

Assam and Arunachal Pradesh North Eastern India.

March 10-25, 2006.

A Birdwatching Trip Report from Kaziranga NP, Nameri NP and Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary.

By Fredrik Ellin, Peter Schmidt and Håkan Söderberg



View from Lama Camp, Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary.

INTRODUCTION

At the time of our first visit to India in 1997, the Pictorial guide by Ali & Ripley was, if not the only, the standard field guide for a visit to the Subcontinent. Although central and southern India offered unforgettable birding, we were soon stricken by all the depicted spectacular and mythical species to be found only in the inaccessible NE hill states, including Ward's Trogon, Beautiful Nuthatch, Rufous-necked Hornbill and the strange looking Wedge-billed Wren-babbler. Since then, a slumbering dream to visit the eastern Himalayas had stayed in the back of our minds. Since 1997 much has happened. New literature and the explosion of internet activity with easy access to trip reports and general information along with a gradual development of political stability in the NE hill states have slowly made things easier for both Indian and foreign birders who want to discover the area. In 2005 we started the planning of a trip to Assam and Arunachal Pradesh and after having read about Eaglenest in the 2005 OBC Birding Asia article by Ramana Athreya, we were left with a delicate choice between this

option and the eastern alternative, Namdapha/Dibru Saikowa. In the end Ward's Trogon, the chance to do pioneer birding and having read about "Magic Easter Sunday" in Mark Waits Eaglenest trip report from 2004 was enough to make up our minds.

Even though the trip was dedicated to Eaglenest, we did want to take the opportunity to get a glimpse of Kaziranga, one of India's most exciting wildlife areas in terms of big mammals. On the way to Arunachal Pradesh we also had two days of enjoyable birding in the Nameri lowland forest along the Jia Bhorelli River.

The aim of this report is to provide a brief insight into what is possible to see during a combined birding trip to Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. Kaziranga is already well known and given the variety of exciting and restricted birds that has been reported the past 2-3 years from Eaglenest, crowned with the recent publication on the Bugun Liocichla, West Kameng and the Aka Hills will definitely attract greater numbers of birdwatchers. It is our hope that more people will take the opportunity to repeat our experience and while doing so also contribute to the long-term preservation of these unique environments.

ITINERARY

10/3. Transport Lund, Sweden-Dehli, India.

11/3. Transport flight Dehli-Guwahati. Transport to the Aranya Tourist Lodge in Kaziranga after a shorter stop in Nagaon to look at the roosting Greater Adjutants.

12/3. Birding Kaziranga, Central Range.

13/3. Birding Kaziranga, Eastern Range until noon. Afternoon transport to Eco camp, Nameri.

14/3. Nameri. Morning birding in the forest across the Jia Bhorelli River. 45 minutes drive upstream for an afternoon rafting trip back to Eco camp.

15/3. Morning walk in the forest. Afternoon and evening relocation to Eaglenest and Bompu Camp.

16/3. Birding Bompu-Sessni

17/3. Birding Bompu-Sundarview.

18/3. Birding Bompu-Sessni-Khellong.

19/3. Birding Bompu-Sessni-Khellong.

20/3. Birding Bompu-Sessni-Khellong.

21/3. Relocation to Lama Camp. Birding Bompu-Sundarview-Eaglenest Pass-Lama Camp.

22/3. Birding Lama Camp- Eaglenest Pass.

23/3. Birding around and below Lama Camp.

24/3. Birding Lama Camp-Tenga. Afternoon relocation to Nameri.

25/3. Relocation to Guwahati and flight back to Sweden.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Tour preparations

Our visit required a VISA permit not only to India, but also a separate permit to Arunachal Pradesh. A standard Arunachal Pradesh permit is issued for 10 days to groups of four travelling through an organized local company. Exceptions to this is possible, but probably require more time and paper work. Not counting the flights to Delhi and Guwahati, we planned the entire trip through Ramana Athreya, Kaati Tours and Mr Indi Glow of the Bugun Welfare Society (who also took care of the AP-permit application). Ramana also functioned as our principle birding guide throughout the stay. Details about a trip organised by Ramana and the Bugun Welfare Society may vary and are better obtained by contacting Ramana

directly (ramana.athreya@gmail.com or kaati_tours@vsnl.net), but below follows an outline of the practicalities during the stay.

Accommodation

In Kaziranga the most popular lodge, the Wild Grass Resort, was booked full at the time of our visit. We stayed nearby at the Aranya Tourist Lodge which was good standard with clean rooms and a restaurant. In Nameri we stayed at the Eco Camp in Bungalow-like enforced tents with bathroom. In Eaglenest, arrangements are handled by Mr Indy Glow and the Bugun Welfare Society. There are a few camp sites to choose from, and we stayed 6 nights in Bompu (1940m) on the southern slope and another 3 nights in Lama Camp (2350m) on the northern slope of Eaglenest Pass (2800m).

Meals & Water

All meals and non-alcoholic drinks were included in the tour cost and consisted of basic Indian vegetarian cuisine at the lodge restaurants. In Eaglenest basic, but very tasty, Indian vegetarian food was prepared in the camp by Ramana's wife Vidya Athreya and hired Bugun locals. Beer and soft drinks were not available in the mountains, but this could probably be brought in if requested in advance. In all we were very satisfied and we definitely did not have to worry about going to bed hungry.

Transportation

All transportation was made in basic 4-wheel drives. Except in Eaglenest (where you are constantly looking for birds and do not want to go too fast anyway) the roads and highways were in good condition and never very busy.

Weather & climate

The temperature in the lowlands was warm and sunny but not to the extreme. In Eaglenest, misty and rainy days at higher altitudes could be a bit chilly requiring jackets and thin gloves and the nights are better spent in long johns and sleeping bags. Again, nothing extreme though.

Equipment

The usual gear on a trip like this. In Eaglenest it is advisable to bring plenty of batteries to cameras and other electrical equipment, since the small "power station" at Bompu Camp was not mint condition and produced one very melted Canon Battery Charger.



We were very satisfied with both food and accommodation during the stay. Basic meals were brought in the cars during the days and during the evenings food was prepared and served indoors at the camp sites.

Health

Except for Peter bringing a nasty Swedish cold we were fortunate to stay well throughout the trip. We did not encounter many mosquitos nor did we experience any other annoying insects. Still, Ramana mentioned a type of biting fly in Eaglenest and therefore a pair of thin gloves, a cap and insect repellent may be useful if they do turn up.

PLACES VISITED

This report does not to include a general description of Eaglenest and the other sites visited as this can be read about elsewhere. Maps and more detailed information can be found in the documents in the reference list below.



Kaziranga. A view of the grassland landscape in Central Range and the forested area in Eastern Range

Kaziranga. We spent only 2 days in this well known wild life park in Assam. This is of course far from being optimal both in terms of experiencing the park and of the number of birds you have time to see. Still, we were lucky and managed to see a lot during our limited stay. Due to all big mammals, all transportation is made in open Jeeps in accompaniment of an armed guard. However, it is possible to leave the vehicle as long as you do not wander away too far. We visited the Central range and birded the grassland vegetation. Several lakes and marshy areas also provide good feeding grounds for water birds. In the Central Range we also spent the morning hours on an organized elephant ride. The second day was spent in the Eastern range first passing through forest and, further on, vast grassland around Debeswary.

Nameri. We stayed at the Eco camp which is situated by the Jia Bhorelli River. Although some birding can be made in the scrub near the camp and by scoping the river from the banks, the good lowland forest is on the other side of the river and is reached by boat. In the forest a few ponds form after the rains and are stakeouts for the sought-after White-winged Duck. Nameri is also a place well worth a much longer stay for exploring in the forest.

