

Southern India's Western Ghats w/ Andaman Islands pre-tour Extension

Nov. 2-21, 2025 | Trip Report | by Chris Harbard



Local guides Avijit Sarkhel and Dhanish Trogon, with Natural Journeys host Chris Harbard and clients John, Daryl, Louis, Diana, Nancy, Harriet, Linda and Mariel.



Andaman Islands Extension

Sunday November 2

Afternoon birding | Preparation for departure

Everyone had arrived by the previous evening, and after a relaxing morning Chris met the group in the hotel lobby to do some local birding. Just a short walk down the road was a grassy field with scattered trees and bushes, just right for seeing some of the local species.



The first bird we saw was a Black Kite, slowly soaring over, on the lookout for something to scavenge. On top on a nearby bush sat a delightful Brown Shrike, and in the scope we could see the hooked tip to the bill which makes it like a mini bird of prey. On a nearby wire, Chris spotted a Black-shouldered Kite with its glaring red eyes. Two black birds were sitting on a tree branch, with long tails which ended in a deep fork. These were Black Drongos, which could be distinguished from the similar Ashy Drongos by the white spot on the face. A squawking overhead drew our attention to some Rose-ringed Parakeets flying past. Another black bird was spotted on a tree, but this one had a white belly, and white wing patch - an Oriental Magpie Robin, a great songster and we could just make out snatches of its lovely song.

At the distant edge of the field Diane spotted a bird swooping up and down which eventually revealed itself as an Asian Green Bee-eater, chasing after insect food. A pair of them were very active. Suddenly a bird of prey appeared, flying over us, showing a protruding head and longish tail. Diane and Nancy both took quick photos which helped confirm the identity of an Oriental Honey-Buzzard. Just as we were about to leave a small bird was seen in the vegetation in front of us, calling noisily. It perched up on a branch and showed a cocked tail, pale underparts and bright red eye - an Ashy Prinia. It was time to head back to the hotel and relax a little before dinner.

At 7 pm we gathered in the dining room for dinner and our guide Avi joined us. He explained the plans for tomorrow. At 6 am we should leave our luggage ready for departing to the airport for the flight to the Andaman Islands. Then we should come down to the lobby with any bags we wanted to leave, which we could pick up when we returned from our visit to the islands. At 6:30 we would leave the hotel and make our way to a nearby lake for some birding before our flight. A breakfast snack would be provided and we would arrange some food to eat on the plane so we could be ready to go birding as soon as we got off the plane. This meant we could make the most of the remaining daylight before checking in at the hotel. Nighttime owling was also a possibility that evening.

Chris then passed out the species checklists to everyone. Dinner arrived with some sweetcorn soup, followed by a variety of dishes, including butter chicken, chicken biryani, and raita, with accompanying roti bread. After a quick species list, it was time for bed and dreams of our first full day tomorrow.

Monday November 3 Lake birding | Flight to Port Blair | Big Tree Resort | Owls

We gathered in the lobby just after 6am and handed over our excess luggage for storage before boarding the minivan. Driving in India is always an experience as it is not only on the 'other' side of the road but seemingly has rules which are open to any interpretation. Most of the roads are good but there are always sections under



construction and very bumpy. Before long we reached Gantiganahalli Kere a wonderful lake with a path around it. Avi had his scope and we were soon scanning a variety of birds in front of us. It was a fantastic introduction to the birds of Bengaluru with sunbirds, flowerpeckers, barbet and bulbuls, along with kingfishers, egrets and many others. We saw 46 bird species in under two hours and also saw an Indian Gray Mongoose.

Soon it was time to head for the airport. Avi had warned us in advance that going through security would involve getting every piece of electronics out and in a tray, including chargers, cables, cameras, batteries and toothbrushes. After a thorough scrutiny we gathered at the gate, ready for our flight to the exciting Andaman Islands. Exiting at the Port Blair airport, the humidity hit us immediately, and so did a heavy shower of rain. While we waited for our transport we watched Plume-toed Swiftlets flying around the airport buildings. Our second other local guide, Dhanish Trogon, was there to meet us and we were soon on our way to the Big Tree Resort.

On our way we stopped at several places along the road to Chidaya Tapu to look for birds and soon saw our first endemics, Andaman Green Pigeon, Andaman Coucal and Andaman Bulbul as well as Red-breasted and Long-tailed Parakeets, Collared Kingfisher, Chestnut-headed Bee-eater, Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, Asian Fairy Bluebird and many more.

We were greeted by our host Diya and were shown to our rooms. Before dinner we went on an owling walk down the road with Dhanish playing calls, and Avi using an infra-red heat detector to look for birds and other creatures in the darkness. We soon heard an Oriental Scops Owl, with the endemic race known as Walden's Scops Owl, and found it sitting on a wire glaring at us. Avi then found us an Indian Flying Fox, up in a tree and heard Andaman Boobook, also getting a view of a Hume's Boobook, our fourth endemic of the day. Not bad considering we had only just arrived!!

There were welcome drinks all round to celebrate our first day with a toast of thanks to Avi and Dhanish, and a wish for many more days like today. We then enjoyed a wonderful dinner of fish with rice, lentils and poppadoms, followed by brownie with ice cream. Everyone retired to bed very satisfied and somewhat weary!

Tuesday November 4 Early birding | Chidya Tapu | Sippighat Wetlands | Owls

We were up early for a 5:30 start, with pre-breakfast birding along the road by the resort. Plenty of birds were singing as we walked along, and the first tall tree we found contained several new species for us, including Andaman Treepie, Andaman Drongo and White-headed Starling, all endemics, as well as Oriental Cuckoo-Shrike and Ornate Sunbird. An Andaman Bulbul posed for us by the road, eating berries, and a large brown dove flashed across the road, seen only by a couple of the group, identified as an Andaman Cuckoo-Dove, one of the



more elusive endemic species., Avi and Dansh sat in separate vans to spot birds along the way. We stopped along the road a mile or so away, to look for the Andaman Shama, a shy endemic which we eventually got nice views of. It was then time for breakfast and we were treated to coffee or tea (masala or English breakfast) eggs (fried or omelet) and toast, the latter with homemade banana jam ... all very yummy! We heard Andaman Flowerpecker calling by the dining area and watched one perched with an Ornate Sunbird, so adding one more endemic to our tally.

We then headed out to bird further afield, using three cars, instead of the rather uncomfortable van we had yesterday, first visiting the nearby Chidaya Tapu Biological Park for a quick look for the endemic Andaman Wood Pigeon - no luck but we had nice views of Asian Emerald Dove. At the next stop we found a Stork-billed Kingfisher, and had great views of an Andaman Coucal plus a flock of starlings made up mainly of White-headed and Daurian Starlings, the latter was once a vagrant to the Andamans but is now seen more regularly in a few places.

