of Great Indian Bustards! Unfortunately, too close, for they immediately took off and we watched them fly off into the distance and away, but a thrilling moment, nevertheless.

<https://ebird.org/india/checklist/S76674094>

One of the benefits of the coronavirus restrictions for us is that remote working is the norm, so Vijayaditya was able to attend an online lecture via his laptop in the car at Sudasari! Whilst he did this the rest of us took another round through the main Sudasari enclosure, adding Short-toed Snake Eagle and Eastern Orphean Warbler.

<https://ebird.org/india/checklist/S76674140>

We were then met by local guide Uras Khan, part of the “Godawan Mitra” (Great Indian Bustard Friends) programme of community members who are employed to monitor bustards and other local wildlife. Digvijay and Vijayaditya were keen to go with him to find Trumpeter Finch and Red-headed Vulture, whilst the rest of us decided we’d rather do some exploring on foot, so we split up for the rest of the afternoon.

Both groups were successful, Vijayaditya getting excellent photos of those two target birds, whilst we chanced upon a brilliant group of three female Great Indian Bustards which we were able to watch walking through the grassland for about 15 minutes. We also saw two Asian Desert Warblers. They have a curious habit of following wheatears from bush to bush to feed. In this case, one followed a Variable and the other a Desert; I’m aware of them following both Isabelline and Mourning Wheatears in the Middle East as well! Digvijay and Vijayaditya joined us at the bustards, but unfortunately by the time they arrived the birds had all walked behind some bushes in the distant grassland and remained frustratingly out of sight!

<https://ebird.org/india/checklist/S76674209>

For the next day Uras accompanied us throughout and was a great help with some specific local knowledge and directions, even though he almost always mixed up his left and right! Human pressure is the greatest threat to the survival of Great Indian Bustard, and hence the involvement of the local community, through people like Uras, is crucial for its survival. The support from groups like us visiting the area is also important.

We decided first thing to try a waterbody to the north, which in some years has Black-bellied Sandgrouse come to drink. Previously known as Imperial Sandgrouse, this used to be an incredibly common bird, occurring in flocks of several thousand, but hunting especially has caused a drastic decline in Asia. Unfortunately, we had no luck, but super views of a Greater Hoopoe-Lark in the nearby desert, together with close Cream-coloured Coursers, made up for that.



Red-headed Vulture © Vijayaditya Singh Rathore



Great Indian Bustard © Mike Prince

<https://ebird.org/india/checklist/S76666058>



Greater Hoopoe-Lark © Vijayaditya Singh Rathore



Cream-coloured Courser © Vijayaditya Singh Rathore

The waterbody was productive birding however, with waders including Spotted Redshank, Kentish Plover, Temminck's and Little Stints, eight species of ducks, four species of wheatears, and three of wagtails.

<https://ebird.org/india/checklist/S76665829>

Exploring the general area, we found several hundred Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, although we arrived just as they were leaving a drinking pool.

<https://ebird.org/india/checklist/S76665811>

A chance stop beside the road when we saw a vulture from the car ended up producing an amazing 10 species of raptors in 10 minutes, including five vulture species.

<https://ebird.org/india/checklist/S76665728>

Returning to Sam, we then spent the afternoon doing a series of small birding stops between Sam and Khuri, from the Khabha Fort road, whenever we saw interesting habitat—which actually is most of the area! A small waterhole gave us close views of an amazing 45 Trumpeter Finches, we found Desert Larks at multiple places, and chanced upon a wonderful Indian Eagle Owl in a small stand of acacias. As it flew out it was dramatically dive-bombed by a pair of Laggar Falcons that appeared from nowhere—the action was all over in a few seconds before we had hardly had a chance to grab a breath. It was then that Deepak appeared from behind a bush to greet us with a “seen anything?”—if it wasn't for the single photo that Salil managed I'm still not sure he would believe us!