Eaglenest. The main attraction of our trip and also the place were we decided to spend most of the time, nine full days. 6 nights were spent in Bompu camp, allowing us to cover a stretch between Khellong and Sundarview, on the southern slopes of the Eaglenest Pass, during the days. We then went over to the northern side of the pass and spent 3 nights at Lama Camp with most of the time spent birding back up to the pass. Eaglenest lies within the Eastern Himalaya Endemic Bird Area (EBA, defined by BirdLife International as an area with two or more species with a distribution less than 50,000 km²) and at least 12 of the 22 restricted species of this particular EBA have been recorded in Eaglenest. More information is found on the Eaglenest Biodiversity Project homepage referred to below.

DAILY LOG

10 March. Left from Lund in southern Sweden at 7.30 am for our Copenhagen flight to Delhi with Austrian Airlines. Landed on schedule at the Indira Gandhi International Airport by 10.30 p.m. and were greeted by loads of people, 500 taxis and 15 cows at the chaotic arrival area. After some confusion we jumped in one of the taxis which then took us on a 50 minute suburbia by night sight-seeing before finally locating our hotel not more than 2 km from the airport. Around midnight we were sound asleep after a long day.

11 March. After a nice hotel breakfast, departure from the domestic terminal to Guwahati after a 2 hrs delay. At the airport and from the aircraft waiting for lift-off, we saw the first birds including a **Long-legged Buzzard**, **Black-winged Kite** and groups with **Bank Mynas**. By 2 p.m. we were in Assam where Vidya Athreya and our driver Tsering waited for us with the jeep that was to take us to our first destination, Kaziranga. We were recommended to skip the local city dump in search for **Greater Adjutant** and instead headed for the village of Nagaon, in the vicinity of which there is a known roosting site for this rapidly declining species. Due to our late arrival, we did not reach the place until just before dusk, but there was still enough light to walk the 200 m down the road to see the some 30 individuals roosting in the trees. After having talked a bit with Mr. Shimanta Kumar Goswami and the people working with the Greater Adjutant Stork Conservation Project in the area, we continued to Kaziranga and the Aranya Hotel where our principle guide Ramana Athreya and the American birder Duncan Himes had already spent one day of birding. The drive from the airport was approximately 6 hrs including our 45 minute Adjutant stop. After dinner, a **Brown Hawk-owl** was heard inside the hotel garden.

12 March. Up at dawn and birding in the Central Range. Some scoping before the elephant ride yielded 3 **Black-faced Buntings** and a bunch of more common species including a number of larks, pipits and wagtails. Well on the elephants, we soon realized that this way of birding was a bit challenging. **Rhinos**, **Wild Boars**, **Barasingha** and **Hog Deer** were easier to spot. Then, out of the blue, a male **Bengal Florican** flew and past us less than 200 m away.



The male Bengal Florican, *Eupodotis bengalensis*, seen during the morning elephant ride. Kaziranga is also good place for storks and raptors. To the right, a Lesser Adjutant, *Leptoptilos javanicus*.

We were stunned, realizing that we had been very lucky! Everyone has to leave the park over lunchtime and when we returned we went in open jeeps around Central Range. Peter had not been feeling well during the morning and this was now getting worse. The afternoon yielded some nice raptors including **Pied Harrier** and **Pallas' Fish Eagle**. Storks and **Spot-billed Pelicans** were fairly numerous but the total number of vulture sightings were less than 50, mostly **Himalayan Vultures**. **Blue-bearded Bee-eater**, **White-vented Mynas** and **Spot-winged Starlings**, 3 species of **Shrikes** and **Grey-headed Lapwing** were also noted. In the

elephant grass Fredrik spotted a **White-tailed Rubythroat**. In this habitat, birding can be frustrating with only glimpses of some of the more skulking species. A small *Acrocephalus*-warbler was left unidentified and a *Phylloscopus*-warbler was most probably a Smoky Warbler. **Swamp Francolin** was heard several times and finally seen well.

13 March. Fortunately, after having slept for 13 hrs, Peter felt much better. The morning was spent in open Jeeps in the Eastern Range, through the open forest all the way to the grassland where a few NE India grassland specialities can be seen. Several and very nice sightings of **Rhino, Elephant and Wild Buffalo** during the day. Up to 6 **Pallas' Fish Eagles**, an adult male **Pied Harrier, Changeable Hawk-eagle** and 3 **Greater Adjutants**. The bird of the day, however, was **Black-breasted Parrotbill**, with a pair seen in tall elephant grass. After lunch we checked out from the hotel and headed for Nameri, thereby leaving Slender-billed and Jerdon's Babbler for another trip. A 2 ½ hrs trip later, after having crossed the impressive Bramaputra River, we arrived at the Eco camp in Nameri. A pair of **Oriental Hobbies** having their favourite tree just by the camp was a nice surprise. We could not get a permit to cross the river this day, so the afternoon was spent in the scrub near the camp and by the side of the river. **Hill Myna, River Lapwing** and hundreds of **Small Pratincoles** were added to the trip list, and at dusk several displaying **Large-tailed Nightjars** and a **Savannah Nighthawk** was noted.



The boat ride on the Jia Borelli River provided nice close-ups on many of the species, here a River Lapwing, *Vanellus duvaucelli*, and is the best strategy to see Ibisbill and Long-billed Plover.

14 March. At dawn, the boatman who was to take us across the Jia Borelli River was still sleeping profoundly. After 15 minutes of in vain shouting, our selected forest guard found no other solution than to fire his rifle. This improvised act proved successful, also to wake up the many local roosting cormorants, and soon we were in the forest on the other side heading for a stakeout for White-winged Wood Duck. Birding was a bit slow, mainly due to the fast walking pace. We checked at two locations for the duck, having no luck. Back at Eco camp for lunch and then off to a rafting trip in search for Ibisbill and Long-billed Plover. The small rubber boats felt like easy prey for the sometimes rather vivid currents, but we (and our camera equipment) managed to stay fairly dry throughout the experience. To our delight we soon spotted a group of 9 **Ibisbills** which could be observed from a distance. As a bonus, a single bird was seen further downstream. The men with the paddles really had to earn their pay to get us close enough to the bird for photographs. No Plovers but many **River Lapwings**, a breeding pair of **Pallas' Fish Eagle** with a young and a **Great Thick-knee**. The afternoon was spent again looking for the duck. Approaching the stakeout ponds in the forest requires some time since the birds are notoriously cautious and fly off as soon as they sense any human presence. This time a **White-winged Wood Duck** was feeding in the pond and although it had clearly seen us, it lingered for 10-15 minutes before it took off. The wariness of the bird was like nothing we had ever experienced, we were then hidden behind trees more

than 60 meters away from the pond and hardly moved at all. Birding was better than in the morning and we found 3 **Silver-backed Needletails** flying low in the sky. Fredrik found a male **Siberian Rubythroat** and a **Thick-billed Warbler**. A **Common Shelduck** was a surprise.