In the Jorakaan-Sippighat area we stopped near some wet grassland with open water at the back. With scopes out we scanned excitedly. Close by some Pin-tailed Snipe were spotted, with a Wood Sandpiper and several Common Redshank. In the long grass were Gray-headed Swamphens and from some nearby reeds a Cinnamon Bittern appeared and flew around a couple of times. There were some distant Pacific Swallows perched on posts, and some terns were identified as Black-naped with a couple of tiny Little Terns as well. Eastern Yellow Wagtails fed around the feet of some cattle, and a couple of plovers were revealed to be Tibetan Sand-Plovers. Nearby was a muddy fringe to the wetlands with some islands and here were many more shorebirds, including several Long-toed Stints, Curlew Sandpipers, Eurasian Curlew and the newly split Eurasian Whimbrel. A White-bellied Sea Eagle was also seen.

Along the road we saw our only Pheasant-tailed Jacana, and one of the cars also saw a Yellow Bittern

We headed to a local restaurant, Junglee Mirchi, for lunch which consisted of several delicious starters and then a main course of either a chicken or paneer dish, with rice and bread. We left feeling very full and a little sleepy! We stopped at another wetland area where there were Gray-headed Swamphens, egrets and herons, Pacific Golden Plovers and Blue-tailed Bee-eaters. We made a stop in a town, just as it began to get dark, at a stake-out for the Andaman Masked Owl. Dhanish told us that the birds had not been seen for a couple of weeks, but that he thought they were still there. On the ledges of a nearby building there were pigeons getting ready to roost, and with building work nearby we were not very hopeful. Then Dhanish flashed his torch ... he had found one. It was sitting on top of a nearby roof. Suddenly a second was seen sitting on a ledge giving brief but good views before flying off. With another endemic in the bag, we made one last stop in an area for Andaman Nightjar, and



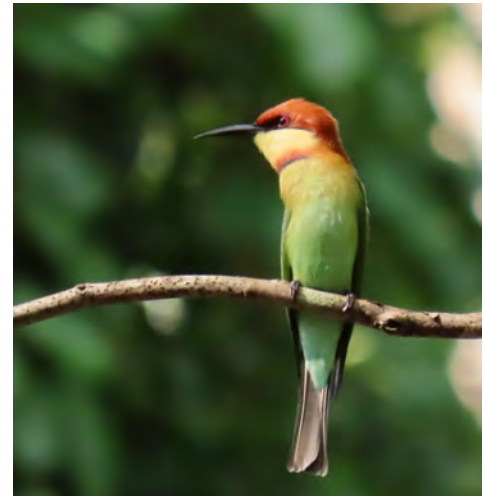
in the darkness we could hear more than one calling. Most of us had a glimpse of eyes reflected in the flashlight beam, and saw a bird flying off but despite lengthy searching by Dhanish, we could not locate views of any more. Back at the lodge we enjoyed another scrumptious dinner of fish with rice and an accompanying dahl, with a tasty paratha flat bread, followed by a tangy lemon pie. There are dozens of different flat breads in India and we sampled many of them over our weeks here - some flat with others puffed up like balloons, including paratha, chapati, puri, roti, dosa and phulka, not forgetting the delicious crispy poppadoms. Late night owling gave us views of Andaman Boobook and we heard Oriental Scops Owl and Hume's Boobook.

Wednesday November 5 Mt Harriet forest | Chouldari wetlands

We were up early to do a little birding at Big Tree before collecting our packed breakfast and driving up to the Mount Harriet National Park Area. One of the cars was lucky to spot a Slaty-breasted Rail crossing the road, the only one seen on the trip. We took a path off to the side of the road, which led to a refuse collection area, which attracted many birds, probably due to the insects there. Here we enjoyed our breakfast while watching Chestnut-headed Bee-eaters, Greater Racket-tailed and Andaman Drongos (the latter being a new endemic) and a Freckle-breasted Woodpecker which gave neck-aching views. scarlet and Small Minivets added some colour and two eagles soaring high above us were ID'd as Changeable and Andaman Serpent Eagles, the latter being clearly darker. Dhanish spotted a Besra flashing by ... one of the accipitrine hawks. We walked back to the road a followed it up the hill. There was another endemic we hoped for here, and eventually we heard and saw it ... the large Andaman Woodpecker.

Back down the road was an area of mangroves and here we hope to find Ruddy Kingfisher and Mangrove Whistler, but despite extensive searching they could not be found. Both Chris and Diana found that they had obtained new friends in the form of leeches on their backs, probably from nearby wet grass. They were soon removed. We decided to go for lunch at the Cafe 7 Eleven in Chouldari, and Avi chose some not too spicy dishes for us which we all enjoyed. We then explored along a path through a wetland area where we at last found a Mangrove Whistler which may have been nest building. Some Collared Kingfishers were also seen.

We explored along more of the Chouldari wetlands, stopping at one area with distant egrets which turned out to be Pacific Reef Herons, and a couple of shorebirds which were Curlews. In one of the trees by the road a flycatcher caught our eye, and a warbler was tacking from some vegetation. The former was a Taiga Flycatcher, and the latter were several Dusky Warblers. Further stops along the way added a few bits and bobs, then it was time to head back with one last stop at an area where birds were gathering in the treetops before going to roost. These included about 20 Daurian Starlings plus some Asian Glossy Starlings, and a large number of Plumbe-toed Swiftlets overhead. Dinner was a delicious Burmese dish with shrimps and noodles, and a choice of either lemon pie or brownie and ice cream.



Thursday November 6

Wagtail wonder | Chidya Tapu | Owls

Another early start saw us stopping just down the road from the resort to look at an Andaman Serpent Eagle perched on a tree in the misty first light. We were out early to try and track down the very elusive Andaman Crake which is found on the damp forest floor in certain areas. We drove to the Ferragunj to search likely places, stopping so Dhanish could work his magic. After several attempts we began to wonder if his luck had run out when suddenly he uttered the phrase we wanted to hear ... “Oh my God ... come, come, come ...” We gathered behind him, standing by a low wall, looking down into the dark forest. “Follow my pointer” he directed and his green laser beam crossed the forest floor and stopped by a tree. “It is just behind there” he said. We stared into the gloom and saw nothing. After a few minutes there was a movement, but it was a small patterned bird sitting on a branch, wagging its tail. It was a Forest Wagtail. Now John, one of our group, had mentioned to us that he had seen all of the wagtails in the world except one, and to see this one would be a huge highlight for him ... and here was his opportunity. The wagtail obliged and John was jubilant!! Quietly celebrating we continued to look for the crake. After what seemed like ages it reappeared and eventually everybody was able to see it, with its dark, rusty plumage and pale-yellow bill. What a treat! Another endemic!