Trumpeter Finch © Vijayaditya Singh Rathore

<https://ebird.org/india/checklist/S76665667>



Indian Eagle Owl © Vijayaditya Singh Rathore



Indian Eagle Owl © Mike Prince

Our longest stop was at a fascinating abandoned Paliwal village, where old cenotaphs just lay in the rubble. It's an awe-inspiring place, and I wandered around enjoying the experience—and looking for buntings—until Uras told me to come away because (seriously) “a ghost might just come and sit on my shoulder”! Happily, that didn't happen, and I also found a Striolated Bunting not too far away. This site was especially good for Desert Larks and Red-tailed Wheatears, and we were treated to close views of a family of recently fledged Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse.

<https://ebird.org/india/checklist/S76665131>



Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse © Vijayaditya Singh Rathore

Continuing on towards the area we had been yesterday we were lucky to find another group of Great Indian Bustards, this time two males and two females. They were distant, but still flew when we were a long way

off. This meant we had seen 10 different individuals in our two days—not far off 10% of the remaining global population!

<https://ebird.org/india/checklist/S76665097>

Jaisalmer to Jodhpur, via Khetolai

With a long drive today, we set off before dawn so that we could manage some birding at Khetolai, meeting up with Divesh Kumar Saini again, and also Radheshyam Pemani Bishnoi, another local community volunteer. A large flock of Greater Short-toed Larks came down to drink, giving excellent photo opportunities.

We had our best views of Desert Whitethroat here, a separate species according to IOC but treated as a subspecies by eBird and Clements. One adult was quite distinctive but most “Lesser” Whitethroats are tricky, and the taxonomy and identification are definitely confusing. Another Asian Desert Warbler here followed one of the Desert Whitethroat—the first time I’ve seen one clearly associating with a bird that isn’t a wheatear!

<https://ebird.org/india/checklist/S76699139>

Divesh then took us to a remote carcass dump, where we had good close views of many Eurasian Griffons and a few Himalayan Griffons with them. Indian Vulture is regular here apparently, but not whilst we were watching. However, when we returned to the main road, we were lucky to see one flying close overhead: our only one on this trip.

Desert Whitethroat © Mike Prince

<https://ebird.org/india/checklist/S76699817>

The drive on to Jodhpur gave us a few roadside raptors, including two sightings of Bonelli’s Eagles. Here we parted company with Digvijay and Vijayaditya, and Deepak, Salil and I continued on to Pushkar where we were staying the night. We had hoped to visit Rao Jodha Desert Rock Park in Jodhpur, as this has held a couple of confusing Scops Owls recently—both Pallid and Eurasian have occurred here—but reluctantly decided to skip it rather than arrive too late at Pushkar.

Pushkar

Outside Pushkar are extensive areas of acacia thorn forest, and it is one of the more reliable places to find White-naped Tit. After a while of searching, we succeeded in finding them, and a wonderful flock of 12 White-bellied Minivets. There were some other new birds for the trip here, including White-bellied Drongo, Sulphur-bellied Warbler and Taiga Flycatcher.

<https://ebird.org/india/checklist/S76737158>

Anasagar Lake is in the centre of Ajmer but attracts a lot of birds. There was a large flock of Black-headed Gulls, with a few Brown-headed and three Lesser Black-backed Gulls, almost certainly *barabensis*



“Steppe” Gulls—one adult had quite a pale mantle, but the shape did not suggest Caspian Gull. Waders included Pied Avocets, Common Redshank, Marsh Sandpiper, and a large flock of Ruff. There were two Great White Pelicans, but unfortunately no Dalmatian.

<https://ebird.org/india/checklist/S76737223>

Okhla Bird Sanctuary

On the edge of Delhi and along the Yamuna River, we often visit Okhla Bird Sanctuary at the start or end of tours. There are a few birds here that are not easy to find elsewhere, and the last morning succeeded in finding three of these: Yellow-bellied Prinia, Striated Grassbird and Striated Babbler. The excellent selection of birds overall, also including White-tailed Lapwing, Pallas’s Gull, Moustached and Greenish Warblers, and Common Rosefinch, was a fitting end to a successful short tour.