15 March. We looked for the duck again only to encounter a herd of **Gaur** in the forest. From a distance, we could observe these huge bovines grazing by the pond and then slowly moving away into the forest. After the Gaurs had left, to our surprise we again spotted the duck. After having had decent views in the scope we left the bird before it got to anxious. Suddenly a **Blue-naped Pitta** started calling nearby. Ramana tried to tape it in, but despite responding to the artificial call, the bird remained invisible for more than 30 minutes. Finally, it could be seen for a short moment on the ground before moving away in the undergrowth. Birding in the forest the remaining morning hours resulted in a pair of **Jerdon's Baza**, **Great Hornbill**, and **Grey-bellied Tesia** to name a few. Lunch at the camp before relocating to Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary, our target destination where we planned to stay for the next 10 days. Still in Nameri, the Hindu tourists were celebrating Holi, festivities of which the most striking feature was the tradition of throwing paint in the face of your family members and pretty much anyone that you happened to meet in the street. We escaped getting bombarded, but our cars were popular targets along the road. The subsequent journey took approximately 5 ½ hrs and proceeded west through the Assam plains and then north to the Arunachal Pradesh border. Almost immediately after entering this Eastern Himalayan mountain state, the road started to climb and forest appeared along the roadside. At the lower altitudes before dusk we made a few rather productive stops and saw 2-3 bird waves which included our only **Pale-headed Woodpeckers**, **Red-headed Trogon**, **Red-faced Liocichla**, **Blue-winged Laughingthrush**, **Grey-hooded Warbler**, **Yellow-throated Fulvetta** and **Red-tailed Minla**. We also had nice views of a pair of **Rufous-necked Hornbills** before it got to dark. Arrival at the Bompou Camp site at 7 p.m. where we were to stay in large tents for the next 6 days. Here we met up



In Eaglenest one encounters a large variety of babblers, including a number of restricted species. Beautiful Sibia, *Heterophasia pulchella* (left) is common at elevations above 2,000m. Scaly Laughingthrush, *Garrulax subunicolor* (right) is one of the some 15 species of Laughingthrushes, including the Liocichlas, possible to see during a visit to the area.

with Vidya and the people from the village hired to work at the camp as well as Mr. Indy Glow, the head of the Bugun Tribe Welfare Society. In the evening Ramana told us that he on previous visits had seen a strange Liocichla, reminiscent of the Emei Shan Liocichla, which he could not identify. We did not know what to make of this, and the next coming days other birds would distract our minds.

16 March. In March, sunrise permits birding from around 5.15 a.m. and the morning was spent around the camp before breakfast. A nice flock with 30+ **Greater Rufous-headed**

Parrotbills and 2-3 **Coral-billed Scimitar-babblers** as a nice start. The rest of the clear and fairly warm day was spent both above and below Bompou down to Sessni. 2 **Slender-billed Scimitar-babblers** required a great deal of effort, and this day also produced a displaying **Crested Goshawk**, **Broad-billed Warbler**, a female **White-browed Bush-robin**, **Streak-throated Barwing** and the first of many **Beautiful Sibias**. In the late afternoon, while walking below Sessni at 1600m, Ramana spotted a pair of *Arborophila*-partridges. The male was seen well and could be identified as a **Chestnut-breasted Partridge**, the first record for Eaglenest. Soon we heard 2-3 birds displaying and the next coming days several more were heard from 1200-2000m. The bird is found in both Bhutan and further east in Arunachal Pradesh, so Fredrik's pre-trip guess that the bird could be present also here turned out to be correct. Back in camp everyone was very excited since the birding definitely had lived up to all expectations. Dinner was basic but very tasty Indian cuisine. Continuing the tradition of burning battery chargers in different Asian countries, Peter melted his lithium battery charger in the camp diesel-driven electricity works. Fortunately, we had a handful of 1,5 Volt batteries that would last us for a couple of days. Mr. Indy Glow was leaving to buy more supplies the next coming days, so we managed to keep our cameras going despite this little incident.

17 March. Morning above the camp and then all the way up to Sundarview. For this and the next couple of days we were joined by Shashank Dalvi who has a great passion for reptiles and amphibians and takes an active part in the Eaglenest Biodiversity Project. Just above Bompou, a 2nd year male Tragopan at a difficult early stage moult caused identification problems (see species list for photos and discussion). Attempts to locate calling trogons some 600 m higher up failed, possibly since the day was a bit chilly and misty. We were shown a roadside tree at 2370m where Shashank the previous year had seen a Ward's Trogon in what appeared to be an active nest. The day was still productive though, generating 5 species of laughingthrush including **Scaly Laughingthrush** and more babblers such as **Streak-breasted Scimitar-babbler**, **Rufous-throated Wren-babbler** and nice views of 2 males **Black-headed Shrike-babbler** which turned out not to be that uncommon in Eaglenest.

18 March. The morning was spent below Bompou and down to Sessni. One goal of this day was to locate Wedge-billed Wren-babbler, an extremely rare bird that was rediscovered in Bhutan in 2000 and found by Ramana in Eaglenest in 2003. At the right altitude, but at a previously unknown site, we suddenly heard a singing bird in a big and very dense bush. After surrounding it we spend several minutes before anyone actually caught a glimpse of the bird. We managed to see silhouettes of the impressive bill and to have brief looks of the 2 **Wedge-billed Wren-babblers** in the dense green, but the birds were not seen well enough to be able to tell details of the plumage which would have been interesting given the fact that there is some confusion as to which subspecies/species the Eaglenest birds belong. Some observers have suggested intermediate characters on the Eaglenest birds, and future studies will provide more taxonomical answers. Just above Sessni at 1300 m walking along the road, Ramana recalled his days in Namdapha and suggested that the undergrowth looked good for **Eyebrowed Wren-babbler**, a species hitherto not recorded in Eaglenest, but likely to be present. We went into the vegetation some 30m and played the tape. Within seconds the ordered bird flew right up and performed 3m from us! Today, as most other days, we meet a group of villagers collecting wood and other things in the forest. But the number of people entering Eaglenest is despite the absence of forest guards probably still quite low, especially at higher altitudes. Later, a **Chestnut-breasted Partridge** was called in, again confirming the notion that the species was not uncommon in the area. The clouds looked dark but we were lucky to only have a short shower at lunchtime at Sessni. Again an incredible day with a number of additional great sightings of e.g. **Scarlet and Gold-naped Finch**, **White-gorgeted Flycatcher**, groups with **Coral-billed Scimitar-babbler**, **Grey-headed** and **Greater Rufous-headed Parrotbills**, **Mountain Hawk-eagle** and 10 **Rufous-necked Hornbills**.



Beautiful Nuthatch, *Sitta formosa* (left), and Rufous-backed Sibia, *Heterophasia annectens* (right) are often seen together forming slow moving birdwaves together with species such as Cutia, *Cutia nipalensis*, and Sultan Tit, *Melanochlora sultanea*.

Photography in Eaglenest can be challenging, as demonstrated by these pictures...

19 March. Birding below Bompu down to 400m near Khellong. **Pin-tailed Green Pigeon** was fairly common at this low altitude and during the day many waves with an array of babblers and warblers were encountered. The two most thrilling birdwaves, closer to Sessni, yielded several species that we had hoped for back in Sweden, including **Cutia, Rufous-backed Sibia, Sultan Tit** and **Beautiful Nuthatch**. As if this was not enough, just above Sessni, suddenly a **Long-billed Wren-babbler** started calling! After some frustrating moments the long bill and the streaks on the back of the bird could be seen briefly but well in the undergrowth. Again a new record for Eaglenest and another fruit of Fredrik's pre-trip preparations. Back at the camp at 6.30 after having had nice views of a wary but approachable **Kalij Pheasant** on the road in front of the car.