Lunch was at Junglee Mirchi again, and was just as good as last time. There was time to fit in one last visit to the Biological Reserve, in a last-ditch attempt to see Andaman Wood Pigeon. Dhanish scouted for it while we waited by the Wild Pigs enclosure and after a while he appeared and beckoned to us - he had found some a little way down a side trail. He gestured high up in some tall trees and explained this is where the birds were feeding. A pigeon suddenly flew and vanished just as quickly. At least we knew they were still there. We spread out to have different vantage points. A few of us saw one fly up, while others saw another. Eventually most of us had had a reasonable view. An Andaman Cuckoo-Dove also appeared. It was now time to leave as the Reserve was closing soon. Back at Big Tree it was soon time for dinner - fish in port wine sauce. After dinner a few of us had one last try to find our last endemic bird, the Andaman Scops Owl. We drove a few miles down the road and got out of the van to listen and we could hear an Oriental Scops Owl calling. Dhanish played the Andaman Scops Owl but nothing replied so we walked further along the road. After a few more tries we walked back towards the van. Then a sound was heard, and Chris thought it sounded right for our target bird – it was back near the van. As we got closer, we realized it was Andaman Scops Owl, and not too far away. We looked up into the trees with our flashlight, scanning for this tiny owl but it was too well hidden behind leaves. Then a second began to call on the other side, a little nearer. As Dhanish pointed his light, Chris tentatively said “There it is” ... and there it was. A small blob on a branch high above us, its eyes reflected the flashlight and we all had good views of it. Our last endemic – what a treat!! We returned triumphantly to the lodge for our last night there and slept extremely well.



Friday November 7

Local birding | Flight to Bengaluru

We were up early for some pre-breakfast birding along the road for the last time. It seemed less birdy than before but as we walked further, we saw more and more. Stork-billed Kingfisher, Dollarbird, Freckle-breasted and Andaman Woodpeckers, Long-tailed Parakeet, Oriental Cuckooshrike, Indian Golden Oriole (a rarity) and Andaman Treepie were just some of what was on show.

Bags were packed into our transport and we headed to the airport. The usual display of electronics was required to get through security and soon we were in the departure lounge by the gate. Here we saw one of the few House Sparrows seen during our time in the Andaman Islands. Soon we were up in the air, winging our way back to Bengaluru and the Click Hotel. We met with the three new member of the group (Mareil, Harriet and Linda) at the hotel, and instead of eating there Avi suggested we go to a local restaurant around the corner for dinner, where we enjoyed a nice meal, getting to bed in good time.

Southern India's Western Ghats

Saturday November 8

Vulture rocks | Tropical Villages | Afternoon walk

Next morning we were up bright and early to head out on our morning drive towards our next hotel. Armed with a packed breakfast and all of our luggage (including that left at the hotel during the extension trip), we climbed into our van driven by the redoubtable Renji. Our early start was an attempt to avoid the hideous traffic which builds up in Bengaluru in the morning, and as we were heading south, we had most of the city to cross.

Our plans, always flexible, had to undergo a considerable change when we learned that Nagerhole Tiger Reserve was to be closed to safaris. As this was to have been our itinerary for the next few days, we needed an alternative, and luckily our guide Avi (who owns the Indian tour company) was able to work out a plan as we drove along. On the journey south we stopped just off the highway near Ramanagara and spent some time birding along a trail at the edge of a hillside. Avi pointed out some huge granite cliffs there and told us that these are among the oldest known rocks on Earth, nearly 3.5 billion years old. On some ledges there he found a couple of Indian Vultures, which are what remains of what used to be a thriving population. Sadly, the use of certain veterinary drugs for livestock have resulted in the loss of more than 95 per cent of India's vultures, with only a few thousand still remaining. We birded along a nice trail near the hillside and saw Peregrine, Black Eagle and



Short-toed Snake-Eagle as well as many smaller birds including Jerdon's Bushlark, the colorful Coppersmith Barbet, Dusky Crag-Martin, Ashy Prinia, Yellow-billed Babbler and Indian Robin.

By midday Avi had found us a place to stay, as going to stay at the reserve was pointless without jeep safaris. Two hours later we arrived at Tropical Villages where we would stay for the night. An ox-pulled cart took us and our luggage to our rooms. Lunch was a very nice meal of pasta, with a brownie and coffee and walking around the grounds we saw Blue-tailed Bee-eater, Purple-rumped Sunbird and Indian Silverbill. We got back into the van for some late afternoon birding, stopping a couple of times when we saw a Painted Stork by a pool, and some wet fields with Green Sandpiper and Common Redshanks, White-throated and Common Kingfishers, as well as roosting Black-headed and Red-naped Ibis in some trees. Nearby there were a couple of Indian Gray Hornbills and a Pied Cuckoo posed for us while few Baya Weavers appeared in some bushes. Our aim was to explore an area along the Varuna Canal which was known for a range of species. This was quite a birdy area, near the canal there were Red-wattled Lapwing, and Eastern Red-rumped and Streak-throated Swallow were swooping around. A Plain Prinia popped up and a Booted Warbler was seen by a few of the group while Asian Green Bee-eaters were sailing around pursuing their prey. The canal deepened and its rocky side were where we searched for our target, a Rock Eagle-Owl, which was glimpsed as it flew down the channel, but could not be relocated. Soon it was time to return to our hotel, where we enjoyed a delicious meal of local dishes before doing the species list and heading for bed.

Sunday November 9 Morning walk | Elephant and deer | Brown Fish Owl

We were up before breakfast for another try to see the Rock Eagle-Owl, arriving by the canal at about 6:50. We only had an hour there, so tried to walk quickly towards the channel, but kept seeing birds along the way. Gray Francolin were seen on one side, while Wire-tailed Swallows were new for us. A Jungle Prinia was calling from the other side and was eventually seen. More small bird appeared, one which perched up on a bush was recognized by Chris as a Bluethroat, unusual at this time of year. Diana spotted a black-and-yellow bird across the canal, which was flicking around a bush, it was a Common lora, and another similar bird posed for a photograph, turning out to be a much rarer White-tailed lora. There was no sign of the owl so we turned back and then a Common Hawk-Cuckoo flew across and landed in a nearby tree. Suddenly a large brown bird flew out from in front of us and across the canal, flying back over the bushes and finally disappearing. It was the owl and it gave us brief but nice views!!! After breakfast we said goodbye to Tropical Villages and continued on our way from Mysurs towards Ooty in the highlands. This long drive took us through the Bandipur National Park, also a tiger reserve so, an area we could drive slowly through but we could not stop. Tigers tend to stay in the higher valleys here so are not seen near and roads. We did see lots of Spotted Deer, several Malabar Gray Langurs and one distant Indian Elephant (our only sighting of the trip).