<https://ebird.org/india/checklist/S76783775>



Red-tailed Wheatear © Mike Prince

Systematic List

Number in parentheses indicates the number of different days on which the species was recorded.

Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl *Anatidae*

1. Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus* (1)
2. Greylag Goose *Anser anser* (2)
3. Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* (2)
4. Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* (1)
5. Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata* (7)
6. Gadwall *Mareca strepera* (3)
7. Eurasian Wigeon *Mareca penelope* (1)
8. Indian Spot-billed Duck *Anas poecilorhyncha* (3)
9. Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* (3)
10. Northern Pintail *Anas acuta* (3)
11. Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca* (7)
12. Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina* (1)
13. Common Pochard *Aythya ferina* (2)
14. Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* (1)
15. Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* (2)

Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies *Phasianidae*

16. Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus* (7)
17. Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix* (2)
18. Black Francolin *Francolinus francolinus* (1)
19. Grey Francolin *Francolinus pondicerianus* (8)

Flamingos *Phoenicopteridae*

20. Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus* (1)

Grebes *Podicipedidae*

21. Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* (7)

Pigeons and Doves *Columbidae*

22. Rock Dove *Columba livia* (8)
23. Yellow-eyed Pigeon *Columba eversmanni* (4)
24. Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* (9)
25. Red Collared Dove *Streptopelia tranquebarica* (2)
26. Laughing Dove *Spilopelia senegalensis* (5)

Sandgrouse *Pteroclididae*

27. Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles exustus* (5)

Cuckoos *Cuculidae*

28. Greater Coucal *Centropus sinensis* (5)
29. Sirkeer Malkoha *Taccocua leschenaultii* (1)

30. Asian Koel *Eudynamys scolopaceus* (1)

Nightjars and Allies *Caprimulgidae*

31. Savanna Nightjar *Caprimulgus affinis* (1)

Swifts *Apodidae*

32. Little Swift *Apus affinis* (1)

Rails, Gallinules, and Coots *Rallidae*

33. Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* (3)
34. Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra* (5)
35. Grey-headed Swamphen *Porphyrio poliocephalus* (1)
36. White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus* (2)

Cranes *Gruidae*

37. Demoiselle Crane *Grus virgo* (2)
38. Common Crane *Grus grus* (3)

Stilts and Avocets *Recurvirostridae*

39. Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* (8)
40. Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* (2)

Plovers and Lapwings *Charadriidae*

41. Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* (1)
42. Red-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus* (8)
43. White-tailed Lapwing *Vanellus leucurus* (1)
44. Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* (3)
45. Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* (2)

Sandpipers and Allies *Scolopacidae*

46. Ruff *Calidris pugnax* (4)
47. Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii* (3)
48. Dunlin *Calidris alpina* (1)
49. Little Stint *Calidris minuta* (3)
50. Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* (1)
51. Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* (4)
52. Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* (4)
53. Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus* (3)
54. Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* (1)
55. Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* (1)
56. Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* (1)
57. Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* (2)

Pratincoles and Coursers *Glareolidae*

58. Cream-colored Courser *Cursorius cursor* (2)
59. Indian Courser *Cursorius coromandelicus* (1)

Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers *Laridae*

60. Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* (4)
61. Brown-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus brunnicephalus* (1)

- 62. Pallas's Gull *Ichthyaetus ichthyaetus* (1)
- 63. Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus* (1)
- 64. River Tern *Sterna aurantia* (5)

Storks *Ciconiidae*

- 65. Painted Stork *Mycteria leucocephala* (1)

Anhingas *Anhingidae*

- 66. Oriental Darter *Anhinga melanogaster* (1)

Cormorants and Shags *Phalacrocoracidae*

- 67. Little Cormorant *Microcarbo niger* (2)
- 68. Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* (4)

Pelicans *Pelecanidae*

- 69. Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* (1)

Hérons, Egrets, and Bitterns *Ardeidae*

- 70. Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* (4)
- 71. Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* (1)
- 72. Great Egret *Ardea alba* (2)
- 73. Intermediate Egret *Ardea intermedia* (2)
- 74. Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* (4)
- 75. Eastern Cattle Egret *Bubulcus coromandus* (4)
- 76. Indian Pond Heron *Ardeola grayii* (4)
- 77. Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* (1)