20 March. After the intense and exciting birding, this day felt a bit like a moment of calm after the storm. Most of the day spent back-tracking around Sessni down to Khellong. On the way down we again passed the dead elephant female who had perished last November after having fallen from a slippery hillside. This and many signs of elephants in the vegetation and along elephant trails reminded us of their presence and of keeping an eye and ear out for these apparently rather unpredictable animals. Elephants normally spend the summer in the cooler mountains and then descend to the plains in the winter. However, the increasing number of conflicts with people down in the lowland has made the elephants associate man with problems and they can therefore become rather aggressive. Initially a bit anxious, we asked what we should do if we suddenly faced an elephant on the narrow road. Go downhill or uphill, or perhaps climb into a high tree? We got the somewhat not altogether calming answer that we just should make sure that such an encounter did not happen! A few clouds around Sessni, otherwise another day with clear skies and warm weather. Highlights of the day were a group of 11 **Scarlet Finches**, 2 **Beautiful Nuthatches**, 3 species of **Sibia**, an illusive **Red-faced Liocichla** and no less than 5 **Rufous-throated Wren-babblers** above Bompu.

21 March. While our luggage went ahead in another car to Lama Camp on the northern side of Eaglenest Pass, we spent the day slowly following which included passing the huge landslide above Sundarview. The target of the day was to make a last attempt to find the trogon. At the right altitude weather was warmer than the previous time. Soon we heard a male **Ward's Trogon** calling from a valley followed by another one even further away. After 30 minutes and a bit frustrated we gave up and went further up by foot. Not far away another



Two species of Tits in Eaglenest. Green-backed Tit, *Parus monticolus* (left) and Black-throated Tit, *Aegithalos concinnus*, (right).

bird called near the road and soon we caught a few glimpses of a male in the dense and dark forest. Finally we heard a 4th male up the gully nearby. We climbed 50 meters to get better overview and after a couple of minutes the bird responded to Ramana's whistling and flew in giving great views for more than 15 minutes. Soon also a female joined. After this sighting there was a temporary feeling that it would not have mattered if we had not seen another bird during the remaining days. We proceeded up to and beyond the Eaglenest Pass and on the way downhill Håkan and Fredrik spotted a female **Rufous-breasted Bush-Robin**. Birds kept coming and before the end of the day we had sightings of a male **Hill Partridge**, **Darjeeling Woodpecker**, **Grey-headed** and **Red-headed Bullfinch**, a group of **Black-throated Parrotbills** and at dusk at Lama Camp, 2 displaying **Grey Nightjars**.

22 March. A cold and misty day spent going up to Eaglenest Pass. A smaller group with **Ludlow's Fulvettas** was soon spotted, the female **Rufous-breasted Bush-Robin** was seen again and not far from it, a male **Crimson-browed Finch** was feeding. Brief sightings of **Yellowish-bellied Bush-warbler** and near the pass a **Bar-winged Wren-babbler** responded to tape and showed well in the undergrowth. In fact this bird was the 8th species of Wren-babbler seen in the area during our trip, a number which probably makes Eaglenest unique in the world!

23 March. Morning birding above and below the camp, Fredrik choosing the more exciting alternative below, returning for breakfast reporting that he had encountered Ramana's mystery Liocichla! After breakfast, Håkan and Duncan went with Ramana to explore the Tragopanda trail above Lama Camp. Fredrik and Peter were eager to relocate the Liocichla and spent the rest of the morning in the area where it had been seen earlier. A short glimpse of the bird at a distance up a hill side and a few minutes later a Liocichla-like song was heard from the same bushes. Three, sometimes four, descending melodious whistling notes were repeated. The recording equipment was for once left at the camp more than 20 min away. A few not so very nice words were uttered facing this most annoying fact. The bird continued to sing for a couple of minutes but was dead silent the rest of the time when the microphone had been brought from the camp. While waiting for the Liocichla to show or sing again, below a gorge, a minor birdwave caught our attention and suddenly a brownish bird with yellowish wash and a bright yellow rump appeared perched on a naked branch – A **Yellow-rumped Honeyguide**. A rather weak "sit" was heard repeatedly while the bird was in flight. A new interesting, but perhaps logical, addition to the Eaglenest list. A **Spotted Wren-babbler** seen the night before again performed and the trail hikers reported a **Spotted Laughingthrush** and good views of a female **Temminck's Tragopan**. By lunchtime the mist returned and more or less killed the rest of the day.

24 March. To our great disappointment, the forest was covered in thick fog and as a bonus it soon started to drizzle. A futile attempt to locate the *Liocichlas* was made, but conditions were appalling. A **Black Stork** appeared from nowhere in the mist and the silhouettes of 2 pigeons only 20 m away from the road finally turned out to be **Speckled Wood Pigeons**. We soon decided to give up and leave Eaglenest for the village Tenga further down the valley. In retrospect, it was unfortunate that we did not find the *Liocichla* until just before departure. A few more days and better weather would definitely have generated new sightings and perhaps recordings and photographs. However, Ramana returned a week later with another group of birders and also later in May and were able to relocate and catch the bird for thorough documentation. Details about the discovery of the bird with the proposed name Bugun *Liocichla* was recently published (October 2006) by Ramana Athreya. The late morning was spent walking down to Tenga where the weather was much better. Change of habitat added a few species to the trip list including **Golden Bush-robin**, **White-collared Blackbird** and a male **Pygmy Flycatcher**. Lunch in town and then it was time to leave back for a stop-over in Nameri and to say goodbye to Ramana and Duncan, who were going for a couple of days to Twang for some higher altitude birding.

25 March. A slow morning on the campsite side of the river awaiting departure for Guwahati. The 2 **Oriental hobbies** were still around, as was a pair of **Dollarbirds**. While Peter & Fredrik spotted a perched **Short-toed Eagle**, Håkan had wandered away finding a male **Siberian Rubythroat** and a **Black-faced Bunting**. Afternoon in the car, with Tserin, Indy Glow and his birdwatching son, to Guwahati and an eventless flight back to Sweden.

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Further reading

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- Athreya R. A new species of *Liocichla* found in the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary, Arunachal Pradesh, India. *Indian Birds* 2006 vol 2(4), 82. (see www.indianbirds.in)
- Ellin & Schmidt. Eaglenest: I hjärtat av östra Himalaya (in Swedish). *Vår Fågelvärld*, nr 6, 2006.
- Eaglenest Biodiversity Project homepage at: <http://www.clsp.jhu.edu/people/zak/ramana/wapMiscEaglenestBP.htm>

Contact information

Fredrik Ellin: fredellin@hotmail.com

Peter Schmidt: peter.schmidt@klinimm.uu.se

Håkan Söderberg: hakan.Soderberg@lm.se

SPECIES LIST

Swamp Francolin, *Francolinus gularis*

Heard several times and finally seen well in Kaziranga, Central Range, 12/3.

Hill Partridge, *Arborophila torqueola*

Heard on five dates in Eaglenest. A male attracted by tape seen well between Bompu and Sundarview on the 21/3.

Rufous-throated Partridge, *Arborophila rufogularis*

Heard on four days at Eaglenest. The impression was that this was the least common *Arborophila* or perhaps the least vocal during our stay.

Chestnut-breasted Partridge, *Arborophila mandelli*

A pair seen well in the undergrowth below Sessni at 1600 m on the 16/3. The deep chestnut breast, throat and crown and the white crescent between chest and throat of the male was seen and left us without doubt that we had made the first record of this species in Eaglenest. Subsequently the call was recorded and once we had learnt the call this species seemed to be the most common *Arborophila*-species in the area. Heard from around 1200m to slightly above 2000m. A pair was called in on the 18/3 and seen briefly in the dense undergrowth. An Eastern Himalaya EBA species.

Tragopan sp.