We arrived at our overnight accommodation at Secret Ivory, at the edge of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. We checked into our rooms, then had lunch. Around the lodge we saw Jerdon's Leafbird, bright green with a brilliant blue throat, Pale-billed Flowerpecker and White-bellied Drongo. After lunch we joined a local ranger to visit a special area nearby as with elephants in the area, we have to be accompanied. It was fairly open, with scattered trees, and a large pool nearby. We saw Plum-headed Parakeets, Orange Minivet, Bay-backed Shrike and Yellow-throated Sparrows. By the pool there was a thick stand of tall trees, and our guide pointed out a Brown Fish Owl which was roosting there. Just as we saw were getting a scope lined up it flew, but luckily, we relocated it just before a Changeable Hawk Eagle flew in and mobbed it. In some nearby smaller trees, our guide found two Oriental Scops Owls, one greyish and the other rufous, the two color morphs. Soon it was time to head back to the van and back to the lodge for dinner, and the species list.

Monday November 10

Grasslands | Blackbuck | Ooty

6:15 start, with an early breakfast before heading out into the nearby grasslands to bird. Before we left there was time for a quick look at a few birds around the lodge including Brahminy and Chestnut-tailed Starlings and a Long-tailed Shrike, but star place went to a fabulous Indian Pitta which perched briefly for us to see. Our local guide was with us again as we would be walking in areas where there might be elephants. The van dropped us off and we walked across an area of savannah - short grass with trees dotted around. As we followed the trail, we saw a Spotted Owlet was perching on the side of a tree, looking like a continuation of the short branch where it perched. There were a couple of Yellow-wattled Lapwings on the short vegetation as a couple of Rufous Treepies flew over. Dhanish could hear a target bird calling, and eventually we had views of a delightful Indian Nuthatch with its dark chestnut belly as it climbed around the branches of a tall tree. A little further along Avi spotted a small bird feeding in some short grass, it was a Paddyfield Pipit, a real LBJ (Little Brown Job!). Another target bird was soon spotted, the endemic Malabar Lark, another LBJ, but this one had a tall pointed crest. The trail took us down towards some buildings and what looked like an orchard. There was quite a bit of bird activity here so we stopped. There were flycatchers, with both Taiga and the similar Red-breasted as well as a Thick-billed Flowerpecker and a lovely White-browed Fantail. Driving back to Secret Ivory, we saw a few deer, and Dhanish called out "Blackbuck" so we reversed up and had great views of a male with a small fawn. Nearby a couple of birds flew from a bush and we had brief views of Blue-faced Malcoha. We suddenly stopped the van as there were birds circling overhead – they were storks, five Asian Woolly-necked and three Painted Storks! Back a Secret Ivory it was time to pack up and head off towards Ooty.

We arrived in Ooty at lunch time and stopped just off the main road where there was a restaurant (called The Periodic Table) with a café next to it (called Le Café). At Avi's recommendation we chose the café for lunch and chose a variety of pizzas which we all shared, a delicious departure from the usual Indian foods. From there it was a fairly short drive to Sinclairs Retreat where we would be staying for the next three nights, which was very



welcome as it meant we could get some laundry done! Sinclairs was along a nicely forested road which passed a zip-lining launch pad and a tea museum before reaching the hotel. We stopped at one point as there were some birds in the trees, and saw Orange Minivet, Bar-winged Flycatcher-Shrike, Gray-headed Canary Flycatcher and Velvet-fronted Nuthatch. We reached the hotel and dropped off our bags, checked in and then strolled down the road to see what we could find. We found that it was distinctly colder here than we had been used. We were much higher, and it was the end of the day. In the trees by the hotel were a pair of Black-and-Orange Flycatchers and the usual Greenish Warblers could be heard calling. Then Dhanish found an exciting endemic, the lovely Nilgiri Laughingthrush feeding in some leaf litter where we also saw Indian Blackbird. Back at the hotel there was time to relax before dinner and the species list.

Tuesday November 11

Doddabetta | Bush-Quail | Botanical Garden

Before breakfast, we explored along the road to the right from Sinclairs. Almost immediately Dhanish heard a new bird, Indian Scimitar-Babbler with its distinctive downcurved beak and we had nice views of two of them. Further along the trail we found Nilgiri Laughingthrush again. Then Dhanish heard another very special endemic – the Nilgiri Sholakili, previously called the Nilgiri Shortwing. This skulker proved difficult to see, but eventually it showed itself to everyone. On the other side of the trail we found a Spot-breasted Fantail which was, of course, fanning its tail! After a welcome breakfast we all got into the van and headed up towards Doddabetta peak, the highest mountain in the Nilgiri Hills. We parked in the main parking lot where the trail up to the peak starts. There is a large market area here, where a large number of stalls attract visitors who have come to see the peak. We did not climb from here however, as our main targets were to be found in the nearby trees and bushes. We positioned ourselves looking into a small clearing with large tree either side. A small flycatcher was actively feeding and turned out to be the delightful little Gray-headed Canary Flycatcher which posed for a few photographs. There were small warbler around and eventually we identified these as Greenish Warbler, and both Tickell's and Large-billed Leaf Warblers, plus an Indian White-eye. A movement up in one of the tree caught our attention and we realized there had been a couple of Nilgiri Wood-Pigeons there all the time – this was our main target species. All the time Dhanish was frantically searching for a Nilgiri Thrush but all he could find was a Nilgiri Laughingthrush and we suspected his target bird was quietly laughing. Our presence there attracted a lot of interest both from visitors who were curious as to what we were doing there and looking for. Chris had his scope set up on a perched Nilgiri Wood Pigeon, and a group of people had gathered by it to look through. Our driver, Renji, suggested to Chris that he could make a fortune if he charged 10 rupees per look!!

WE drove down towards Ooty, stopping occasionally and near Mynla Road, we stopped by a small tea field and hit gold. Perched up on one of the tea bushes was a small brown bird with a spotted breast – the endemic Nilgiri



Pipit, another was nearby and we had nice looks at them, also finding a Blyth's Reed Warbler in some bushes by the road. We stopped along the Ooty-Kappachi Highway, by a café and stalls. The viewpoint here looked down across a valley with tea bushes planted. Overhead there were Indian Swiftlets, a few Little Swifts and also a Brown-backed Needletail as well as Hill Swallows. Dhanish was looking studiously at the tea bushes and suddenly called out "There ... there ..." pointing towards an area of area earth among the tea. "Keep looking" in this area he said using his laser pointer to circle the bare patch. Sure enough there was movement and a Painted Bush-Quail walked out and promptly disappeared. Another popped out ... there was a pair!! As Dhanish moved his pointed the quail chased the bright spot a couple of times and then both vanished into the tea! We inspected the stall nearby and were amused to find some individually wrapped candies called Barfis. We continued into Ooty and stopped again at the Le Café. While some had pizzas again, a couple of us tried the Lamb Burgers which were rather nice, if a little spicy. We enjoyed a quick look around a local gift store, which specialized in a variety of different hand-made chocolates which looked very tempting.