Ibises and Spoonbills *Threskiornithidae*

- 78. Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* (1)
- 79. Black-headed Ibis *Threskiornis melanocephalus* (1)
- 80. Red-naped Ibis *Pseudibis papillosa* (4)
- 81. Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* (2)

Hawks, Eagles, and Kites *Accipitridae*

- 82. Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus* (4)
- 83. Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* (7)
- 84. Cinereous Vulture *Aegypius monachus* (5)
- 85. White-rumped Vulture *Gyps bengalensis* (2)
- 86. Indian Vulture *Gyps indicus* (1)
- 87. Himalayan Vulture *Gyps himalayensis* (2)
- 88. Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus* (5)
- 89. Short-toed Snake Eagle *Circaetus gallicus* (2)
- 90. Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax* (4)
- 91. Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis* (5)
- 92. Eastern Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca* (3)
- 93. Bonelli's Eagle *Aquila fasciata* (2)
- 94. Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* (3)
- 95. Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* (1)

- 96. Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* (4)
- 97. Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* (2)
- 98. Shikra *Accipiter badius* (2)
- 99. Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* (4)
- 100. Black Kite *Milvus migrans* (3)
- 101. Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus* (5)

Owls *Strigidae*

- 102. Spotted Owlet *Athene brama* (1)
- 103. Long-eared Owl *Asio otus* (1)
- 104. Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* (1)

Hoopoes *Upupidae*

- 105. Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops* (5)

Kingfishers *Alcedinidae*

- 106. Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* (1)
- 107. White-throated Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis* (6)
- 108. Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis* (1)

Bee-eaters *Meropidae*

- 109. Green Bee-eater *Merops orientalis* (6)

Rollers *Coraciidae*

- 110. Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis* (4)

Woodpeckers *Picidae*

- 111. Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* (1)
- 112. Black-rumped Flameback *Dinopium benghalense* (1)

Falcons and Caracaras *Falconidae*

- 113. Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* (5)
- 114. Laggar Falcon *Falco jugger* (6)

Old World Parrots *Psittaculidae*

- 115. Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria* (1)
- 116. Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* (5)
- 117. Plum-headed Parakeet *Psittacula cyanocephala* (5)

Cuckooshrikes *Campephagidae*

- 118. White-bellied Minivet *Pericrocotus erythropygius* (2)
- 119. Small Minivet *Pericrocotus cinnamomeus* (3)

Vangas, Helmetshrikes, and Allies *Vangidae*

- 120. Common Woodshrike *Tephrodornis pondicerianus* (2)

Fantails *Rhipiduridae*

- 121. White-browed Fantail *Rhipidura aureola* (4)

Drongos *Dicruridae*

- 122. Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocercus* (8)
- 123. White-bellied Drongo *Dicrurus caerulescens* (1)

Shrikes *Laniidae*

- 124. Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* (3)
- 125. Bay-backed Shrike *Lanius vittatus* (3)
- 126. Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach* (2)
- 127. Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* (6)

Crows, Jays, and Magpies *Corvidae*

- 128. Rufous Treepie *Dendrocitta vagabunda* (3)
- 129. House Crow *Corvus splendens* (8)
- 130. Northern Raven *Corvus corax* (3)

Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice *Paridae*

- 131. Cinereous Tit *Parus cinereus* (1)
- 132. White-naped Tit *Machlolophus nuchalis* (1)

Larks *Alaudidae*

- 133. Greater Hoopoe-Lark *Alaemon alaudipes* (1)
- 134. Rufous-tailed Lark *Ammomanes phoenicura* (1)
- 135. Desert Lark *Ammomanes deserti* (1)
- 136. Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark *Eremopterix nigriceps* (2)
- 137. Indian Bush Lark *Mirafra erythroptera* (1)
- 138. Greater Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* (6)
- 139. Bimaculated Lark *Melanocorypha bimaculata* (3)
- 140. Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* (6)