After having heard tragopans at dusk around Bompu, an immature 2nd year male tragopan was seen in the morning on the 17/3 just above Bompu. Due to the early stage moult, the bird proved difficult to identify. Some details in the plumage, e.g. rather small spots and pale feathering on the underparts and near the base of the tail could probably rule out Temminck's Tragopan but not for certain Satyr Tragopan. Someone suggested that the red colouration on the chin would be black on Temminck's and Satyr. There are no confirmed records of Satyr Tragopan this far east and this species seems to be more of a tree line bird and therefore likely to be found at higher altitudes. At higher altitudes in Eaglenest, there are several confirmed records of Temminck's Tragopan so at Bompu altitude at 1940m it is not unlikely that it is replaced by Blyth's Tragopan. Adding to the difficulty of identification of this young male is the fact that a Blyth's Tragopan in this area is likely to belong to the poorly known race *molesworthi* described only from a few specimens collected in Bhutan in the 1930's. In conclusion, despite indications pointing towards Blyth's Tragopan, the bird remains unidentified.

Evidence of a Blyth's Tragopan population in Eaglenest were the independent observations during 2006 of adult males by Ramana Athreya and Shashank Dalvi, also from near Bompu.



Tragopan sp. 2nd year male. Bompu at ~1975m, March 17th.

Temminck's Tragopan, *Tragopan temminckii*

A female gave good views for several minutes on the timber trail trek above Lama Camp on the 23/3.

Red Junglefowl, *Gallus gallus*

Several in Kaziranga, also recorded from Nameri.

Grey Peacock-pheasant, *Polyplectron bicalcaratum*

1-2 birds heard on four dates in Eaglenest.

Kalij Pheasant, *Lophura leucomelanos lathami*

A male just below Bompu on the 19/3 displaying at dusk for several minutes in front of our jeep.

Bar-headed Goose, *Anser indicus*

100+ Eastern Range on the 13/3, Kaziranga.

Common Shelduck, *Tadorna tadorna*

A single bird in flight by the Jia Bhorelli River, Nameri on the 14/3.

Ruddy Shelduck, *Tadorna ferruginea*

2 birds Kaziranga and 1+2+3 birds by the Jia Bhorelli River, Nameri on the 13-14/3 and 25/3.

White-winged Wood Duck, *Cairina scutulata*

1 bird present in a forest pond in Nameri seen in the evening and again the following morning on the 14-15/3. Extremely wary and easily disturbed. Adding to the experience was a heard of Gaur by the pond in the morning, finally slowly moving back into the forest.

Cotton Pygmy-goose, *Nettapus coromandelianus*

2 birds Kaziranga Eastern Range.

Gadwall, *Anas strepera*

5+5 birds Kaziranga.

Wigeon, *Anas penelope*

2+1 birds Kaziranga.

Spot-billed Duck, *Anas poecilorhyncha*

A total of 10-15 birds, Kaziranga 12-13/3.

Northern Shoveler, *Anas clypeata*

Up to ten birds recorded in both Kaziranga and along the Jia Bhorelli River, Nameri.

Common Teal, *Anas crecca*

Most numerous duck in Kaziranga with up to 50 daily.

Red-crested Pochard, *Netta rufina*

A male in flight along the Jia Bhorelli River, Nameri on the 25/3.

Common Pochard, *Aythya ferina*

4 birds Kaziranga on the 12/3.

Ferruginous Pochard *Aythya nyroca*

In total a dozen birds, Kaziranga, on the 12-13/3.

Tufted Duck, *Aythya fuligula*

5-6 birds Kaziranga 13/3.

Common Merganser, *Mergus merganser*

Up to 10 daily along the Jia Bhorelli River in Nameri 13-14/3 and 25/3.

Yellow-rumped Honeyguide, *Indicator xanthonotus*

A male showed well for almost 20 minutes in the canopy below Lama Camp on the 23/3. First record for Eaglenest and probably one of few for Western Arunachal Pradesh.



Yellow-rumped Honeyguide, *Indicator xanthonotus*. A male below Lama Camp. The bird was calling with a weak "sit" in flight.



A drumming Darjeeling Woodpecker, *Dendrocopos darjellensis* in Eaglnest below Sunderview.

Grey-capped Woodpecker, *Dendrocopos canicapillus*

1 bird Nameri on the 13/3.

Rufous-bellied Woodpecker, *Dendrocopos hyperythrus*

Totally 3 birds in Eaglenest on the 21/3 and 23/3.

Darjeeling Woodpecker, *Dendrocopos darjellensis*

A displaying male on the 21/3 and a pair on the 23/3.

Rufous Woodpecker, *Celeus brachyurus*

1 Kaziranga on the 13/3 and 1 Nameri on the 15/3.

Lesser Yellownape, *Picus chlorolophus*

1 bird Kaziranga on the 12/3.

Greater Yellownape, *Picus flavinucha*

1 bird Eaglenest on the 19/3.

Black-rumped Flameback, *Dinopium benghalense*

2 Kaziranga, 12/3.

Greater Flameback, *Chrysocolaptes lucidus*

1 Nameri on the 13/3.

Pale-headed Woodpecker, *Gecinulus grantia*

Three birds together in a mixed flock in bamboo below Khellong, Eaglenest on the 13/3.

Bay Woodpecker, *Blythipicus pyrrhotis*

2 sightings Eaglenest on the 19/3 and 23/3 but also heard on a few occasions.

Great Barbet, *Megalaima virens*

Seen and heard all days in Eaglenest 15-24/3.

Lineated Barbet, *Megalaima lineate*

Common Kaziranga and Nameri.

Golden-throated Barbet, *Megalaima franklinii*

Small numbers heard and seen most days in Eaglenest 15-24/3.

Blue-throated Barbet, *Megalaima asiatica*

Heard Nameri on the 14-15/3 and seen/heard on five dates in Eaglenest.

Blue-eared Barbet, *Megalaima australis*

1 seen calling in Nameri on the 13/3.

Coppersmith Barbet, *Megalaima haemacephala*

Noted in Kaziranga and in Nameri.

Oriental Pied-Hornbill, *Anthracoceros albirostris*

A group of 4 birds near Khellong on the 15/3.

Great Hornbill, *Buceros bicornis*

1 Eastern Range, Kaziranga on the 13/3 and 4+1+1+2 in Nameri 13-15/3 and 25/3.

Rufous-necked Hornbill, *Aceros nipalensis*

A pair above Khellong was a very pleasant start on the first evening in Eaglenest. These birds were followed by almost daily encounters of up to 10 birds. Not seen once we were relocated to Lama Camp on the north side of Eaglenest Pass.

Wreathed Hornbill, *Aceros undulates*

A male in flight below Khellong.

Eurasian Hoopoe, *Upupa epops*

1 Kaziranga and 1 Sessni.

Red-headed Trogon, *Harpactes erythrocephalus*

A male below Khellong on the 17/3 and briefly another near Sessni on the 19/3.

Ward's Trogon, *Harpactes wardi*

After having failed to find this bird on the 17/3 we made a new attempt on Trogon altitude above Bompu on the 21/3. Weather was better and soon 2 birds were heard calling at a distance. After giving up on them a male was located closer to the road a few 100 m further up giving brief glimpses in the dense forest. A few minutes later another bird was calling 2-300 m further up in a slope. Soon we had marvellous views of a male perched in the open for several minutes followed by a female showing just as well. Truly one of the highlights of the visit!



Ward's Trogon, *Harpactes waardi*. A pair seen together on March 17.



Indian Roller, *Coracias benghalensis affinis*

Fairly common in Kaziranga and in open areas in Assam.

Dollarbird, *Eurystomus orientalis*

A pair in a tree by the entrance to Eco camp, Nameri on the final day.

Common Kingfisher, *Alcedo atthis*

Not uncommon Kaziranga and Nameri.