After lunch it was time to visit the Botanical Garden in Ooty. We entered and followed the right-hand path which skirted one side with many tall trees. There was a movement high in a tree ... was it a bird, or a monkey? Neither, it was an Indian Giant Squirrel, endemic to the country, and nearly three feet long, with more than half of that the tail. It is patterned with black, maroon and pale brown fur and looks – amazing!!! Instead of storing its food by hiding it in the ground, it squirrels it away in high larders way up in trees inside its drey (nest). It was time to find some birds, and it didn't take long. A bird was moving in one of the trees, and it was climbing down a branch and then a trunk – it was a Velvet-fronted Nuthatch. A rapid soft ticking call was heard, and Avi pointed to a brownish bird, flicking like a flycatcher. It was a Kashmir Flycatcher, a localized species from Northern India, which winters further south to spend its time in small areas including the one we were in. Further along two more flycatchers appeared, the gorgeous Black-and-orange Flycatcher, and an endemic Nilgiri Flycatcher. Soon it was time to leave and we made our way back to Sinclairs, for a lovely dinner and a run through the species list.

Wednesday November 12

Sims Park | Kotagiri walk

Up early for a prebreakfast hunt down the road for the elusive Nilgiri Thrush and those who got out first saw a Common Buzzard fly over. Still no luck with the thrush but Tickell's Leaf Warbler and Greater Coucal were nice to see, along with Indian Blackbird and a brief look at Nilgiri Sholakili. Breakfast was excellent and as we climbed into the bus to head back to the parking lot at Doddabetta Peak it began to rain. While Dhanish headed off on his one-man mission to find us a thrush, we watched some Indian Blackbirds and Nilgiri Laughingthrushes feeding at the edge of the parking lot. Then Avi spotted an endemic Red Spurfowl on a slope by the market area. It was tricky to see, as it was moving through vegetation which hid it - most saw it, but others searched in vain for a glimpse. More Nilgiri Wood-Pigeons were seen, an Asian Tit popped up to say Hello. With no thrush sighting we left and headed for Conoor, stopping at the Garden Hotel to use their facilities. The garden of the



hotel was lovely with a male Nilgiri Flycatcher and a giant squirrel. Next, we visited Sim's Park, a lovely place to walk round with manicured pathways, flowerbeds and tall trees ... and lots of birds. Almost immediately we saw an Indian Yellow Tit, a new endemic for us, swiftly followed by a Nilgiri Flowerpecker, also endemic. A couple of Brown-breasted Flycatchers were feeding from a fence, while a bright blue Nilgiri Flycatcher dazzled us. A couple of Oriental Magpie Robins showed off, while some tricky warblers were eventually ID'd as Tickell's and Large-billed Leaf Warblers. Sitting in a tree was the most obliging Indian Giant Squirrel which posed amazingly for us. We had lunch at a small café just opposite the park, enjoying pizzas. Just by the van, which was parked near the entrance, an Indian Blue Robin perched up on a wire for everyone to see.

Next we drove towards Kotagiri, and met up with a local guide, Ajtam who joined us for a birding walk along a hillside trail. As we walked along, a couple of large raptors appeared and soared past us – huge, black ... they were Black Eagles. A Streak-throated Woodpecker flew into a tree and allowed itself to be scoped. Chestnut-headed Bee-eaters were hawking from some trees and a small group of blue Malabar Parakeets arrived nearby. An Ashy Woodswallow, perched on a distant wire, was scopable while a black bird with a red beak flashed by, ID'd by Avi as a Square-tailed Bulbul. A small flycatcher in a small tree was the only Verditer Flycatcher of the trip. It was getting late in the day and Ajtam took us to one last spot for a walk to look for mammals but none were evident but a couple of Jungle Babblers were seen by some. It was time to head back to Sinclairs for our last night there, with the usual dinner and species list, and of course final packing.

Thursday November 13 Gaur | Anamalai Reserve | Banyan Tree Farm

We had a 7:30 breakfast and then packed into the van and a day with a lot of driving. As we drive Dhanish is always looking and listening, and so we suddenly stopped as he heard a Malabar Whistling Thrush which we were able to watch from the van. Along the way we stopped at the edge of a town where a pair of Hill Swallows were perched on the wire and in a small valley a Tickell's Blue Flycatcher popped up and showed itself. At one point Chris said "There's a Gaur" ... after a few seconds Nancy asked "Where is the gull in relation to the big bull?" and everybody laughed. Avi is always on the lookout for something new, and suddenly we stopped and he jumped out of the van, saying he was going to buy something. When he returned, he had some snacks for us in the form of red bananas. We had been seeing many, many different bananas everywhere, from green plantains to bunches of small yellow bananas (the sweetest!) but we had not had a chance to taste red ones, which he passed round. Delicious, with their own unique flavor. We continued to drive, encountering traffic jams in Coimbatore. We had lunch at a local hotel and later we stopped for washroom break and more snacks - delicious vegetable puffs and peanut brittle.



In the afternoon we arrived at the Parambikulam/Anamalai Tiger Reserve entry checkpoint where we parked and explored along a trail. Looking across a field towards some palm trees and bushes, we could see lots of birds and overhead hundreds of Asian Palm Swifts were circling. Two Gray Francolins were sitting in the field, giving good scope views, and on some fencing a couple of Hoopoes were perched, and everyone loves Hoopoes!! Birds were perched on some bushes at the back of a fence and among the usual Red-whiskered and Red-vented Bulbuls were a couple of White-browed Bulbuls. An all-brown bird turned out to be a Common Woodshrike, and Dhanish suddenly got excited when he spotted a Black-headed Cuckooshrike, which promptly hid, giving only occasional glimpses. A couple of Blue-faced Malkohas flew from bush to bush. We walked up to a nearby hillock which overlooked the main forest behind us. A loud barking noise could be heard which Avi explained was the alarm call of a Sambar Deer from not far inside the trees. The anxious barks continued and Avi felt there must be a threat nearby, a wild dog leopard or even a tiger. The sambar was moving through the forest but we could see nothing. Some babblers in nearby bushes caught Dhanish's eye – they were Tawny-bellied Babblers, new for us.