Cisticolas and Allies *Cisticolidae*

- 141. Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius* (3)
- 142. Rufous-fronted Prinia *Prinia buchanani* (4)
- 143. Grey-breasted Prinia *Prinia hodgsonii* (2)
- 144. Yellow-bellied Prinia *Prinia flaviventris* (1)
- 145. Ashy Prinia *Prinia socialis* (1)
- 146. Plain Prinia *Prinia inornata* (2)
- 147. Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis* (2)

Reed Warblers and Allies *Acrocephalidae*

- 148. Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon* (1)
- 149. Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* (1)
- 150. Clamorous Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus* (1)

Grassbirds and Allies *Locustellidae*

- 151. Striated Grassbird *Megalurus palustris* (1)

Swallows *Hirundinidae*

- 152. Grey-throated Martin *Riparia chinensis* (5)
- 153. Dusky Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne concolor* (2)
- 154. Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* (5)
- 155. Wire-tailed Swallow *Hirundo smithii* (1)
- 156. Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica* (1)

Bulbuls *Pycnonotidae*

- 157. Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer* (8)
- 158. Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus* (1)
- 159. White-eared Bulbul *Pycnonotus leucotis* (7)

Leaf Warblers *Phylloscopidae*

- 160. Hume's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus humei* (4)
- 161. Sulphur-bellied Warbler *Phylloscopus griseolus* (1)
- 162. Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* (5)
- 163. Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* (1)

Sylviid Warblers, Parrotbills, and Allies *Sylviidae*

- 164. Asian Desert Warbler *Curruca nana* (3)
- 165. Lesser Whitethroat *Curruca curruca* (9)
- 166. Eastern Orphean Warbler *Curruca crassirostris* (1)

White-eyes, Yuhinas, and Allies *Zosteropidae*

- 167. Indian White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus* (2)

Laughingthrushes and Allies *Leiothrichidae*

- 168. Common Babbler *Argya caudata* (6)
- 169. Striated Babbler *Argya earlei* (1)
- 170. Large Grey Babbler *Argya malcolmi* (4)
- 171. Jungle Babbler *Argya striata* (4)

Treecreepers *Certhiidae*

- 172. Indian Spotted Creeper *Salpornis spilonota* (1)

Starlings *Sturnidae*

- 173. Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* (3)
- 174. Rosy Starling *Pastor roseus* (4)
- 175. Pied Myna *Gracupica contra* (3)
- 176. Brahminy Starling *Sturnia pagodarum* (1)
- 177. Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis* (4)
- 178. Bank Myna *Acridotheres ginginianus* (4)

Old World Flycatchers *Muscicapidae*

- 179. Indian Robin *Copsychus fulicatus* (5)
- 180. Oriental Magpie-Robin *Copsychus saularis* (2)
- 181. Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica* (1)
- 182. Taiga Flycatcher *Ficedula albicilla* (1)
- 183. Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva* (2)
- 184. Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* (7)
- 185. White-browed Bush Chat *Saxicola macrorhynchus* (4)
- 186. Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola maurus* (1)
- 187. Pied Bush Chat *Saxicola caprata* (1)
- 188. Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* (5)
- 189. Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* (7)

- 190. Brown Rock Chat *Oenanthe fusca* (3)
- 191. Variable Wheatear *Oenanthe picata* (7)
- 192. Red-tailed Wheatear *Oenanthe chrysopygia* (3)

Sunbirds and Spiderhunters *Nectariniidae*

- 193. Purple Sunbird *Cinnyris asiaticus* (3)

Waxbills and Allies *Estrildidae*

- 194. Red Avadavat *Amandava amandava* (1)
- 195. Indian Silverbill *Euodice malabarica* (5)

Old World Sparrows *Passeridae*

- 196. House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* (8)
- 197. Sind Sparrow *Passer pyrrhonotus* (1)
- 198. Yellow-throated Sparrow *Gymnoris xanthocollis* (2)