Stork-billed Kingfisher, *Pelargopsis capensis*

A pair Kaziranga on the 12/3.

White-throated Kingfisher, *Halcyon smyrnensis*

Recorded in small numbers in Kaziranga, Nameri and along the road in Assam.

Pied Kingfisher, *Ceryle rudis*

Fairly common near water in Assam.

Blue-bearded Bee-eater, *Nyctyornis athertoni*

1 bird in the Central range, Kaziranga on the 12/3.

Little Green Bee-eater, *Merops orientalis*

Totally 4-5 birds seen in Kaziranga.

Blue-tailed Bee-eater, *Merops philippinus*

2 birds Eastern Range, Kaziranga.

Chestnut-headed Bee-eater, *Merops leschenaultia*

Common along the Jia Bhorelli River, Nameri. Also recorded in Kaziranga.

Large Hawk-Cuckoo, *Cuculus sparveroides*

Commonly heard at all altitudes, Eaglenest.

Oriental Cuckoo, *Cuculus saturatus*

1 heard the last day in Eaglenest 24/3. Apparently many Cuckoos had not yet arrived or were silent during our stay.

Asian Koel, *Eudynamis scolopacea*

1 from seen from the car on the way back to Guwahati.

Green-billed Malkoha, *Phaenicophaeus tristis*

2+1 birds in Kaziranga on the 12-13/3.

Greater Coucal, *Centropus sinensis*

1+1 birds Kaziranga 12-13/3.

Lesser Coucal, *Centropus bengalensis*

1 adult Nameri on the 14/3 and 1 adult and an immature bird Nameri on the 25/3.

Vernal Hanging-Parrot, *Loriculus vernalis*

1-2 birds Nameri on the 14/3.

Alexandrine Parakeet, *Psittacula eupatria*

10-15 birds both days in Kaziranga 12-13/3.

Rose-ringed Parakeet, *Psittacula krameri*

Common Kaziranga and a few in Nameri.

Red-breasted Parakeet, *Psittacula alexandri*

The most common parakeet in Kaziranga. Impressive flocks of several hundred birds past the hotel both mornings.

Himalayan Swiftlet, *Collocalia brevirostris*

1 bird Nameri. Small groups noted most days in Eaglenest.

Silver-backed Needletail, *Hirundapus cochinchinensis*

3 birds seen well enough for certain identification in Nameri on the 14/3.

Apus sp.

A group of 20-30 *Apus* swifts, Eastern Range Kaziranga did not come close enough for certain identification.

Asian Palm-Swift, *Cypsiurus balasiensis*

Seen in small numbers in lowland Assam including Kaziranga and Nameri.

Mountain Scops-Owl, *Otus spilocephalus*

One heard from the camp in Nameri on 13/3.

Collared Owlet, *Glaucidium brodiei*

Heard on five dates in Eaglenest. 1 seen eating a small lizard on the 19/3.

Asian Barred Owlet, *Glaucidium cuculoides*

The most common owl seen and heard in the lowlands but also seen in Eaglenest. Recorded on 8 dates.

Spotted Owlet, *Athene brama*

1 seen in daylight in Kaziranga on the 12/3.

Brown Hawk-Owl, *Ninox scutulata*

Heard calling outside the hotel in Kaziranga and 2 birds heard near Eco camp, Nameri.

Grey (Jungle) Nightjar, *Caprimulgus indicus*

2-3 birds displaying gave nice views at dusk 23/3 below Lama Camp.

Large-tailed Nightjar, *Caprimulgus macrurus*

2-3 birds seen displaying at dusk 13/3 and also heard 14-15/3 and 24-25/3 in Nameri.

Savanna Nightjar, *Caprimulgus affinis*

1 heard at dusk Nameri 13/3.



Mountain Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula aenea* from near Khellong, Eaglenest and a Barred Owlet, *Glaucidium brodiei* photographed early morning in Kaziranga.

Feral Pigeon, *Columba livia*

Noted near human settlements.

Speckled Wood-Pigeon, *Columba hodgsonii*

1 displaying above Bompu on the 21/3 and 2 birds below Lama Camp on the 24/3.

Oriental Turtle-Dove, *Streptopelia orientalis*

A total of around 15 birds Nameri 13-15/3 and 25/3.

Spotted Dove, *Streptopelia chinensis*

Fairly common in lowland Assam including Kaziranga and Nameri.

Red Collared-Dove, *Streptopelia tranquebarica*

3-4 birds seen in Kaziranga.

Eurasian Collared-Dove, *Streptopelia decaocto*

Recorded in small numbers in Kaziranga 12-13/3.

Barred Cuckoo-Dove, *Macropygia unchall*

1 seen very briefly below Khellong, Eaglenest 15/3.

Emerald Dove, *Chalcophaps indica*

2+1 birds in the Nameri forest 14-15/3.

Yellow-footed Green-Pigeon, *Treron phoenicoptera*

A few small groups noted in Kaziranga.

Pin-tailed Green-Pigeon, *Treron apicauda*

Small flocks and a group of 25 seen around Khellong, Eaglenest.

Green Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula aenea*

A few seen at Eastern Range, Kaziranga. Common Nameri.

Mountain Imperial-Pigeon, *Ducula badia*

Fairly common in small number all days in Eaglenest.

Bengal Florican, *Eupodotis bengalensis*

A male in flight during the morning elephant ride on the first day birding 12/3 provided a great start of the trip!

White-breasted Waterhen, *Amaurornis phoenicurus*

1 Kaziranga 12/3 and 1 in the forest pond Nameri 14-15/3.

Common Moorhen, *Gallinula chloropus*

2 Kaziranga 13/3.

Common Coot, *Fulica atra*

75+ Kaziranga 13/3.

Common Snipe, *Gallinago gallinago*

2+2 Kaziranga 12/3 and 13/3.

Spotted Redshank, *Tringa erythropus*

4-5 birds Kaziranga 12/3.

Common Redshank, *Tringa tetanus*

2-3 birds Kaziranga 12/3.

Common Greenshank, *Tringa nebularia*

Up to 10 birds Kaziranga and 4-5 birds also noted along Jia Bhorelli River, Nameri 14/3 and 25/3.

Green Sandpiper, *Tringa ochropus*

8-10 birds Kaziranga 12/3, singles in Nameri on 14-15/3 and 25/3.

Wood Sandpiper, *Tringa glareola*

2-3 Kaziranga 12/3.

Common Sandpiper, *Tringa hypoleucos*

Up to 5 birds daily in Kaziranga and Nameri 12-15/3 and 25/3.

Temminck's Stint, *Calidris temminckii*

1 bird 12/3 and 15+ birds 13/3 Kaziranga.

River Tern, *Sterna aurantia*

12+ in Kaziranga 12-13/3 and up to 5 birds daily in Nameri 14-15/3 and 25/3.



Whiskered Tern, *Chlidonias hybridus*

50+ noted in the Eastern Range, Kaziranga 13/3.

Pheasant-tailed Jacana, *Hydrophasianus chirurgus*

2 birds 12/3 and 5+ birds 13/3 Kaziranga.

Bronze-winged Jacana, *Metopidius indicus*

5+ Kaziranga, 12-13/3.

Great Thick-knee, *Burhinus recurvirostris*

2+1+1 birds Nameri 14/3.

Ibisbill, *Ibidorhyncha struthersii*

9 + 1 seen at close range during the rafting ride on Jia Bhorelli River, Nameri.

Little Ringed Plover, *Charadrius dubius*

5+ Kaziranga 12-13/3 and a pair displaying in Nameri 14/3.