We continued on, soon reaching Banyan Tree Farm where we were staying. We were shown to our comfortable rooms, and before long were exploring outside. A Black-rumped Flameback swooped up to a nearby tree, flashing its yellow back and red head and a Rufous Treepie flew over. In a tree by the lodge buildings some small birds were flicking – these proved to be Loten's Sunbird, with its highly curved bill, and Pale-billed Flowerpecker while at the back of some bushes by the track a flash of orange revealed itself to be a beautiful Indian Paradise Flycatcher. After dinner and the day's species list we ventured along the entry track to look for owls, finding an obliging Indian Scops Owl which sat nicely for us. In the trees behind were dancing fireflies while on the ground a tiny Skittering Frog was found.

Friday November 14 Aliyar Forest Reserve | Hairpin bends | Sinna Dorai

Breakfast at a Banyan Tree began with excellent coffee and a delicious omelet with accompanying side dishes ... Yum! Louis revealed to us something which his wife Diana already surely knows, "Without coffee I'm a pitta, after it I'm a babbler!" We left the lodge and began the long journey up to Valparai which took us through the Aliyar Forest Reserve. The road climbed steeply and as we neared a large hairpin bend, a sign number two was Indian Roller, three was Blue-bearded Bee-eater, four was Coppersmith Barbet and so on, with most of them being birds. Put up by the Highways department they illustrated mostly wildlife from the area and many were birds we hadn't seen such as Flame-throated Bulbul, White-bellied Treepie and Crimson-backed Sunbird. Along the way a family of Wild Boar were running alongside the road. There were long stretches without hairpins and we stopped at one pull-off by some houses. Avi said this was a good place for birds and as he did a small bird flew up to a wire – a Black-throated Munia, which has a quite limited range. We walked along a small path between some buildings and up flew a Malabar Whistling-Thrush, perching out for us to see. In some low bushes nearby a small group of Rufous Babblers were feeding. We continued and by now we had reached hairpin 33



(Tiger) and before long we finally came the last hairpin, number 40, Lion-tailed Macaque. In some trees by the road were Nilgiri Langurs with their long black tails, and a Crested Serpent was perched nearby. We slowed down and pulled in at a spot where there were signs warning of monkeys crossing. Up in the trees above us were some shapes, these were the endangered Lion-tailed Macaques, endemic to the Western Ghats and one of the world's rarest primates. In trees nearby we sighted a pair of large White-bellied Woodpeckers.

We continued on our way stopping for lunch and stopped along a forested portion of road overlooking a deep valley. Hornbills were calling, and a couple of Malabar Gray Hornbills perched in a tree not far away. On a tree right by the van a small bird perched, it was a Flame-throated Bulbul, so colorful and behind us a couple of birds flew, they were White-bellied Treepies! Further up the road we stopped at a pull-off, and right by us a Crimson-backed Sunbird perched ... all of the birds from the hairpin bend signs in just a short distance!! Not far from Valparai we stopped for some ice creams ... what a treat!! We were now surrounded by tea plantations as far as the eye could see, with every bush at the perfect height for picking! On top of one bush was a Greater Coucal, and in a tree close by sat a Malabar Starling. We turned off the road, along a track which would up through the tea, arriving at Sinna Dorai Bungalow, where we were staying for the night. The large plantation house had some rooms next to it and several others down a long path below. We unpacked and had dinner, and afterwards Avi used a flashlight to find some Brown Palm Civets in the trees by the gardens.

Saturday November 15 Varattupara | Chinnar | Munnar

We headed out early, before breakfast, and explored an area near Varattupara, pulling off the road by a small café. In the trees by the road we spotted a couple of tiny Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpeckers flying from branch to branch and high in another tree was a squirrel which looked like Jungle Palm Squirrel. Dhanish went off to hunt for Legge's Hawk-Eagle in a spot where he had seen it before. A small stream crossed under the road here and in its wet, vegetated edges were a couple of White-breasted Waterhens, with their cocked-up tails. Suddenly Dhanish appeared waving and calling "Come, come, come ...". He had found the hawk-eagle but sadly, in the time it took him to alert us, the bird had flown off. John, who seems to find birds with an uncanny sixth sense, discovered a Yellow-browed Bulbul in the trees above us. We explored down another road where we found Black and Ashy Drongos, Malabar Parakeets, Vernal Hanging-Parrots, a couple of Asian Tits and we heard an Indian Pitta. Back at Sinna Dorai we enjoyed wonderful breakfast crepes (dosas), omelet, bananas, and some delicious orange marmalade.

We left at about 11am, and negotiated the 40 hairpin bends again, passing through the Anamalai Tiger Reserve, where we saw a Bengal Monitor Lizard crossing the road. The road to our next destination, the Chinnar Wildlife Reserve in Kerala was long and winding, taking us about six hours, with a stop for lunch. Arriving at the Chinnar Ecotourism Information Centre at about 3.45pm, we parked and located some local guides who would accompany us our exploration. We followed the road for a short while and then a cuckooshrike tempted us into



the bushes around. While searching for the cuckooshrike we saw Black-hooded Oriole, found a roosting Jungle Nightjar, saw and heard Yellow-eyed Babblers, White-rumped Shama, Small Minivet and eventually both Black-headed and Indian Cuckooshrikes. We took a trail down to the Chinnar River, following it back to the information centre, and here we found a lovely Grizzled Giant Squirrel. Back at the centre, where there were some playful Bonnet Macacques, we also found Tufted Gray Langurs. We now had to drive to Munnar and it was already nearly 5pm. We became caught in a very slow line of buses which were taking parties of young people for a weekend visit to the area. Amazingly we could see them dancing on the buses as they wound around bends and up some steep climbs. We arrived at our next lodgings at about 8pm, later than we had hoped. After a delicious dinner at Olive Brook Lodge we were ready for bed.

Sunday November 16 Eravikulam NP | Munnar | Olive Brook birding

The day started with a 6am breakfast of cheese omelet, toast and marmalade. We then drove to the Eravikulam National Park, stopping en route at a site for the Palani Laughingthrush which was suitable obliging, as well as the White-bellied Sholakili which was more skulking. On arriving at the park some of the group visited to gift shop looking for tea to buy. Just outside the gift shop we were serenaded by a lovely White-browed Wagtail which was sensing its heart out. From here we took one of the park's buses up to where the trail started. The park is mainly high-altitude grassland, and is the home of the rare Nilgiri Tahr, which is related to sheep and goats and the scenery here is stunning with sweeping vistas of the rolling countryside. We stopped for refreshments in the café and were surprised to see a White-bellied Sholakili entering the café to look for tidbits. Walking up the path we saw some distant Nilgiri Tahr looking down on us, and several of them walked closer, eventually joining the path and walking right past us while others kept their distance. A Nilgiri Pipit was perched on some vegetation near the path with some Hill Swallows on wires above us while several Pied Bushchats gave great views. Suddenly Dhanish heard a call and pointed out a small warbler in a bush above us - it was a Tytler's Leaf Warbler. An Alpine Swift was seen by Avi and a Common Buzzard perched nearby. We drove into Munnar and found a hotel with a lovely buffet lunch, finishing just as another large group of mainly British tourists arrived. After hunting for money from an ATM we headed back to spend the rest of the afternoon at Olive Brook Lodge where we found a tree by the lodge with Square-tailed Bulbuls and a Malabar Barbet and from our balconies saw a pair of Loten's Sunbirds, Brown-cheeked Fulvettas, and innumerable Red-whiskered Bulbuls. Some of the afternoon was spent packing ready for an early departure before a late afternoon birding walk with Dhanish produced Orange Minivet, Greater Racket-tailed Drongos, a pair of Indian Yellow Tits, Yellow-browed Bulbul, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch and Indian Blue Robin. Dinner was a very enjoyable selection of local dishes with the usual species list afterwards.