Wagtails and Pipits *Motacillidae*

- 199. Western Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* (1)
- 200. Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* (2)
- 201. White-browed Wagtail *Motacilla maderaspatensis* (1)
- 202. White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* (3)
- 203. Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis* (3)
- 204. Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris* (7)
- 205. Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta* (1)

Finches, Euphonias, and Allies *Fringillidae*

- 206. Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* (2)
- 207. Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus* (1)

Old World Buntings *Emberizidae*

- 208. White-capped Bunting *Emberiza stewarti* (2)
- 209. Striolated Bunting *Emberiza striolata* (1)

eBird Checklists

Date	Location	Checklist	
20 Nov 2020	Kallawas - Kaluwas Road 28.019, 76.479	S76428773	
	Raiwasa Lake & surroundings	S76436284	
	Basri Kalan	S76436299	
	Chitarwal Balaji Mandir	S76436367	
	Kothyari 27.628, 74.749	S76436402	
21 Nov 2020	Tal Chhapar Sanctuary	S76475975	
	Tal Chhapar WLS--Gaushala Area	S76575218	
	Beer Chhapar Rural Pond	S76575358	
	Tal Chhapar Sanctuary	S76575419	
	Tal Chhapar WLS--Gaushala Area	S76575426	
22 Nov 2020	Tal Chhapar Sanctuary	S76575440	
	Tal Chhapar Sanctuary	S76575471	
	Tal Chhapar WLS--Salt Pans	S76575514	
	Charwas Village Pond	S76575527	
	Tal Chhapar WLS--Gaushala Area	S76575537	
	Tal Chhapar Bypass Road	S76575569	
	Chhapar Village Chowk and Pond	S76530646	
	Sujangarh	S79917092	
	Jodhasar	S76575583	
	Jorbeer Vulture Conservation Centre	S76575767	
23 Nov 2020	Tal Chhapar WLS--Gaushala Area	S79917093	
	Junagarh Fort	S76577047	
	Jodbeer	S76583413	
	Bhojan Shala Rural	S76583431	
	Jorbeer Vulture Conservation Centre	S76583438	
	Diyatra	S76583399	
	Khichan--Vijaysagar Lake	S76584660	
	Bhomiyaji Mandir	S76586684	
	24 Nov 2020	Desert NP--Sudasari	S76673933
		Desert NP--Sudasari	S76674012
Desert NP--Sudasari		S76674094	
Khichan--Demoiselle Crane Feeding Station		S76621747	
Desert NP--Sudasari		S76674140	
Desert NP--Sam To Khuri Road		S76674209	
25 Nov 2020	Netsi Village	S76666058	
	Netsi Lake	S76665829	
	Netsi - Khuiyala Road	S76665811	
	Rajgarh Behal Road, Rajgarh, Churu	S79917094	
	Netsi - Sam Road 27.108, 70.415	S76665728	
	Jaisalmer - Sam Road 26.877, 70.606	S76665667	

Date	Location	Checklist
	Damodara - Khabra Road	S76665364
	Khabha Fort	S76665443
	Nabhdungar	S76665131
	Desert NP	S76665097
26 Nov 2020	Jaisalmer - Jodhpur Road, Nawatala 27.038, 71.623	S76698723
	Khetolai	S76699139
	Bhadriya	S76699817
	Bhomiyaji Mandir	S76699825
	Dechu	S76700004
	Jaisalmer - Jodhpur Road, Kanodiya Purohit, Rajasthan, IN (26.697, 72.324)	S76700008
	Jethaniya - Jodhpur Road, Veeramgarh, Rajasthan, IN (26.556, 72.354)	S76700010
	Barli Lake	S76700012
	Jodhpur - Ajmer Road 26.423, 73.089	S76700164
27 Nov 2020	Pushkar--Leela Seori	S76737158
	Pushkar Ghati View Point	S76737177
	Pushkar - Ajmer Road (26.494, 74.605)	S76737196
	Anasagar Lake	S76737223
	Delhi - Jaipur Road (27.195, 75.895)	S76738389
28 Nov 2020	Okhla Bird Sanctuary, Uttar Pradesh	S76783775