River Lapwing, *Vanellus duvaucelii*

Fairly common along Jia Bhorelli River, Nameri.

Grey-headed Lapwing, *Vanellus cinereus*

Totally up to 10 birds recorded in Kaziranga 12-13/3.

Red-wattled Lapwing, *Vanellus indicus*

3-4 birds Kaziranga 12/3 and a pair Nameri 14/3.

Small Pratincole, *Glareola lacteal*

Up to at least 200 seen every day along the Jia Bhorelli River, Nameri.

Osprey, *Pandion haliaetus*

1-3 birds along the Jia Bhorelli river, Nameri 14/3.

Jerdon's Baza, *Aviceda jerdoni*

A pair perched and in flight in Nameri 15/3.

Oriental Honey-buzzard, *Pernis ptilorhyncus*

5+ Kaziranga 12/3 and 1 Nameri 25/3.

Black-winged Kite, *Elanus caeruleus*

2 seen at Delhi airport 11/3, 1 Kaziranga 12/3 and finally 1 near Guwahati 25/3.

Black Kite, *Milvus migrans*

Common near Guwahati and around settlements in Assam. Noted in Kaziranga.

Pallas's Sea-Eagle, *Haliaeetus leucoryphus*

1 adult and 1 immature Central Range and 4-6 birds Eastern Range, Kaziranga 12-13/3. A breeding pair with an immature bird Nameri 14/3.

Grey-headed Fish-Eagle, *Ichthyophaga ichthyaeus*

4-5 12/3 and 2-3 13/3 in Kaziranga. 1 Nameri 25/3.

White-rumped Vulture, *Gyps bengalensis*

1 en route 11/3 and 2 birds Central Range, Kaziranga 12/3. Up to 20 more Gyps seen in Kaziranga and near Guwahati were left unidentified.

Himalayan Griffon, *Gyps himalayensis*

15+ birds Central Range Kaziranga 12/3.

Short-toed Snake-Eagle, *Circaetus gallicus*

1 bird in Nameri on the 25/3. Few, if any, previous records in the area.

Crested Serpent-Eagle, *Spilornis cheela*

2+1 Kaziranga 12-13/3, 2 birds Nameri 14/3 and 1 near Bompou Eaglenest 18/3.

Western Marsh-Harrier, *Circus aeruginosus*

2-3 birds Kaziranga 12/3.

Northern Harrier, *Circus cyaneus*

2+1 Kaziranga 12-13/3 and 1 adult male 14/3 and 25/3 along the river in Nameri.

Pied Harrier, *Circus melanoleucos*

1 immature and 1 adult male seen on two occasions in the Central Range 12/3 and 1 adult male Eastern Range 14/3, Kaziranga.

Crested Goshawk, *Accipiter trivirgatus*

1 displaying above Bompou 18/3 and 1 bird 21/3, Eaglenest.

Shikra, *Accipiter badius*

2 Kaziranga 12/3.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk, *Accipiter nisus*

1-2 Kaziranga 13/3, 1 near Khellong 21/3. 3-4 unidentified *Accipiter* were also seen during the trip.

Common Buzzard, *Buteo buteo*

1 in flight Bompou, Eaglenest 16/3.

Long-legged Buzzard, *Buteo rufinus*

1 flying and sitting on the ground seen from the aircraft while waiting for departure in Delhi Airport 11/3.

Black Eagle, *Ictinaetus malayensis*

Recorded at most altitudes in Eaglenest; 1 Sundarview 17/3, 2-3 below Bompu 18/3, 1 Lama Camp 22/3 and 3 Tenga 24/3.

Greater Spotted Eagle, *Aquila clanga*

2-3 birds Kaziranga 12/3.

Changeable Hawk-Eagle, *Spizaetus cirrhatus*

2 immatures perched and 1 bird in flight Kaziranga, Eastern Range 13/3. 1 Nameri 14/3.

Mountain Hawk-Eagle, *Spizaetus nipalensis*

1-2 birds seen almost daily in Eaglenest 15-24/3.

Common Kestrel, *Falco tinnunculus*

1 Kaziranga and 1 Nameri 14/3 and 1 Nameri 15/3.

Oriental Hobby, *Falco severus*

A pair keeping to a favourite tree just by the entrance to the Eco camp all days in Nameri.

Peregrine Falcon, *Falco peregrinus*

A male seemingly of some northern race seen in Nameri.

Oriental Darter, *Anhinga melanogaster*

5-6 12/3 and 3-4 birds 13/3 in Kaziranga.

Little Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax niger*

Small numbers in both Kaziranga and in Nameri.

Great Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Up to 35 daily in both Kaziranga and Nameri. No certain sightings of Indian Cormorant probably due to poor attention to cormorants in general.

Little Egret, *Egretta garzetta*

Widespread in the lowlands.

Grey Heron, *Ardea cinerea*

Several in Kaziranga 12-13/3.

Purple Heron, *Ardea purpurea*

6-7 birds in Kaziranga 12-13/3.

Great Egret, *Casmerodius albus*

Widespread.

Intermediate Egret, *Mesophoyx intermedia*

3-4 birds in total noted in Kaziranga and Nameri. Overlooked.

Cattle Egret, *Bubulcus ibis*

Widespread in lowland in small numbers.

Indian Pond-Heron, *Ardeola grayii*

Widespread in lowland in small numbers.

Striated Heron, *Butorides striatus*

1 during the river ride Nameri 14/3.

Spot-billed Pelican, *Pelecanus philippensis*

30-35 Central Range 12/3 and 25-30 Eastern Range 13/3 in Kaziranga.

Common Pelican, *Pelecanus onochrotalus*

One immature bird Central Range, Kaziranga.

Asian Openbill, *Anastomus oscitans*

Widespread in lowlands with more than 40 birds 13/3 in Eastern Range, Kaziranga.

Black Stork, *Ciconia nigra*

1 bird emerged out of the mist as it flew past at 2100m, above Tenga, Eaglenest.

Woolly-necked Stork, *Ciconia episcopus*

Up to 10 birds daily in Kaziranga 12-13/3.

Black-necked Stork, *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*

Slightly more common than previous species in Kaziranga 12-13/3.

Lesser Adjutant, *Leptoptilos javanicus*

10-12 Central Range 12/3 and 25-30 Eastern Range 13/3 in Kaziranga. Also recorded a few times en route in Assam.

Greater Adjutant, *Leptoptilos dubius*

29 of these critically endangered birds at a known roosting site near Nagaon. 3 birds together Eastern Range, Kaziranga.

Blue-naped Pitta, *Pitta nipalensis*

A male heard calling and eventually seen briefly in Nameri 15/3.

Asian Fairy-bluebird, *Irena puella*

4-5 birds Nameri.

Blue-winged Leafbird, *Chloropsis cochinchinensis*

1 Nameri 14/3.

Golden-fronted Leafbird, *Chloropsis aurifrons*

1 14/3 and 2 15/3 Nameri.

Orange-bellied Leafbird, *Chloropsis hardwickii*

A male Nameri. Only two males seen in Eaglenest. According to Ramana, more common other times of the year.

Brown Shrike, *Lanius cristatus*

1 bird 12/3 and 2 birds 13/3, Kaziranga.

Long-tailed Shrike, *Lanius schach*

Race *tricolor* not uncommon Kaziranga and also noted in Tenga, Eaglenest.

Grey-backed Shrike, *Lanius tephronotus*

Fairly common Kaziranga and also noted in lowland elsewhere.

Green Magpie, *Cissa chinensis*

2 birds below Sessni in a birdwave with Beautiful Nuthatch and Rufous-backed Sibia.