Monday November 17

Periyar | Spice tour | Niraamaya Retreat

Another early breakfast and it was then time to leave, heading for the Periyar Tiger Reserve. Along the way we stopped at the Lockhart Gap viewpoint, where Dhanish found a lovely pair of Painted Bush-Quail, and a Blue Rock Thrush which was surprisingly elusive. Dusky Crag Martins were swooping around, along with several Little Swifts. Other wildlife included a Nilgiri Striped Squirrel and a species of Day Gecko as yet unidentified, found in a small cave. Another stop along the edge of a valley was good for bulbuls, A Gray-headed was seen by Avi and glimpsed by others, while great views were had of two Yellow-throated Bulbuls, with several White-browed, and as usual, loads of Red-whiskered. Jerdon's Leafbirds, Orange Minivets and Vernal Hanging Parrots were also seen. We arrived at the town of Kumili and had to leave the van to get into other vehicles to reach our lodge, The Niraamaya Resort. In one car the driver, realizing we were Americans, started talking about JFK, his favorite president, and then others, and did not stop the whole way to the resort. The moment we arrived at the lodge, the birding started. A Heart-spotted Woodpecker, called and then perched in a tree, then two a Jungle Owlet appeared and perched for all to see. From the dining room, overlooking a swimming pool, two White-bellied Treepies showed off.

After a lovely lunch we had a tour of the Green Park Spices and Ayurvedic Plantation. Ayurveda is a 5,000 year old holistic healing system which promotes wellness through diet, herbs and spices, and lifestyle. Our guide showed us around the plantation showing us a wide range of plants including nutmeg, allspice, cardamon, cloves, cinnamon, vanilla to ginger explaining exactly how they help and how to use them. We then had a chance to sample and purchase some of the wonderful spices, herbs and nuts they had available in their gift shop. We then returned to the resort, where a couple of Dark-fronted Babblers were seen by the pool. As it got dark we explored down the road looking for nocturnal creatures. An Oriental Scops Owl showed well, and then a Brown Boobook perched out for us. Later we had dinner which was a wonderful spread of sampler dishes of local foods. After we did the species list we said farewell to Mariel, Harriet and Linda who were leaving early in the morning, having arranged a separate private trip to look for tigers during the last few days of our tour.

Tuesday November 18

Periyar Reserve | Home lunch | Niraamaya Retreat

This morning, we awoke to heavy rain. We enjoyed our breakfast and then headed out to visit the Periyar Tiger Reserve where we spent several hours sheltering and birding in between wet periods. In the parking lot we saw Gray-fronted Green Pigeon and Malabar Imperial-Pigeon, White-whiskered Barbet and some Indian Flying Foxes hanging in some trees. A bus took us into the reserve to a viewing area across the lake there. Armed with umbrellas we scanned the water's edge and the distant trees across the lake. There were Asian Woolly-necked Storks, Red-wattled Lapwing and a Glossy Ibis at the edge and a Great Hornbill flew between trees at the back. As the rain was continuing, we decided to get some respite in the café nearby and after drying out and enjoying refreshments we sallied forth along the trail in search of more birds. Two flycatchers were seen outside the café, one was Asian Brown, while the other was Rusty-tailed, new for the trip. Up in the trees were Black-rumped



Flamebacks and a Lesser Yellownappe was new, as was a Little Spiderhunter. Despite the rain we saw 43 species there.

We left the reserve and Avi took us to have lunch at a house belonging to his friend Soni. She had daughters at college in Paris and Pennsylvania and gave us a fabulous lunch of local dishes with a delicious rice/tapioca dessert. On the walls of her house were some amazing carved cattle heads all beautifully painted. Through the window of her dining room were several good birds including Rufous Treepie and a Black-rumped Flameback which was feeding on a banana flower. It was still raining when we arrived at another area of the Periyar Tiger Reserve called Green Walk looking for one special bird. We followed the often-narrow trail to a grassy area next to a small river. Around us the wet grass was full of life in the form of hundreds of leeches. We were all wearing leech socks for this eventuality and were knocking off the more adventurous ones which climbed up high. It was difficult to prevent some dropping down from the trees, however. We stood for some time while Dhanish searched in vain for the Wayanad Laughingthrush, a Western Ghats endemic. After a while we left and rapidly retreated to some leech-free ground. Chris mused that if ever he had a pet leech, he would call in Archie. Birds seen on the walk included Southern Hill Mynah, Common Hawk-Cuckoo, Malabar Flameback, Bronzed Drongo, Indian Paradise-Flycatcher and Common Tailorbird. Back at Niraamaya Retreat we were able to survey the damage done by the leeches with some of us sporting about 20 bites. Luckily leeches are clean and do you no harm but are a great nuisance. We looked for owls again with no luck, but did we find a couple of Brown Palm Civets. Dinner was a delicious wrap and chicken dish with chocolate sponge dessert.

Wednesday November 19 Birds Murrur Camp | Thattekad | Hide

We had an early breakfast at 6:30, then left Niraamaya to drive down to more lowland areas, and to our last lodging. At a comfort stop Avi bought some delicious pineapple which was cut up for us to eat, with salt or pepper and masala. It was a windy drive down, with nice sunny weather and after four hours the scenery had totally changed and we saw our first rubber plantations. In late morning we arrived at Birds Murrur Camp, our home for the next two nights. Our rooms were like large tents with sturdy canvas walls, attached to a more solid bathroom area ... glamping!!! All set on the banks of the magnificent Idamalayar River. After we had settled in, we went to explore the Thattekad Bird Sanctuary area. We took a walk near Urulanthanni with Dhanish scouting for things as usual. There were woodpeckers – Common and Black-rumped Flamebacks and a Lesser Yellownappe, and White-bellied Treepies, Yellow-browed Bulbuls and an endemic White-bellied Blue Flycatcher. Dhanish beckoned, he had found a Sri Lanka Frogmouth up in a bush, typically cryptic, we would have walked right past it and been unaware. As we left, a Banded Bay Cuckoo was seen from the bus. We stopped at a different area and Dhanish went exploring, soon calling us and taking us to a spot where a Slender Loris was



roosting. This tiny primate, was incredibly well hidden next to some dead leaves and looked amazing in the scope.

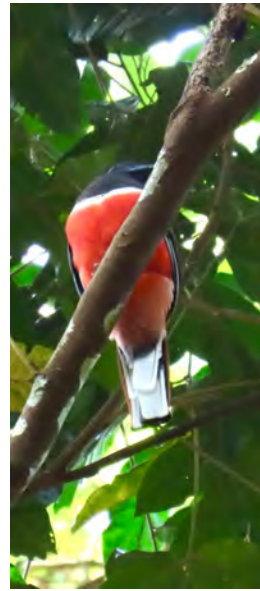
After lunch at Birds Murmur, we again ventured out into the sanctuary and visited a photographic hide. This simple structure (with uncomfortable seats!) was set up near a small lodge and we settled in to watch a feeding area in front of us. There were tempting perches placed for the birds which allowed opportunities to photograph them and every 30 minutes or so fresh food was put out to attract the birds in. The arrival of the food prompted a feeding frenzy. Greater Racket-tailed Drongos swooped in and squabbled, along with Jungle Babblers. Black-rumped and Malabar Flamebacks arrived and perched on various logs and branches. Highlights were a fabulous Orange-headed Thrush, Brown-breasted and White-bellied Blue Flycatchers, Oriental Magpie-Robins, many Malabar Starlings and Yellow-browed Bulbuls. We drove back, stopping occasionally, and it began to rain. We got back to Birds Murmur and Avi saw a Great Eared-Nightjar flying over the camp just before dinner. After the species list we retired.

Thursday November 20

Frogmouth | Suspension Bridge

Up at 6:30, with a packed breakfast to enjoy in field. We were in a different part of the sanctuary on a slope with a forested area behind us a scattered trees and bushes nearby. As we were eating our breakfast we watched a variety of birds in the trees around. One new bird was the Malabar Woodshrike and there seemed to be dozens around us, clearly a feeding flock. Malabar Barbets looked down on us and a couple of Flame-throated Bulbuls fed nearby. Suddenly Dhanish called to us and we followed him along a trail and into some bushes. He looked around and explained that he had found a Sri Lanka Frogmouth with a chick, but it had now moved. He searched and searched and suddenly froze, not far from him was a large brown leaf which he had walked past several times ... it was the frogmouth! It sat, immobile and posed beautifully for us, confident that we could not see it, but there was no sign of the chick, which must have been nearby. Further along the road there were Green, Western Crowned and Large-billed Leaf Warblers and again Dhanish found our target, a Malabar Trogon. This was a female bird, high in a tree and quite tricky to spot, but we all got views.

We returned to Birds Murmur for lunch with a break afterwards to enable us to start packing. We then headed out at 3pm to look for more birds, plus some night-birding. We birded several places before heading to the Inchathotty suspension bridge. Along one road we stopped as Dhanish had seen a raptor. This turned out to be a Black Baza and we managed to get a scope onto it high in a tree also spotting some Plum-headed Parakeets nearby. A couple of Fork-tailed Drongo-Cuckoos were spotted high in a tree and also more Malabar Trogons. We explored a trail which overlooked some wet fields where we saw Lesser Whistling Duck, Purple Heron, several egrets and Pin-tailed Snipe. Next we crossed the hanging bridge suspended high over the huge Periyar River which swayed as we traversed it. At the other side it was starting to get dark and as we stood by the road



some dark shaped swooped over a large pool - these were Great Eared-Nightjars. Our bus which had driven round from the other side of the river soon picked us up and there was one more stop before we headed back to camp. We were looking for owls along a trail when Dhanish shone his flashlight on a small bright bird, roosting on a branch – a fabulous Indian Pitta, right in front of us. Further along the trail a shadow flew up to a branch (detected by John’s amazing eyesight) and we had a Mottled Owl in our sights with its barred underparts and pink-rimmed eyes. What an amazing end to the day. Back at the camp it was time for some farewell drinks, our last dinner together and one last species list.

Friday November 21

Thattekad walk | Kochi | Depart

We were up and out at 6:30 with a packed breakfast, ready for one last morning birding. First we visited an area near Charupara and were successful in finding Gray-headed Bulbuls, which we had missed before. Dhanish heard, and located a Blue-throated Flycatcher, another new bird for the list and we also enjoyed Indian Golden and Black-hooded Orioles and Golden-headed Leafbird. We lastly went back to the sanctuary we went to where we had seen lots of birds before, and sitting on a wire by the road, right in the open, was a female Malabar Trogon, soon joined in a tree nearby by the brightly colored male. A pair of large White-bellied Woodpeckers put on a show, and a tiny Speckled Piculet was glimpsed by some. This was a great final morning of birding and as we drove away from Thattekad we said goodbye to Dhanish whose incredible birding skills had made this the successful trip it was. There was still one last treat as we stopped at a friend of Avi’s for a cooking demonstration and lunch. Divya and showed us how to make several dishes and gave us recipe a sheet and followed this with a wonderful lunch. Then it was time to head for the airport at Kochi where we said our final goodbyes.

Group (Chris Harbard -CH), Vernal Hanging Parrot (Avijit Sarkhel - AS), Ruddy Kingfisher (AS), Loten’s Sunbird (AS), Asian Fairy Bluebird (CH), Oriental (Walden’s) Scops Owl (CH), Birding at Big Tree Lodge (CH), Andaman Shama (CH), Andaman Bulbul with berry (CH), Andaman Treepie (CH), Asian Emerald Dove (CH), Chestnut-headed Bee-eater (CH), Indian Wanderer (CH), Ruddy Kingfisher (AS), Adaman Crake (AS), White-throated Kingfisher (CH), Spotted Deer (CH), Malabar Gray Langurs (CH), Jerdon’s Leafbird (CH), White-rumped Vulture (Nancy Houlihan - NH), Group Birding (CH), Nilgiri Pipit (AS), Asian Tit (CH), Nilgiri Laughingthrush (AS), Malabar Giant Squirrel (CH), Gaur (CH), Indian Scops Owl (CH), Liontailed Macaque (AS), Jungle Nightjar (CH), Nilgiri Tahr (CH), Black-rumped Flameback (CH), Yellow-browed Bulbul (CH), Brown-breasted Flycatcher (CH), White-bellied Blue Flycatcher (CH), Orange-headed Thrush (CH), Indian Pitta at roost (CH), White-bellied Woodpecker (CH), Malabar Trogon (CH)