Rufous Treepie, *Dendrocitta vagabunda*

5 observed 12/3 and 3 birds 13/3, Kaziranga.

Spotted Nutcracker, *Nucifraga caryocatactes*

5-6 birds above 2,500 m in Eaglenest.

House Crow, *Corvus splendens*

Noted around human settlements.

Large-billed Crow, *Corvus macrorhynchos*

Common and widespread. Only sparsely encountered in Eaglenest.

Black-hooded Oriole, *Oriolus xanthornus*

Totally 10-12 birds Kaziranga, 5-6 Nameri.

Maroon Oriole, *Oriolus trailii*

1 Nameri 14/3, 6-7 Eaglenest.

Large Cuckooshrike, *Coracina macei*

1 Kaziranga 12/3.

Black-winged Cuckooshrike, *Coracina melaschistos*

5-6 birds Eaglenest 18-20/3.

Small Minivet, *Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*

A group of 4-5 birds Kaziranga 12/3.

Grey-chinned Minivet, *Pericrocotus solaris*

2-5 birds daily 18-21/3 Eaglenest. Mainly at lower altitudes but also recorded just above Bompou.

Short-billed Minivet, *Pericrocotus brevirostris*

Up to 10 birds daily in Eaglenest. The most common Minivet here, especially at higher altitudes.

Scarlet Minivet, *Pericrocotus flammeus*

A pair Eaglenest 19/3.

Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike, *Hemipus picatus*

1 bird below Sessni, Eaglenest 20/3.

Yellow-bellied Fantail, *Rhipidura hypoxantha*

Common, often in mixed flocks, all days in Eaglenest.

White-throated Fantail, *Rhipidura albicollis*

As the above species but generally in smaller numbers.

Black Drongo, *Dicrurus macrocercus*

Common and widespread in the lowland.

Ashy Drongo, *Dicrurus leucophaeus*

Fairly common up to 1900 m in Eaglenest.

Bronzed Drongo, *Dicrurus aeneus*

2 Nameri 14/3 and 6-7 birds around and below Sessni, Eaglenest 19-20/3.

Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo, *Dicrurus remifer*

Fairly common from Sessni and downwards. 1 bird seen just above Bompou at 2,000 m.

Hair-crested Drongo, *Dicrurus hottentottus*

1 Eaglenest.

Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, *Dicrurus paradiseus*

1 Eaglenest 19/3.

Black-naped Monarch, *Hypothymis azurea*

2 Nameri 15/3, 2 below Khellong, Eaglenest 15/3.

Common Iora, *Aegithina tiphia*

3-4 birds Nameri, 14/3.

Large Woodshrike, *Tephrodornis gularis*

5-6 birds in a group in the Nameri forest 14/3.

Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush, *Monticola rufiventris*

1-2 males seen almost daily south of the Eaglenest Pass.

Blue Rock-Thrush, *Monticola solitarius*

1 male 13/3 and a female 14/3 Nameri.

Blue Whistling-Thrush, *Myiophonus caeruleus*

4 birds in Nameri. Common on the way to/from and in Eaglenest.

Long-tailed Thrush, *Zoothera dixonii*

Two birds seen well at around 1000 m. Several *Zoothera* thrushes were seen too briefly to permit certain identification.

Black-throated Thrush, *Turdus ruficollis atrogularis*

At least three different birds daily around Bompou 16-18/3. 3 near Lama Camp 24/3 and 1 male in Nameri on the 25/3. This taxon not listed for Nameri in the Forktail checklist.

White-collared Blackbird, *Turdus albocinctus*

2 males and a female in conifer forest near Tenga.

Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher, *Ficedula strophiiata*

2-5 birds daily in Eaglenest, 15-24/3.

Taiga Flycatcher, *Ficedula albicilla*

1 bird 12/3 and 2 birds 13/3 in Kaziranga. All in female plumage.

White-gorgeted Flycatcher, *Ficedula monileger*

3 singing birds yielded 2 sightings 18/3. 1 singing 20/3.

Little Pied Flycatcher, *Ficedula westermanni*

Two female-plumaged birds in Nameri 15/3.

Slaty-blue Flycatcher, *Ficedula tricolor*

1 female near Sessni at about 1500 m, Eaglenest 19/3.

Verditer Flycatcher, *Eumyias thalassina*

Common in Nameri and in Eaglenest with up to 6 birds daily.

Large Niltava, *Niltava grandis*

1 singing 20/3 and 2 singing 21/3, Eaglenest.

Small Niltava, *Niltava macgrigoriae*

One male in Nameri 14/3. 2 males 19/3 and 1 heard singing 20/3, Eaglenest.

Pale-chinned Blue-Flycatcher, *Cyornis poliogenys*

A few seen in Nameri on 14/3 and 15/3.

Pygmy Blue Flycatcher, *Muscicapella hodgsoni*

1 adult male seen well below Lama Camp at about 2200m on the last day, 24/3. Presumably, many flycatchers are yet to arrive this early in the season.

Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher, *Culicicapa ceylonensis*

2-3 Nameri 13-14/3. Common, often in mixed flocks, in Eaglenest.

Siberian Rubythroat, *Luscinia calliope*

1 male 14/3 and another male singing 25/3, Nameri. Both birds in riverside scrub.

White-tailed Rubythroat, *Luscinia pectoralis*

A male of race *tschebaiewi* seen in high elephant grass, Kaziranga.

Bluethroat, *Luscinia svecica*

1-2 birds 14-15/3 and 1 bird on the 25/3 in grassy riverside areas in Nameri.

Orange-flanked Bush-Robin, *Tarsiger cyanurus*

Seen daily with up to 4 birds in Eaglenest.

Golden Bush-Robin, *Tarsiger chrysaeus*

Briefly 1 bird at a distance and later 1 male seen in degraded scrub around Tenga 24/3.

White-browed Bush-Robin, *Tarsiger indicus*

2 females near Bompou.



Four species of Tarsiger-robins are possibilities in Eaglenest. Here, males of Orange-flanked Bush-Robin, *Tarsiger cyanurus* (left) and Golden Bush-Robin, *Tarsiger chrysaeus* (right).

Rufous-breasted Bush-Robin, *Tarsiger hyperythrus*

A female seen on two dates on the north side below Eaglenest Pass.

Oriental Magpie-Robin, *Copsychus saularis*

2-3 birds daily in Kaziranga and in Nameri.

Black Redstart, *Phoenicurus ochruros rufiventris*

1 male Kaziranga 12/3.

Hodgson's Redstart, *Phoenicurus hodgsoni*

Single females seen daily in Nameri, 13-14/3 and 24-25/3.

Daurian Redstart, *Phoenicurus aureus*

A female in Eco Camp, Nameri was the only record.

Blue-fronted Redstart, *Phoenicurus frontalis*

1 female near Sundaraview 17/3. 2 males Lama Camp 21-23/3 and 6-7 birds around Tenga 24/3.

White-capped Redstart, *Chaimarrornis leucocephalus*

1 by the Jia Bhorelli river, Nameri 14/3 was the only record.

Plumbeous Redstart, *Rhyacornis fuliginosus*

1 female at about 1200m, Eaglenest was the only record.

Slaty-backed Forktail, *Enicurus schistaceus*

Single birds seen above Sessni 19-20/3. No luck with Forktails this time.

Common Stonechat, *Saxicola torquata*

Very common in grassland, Kaziranga and Nameri. All birds seen with characters of *maurus/stejnegeri/indicus*.

Grey Bushchat, *Saxicola ferrea*

1 female 15/3 at a stop during the rafting ride on Jia Bhorelli River. 1 male 21/3 at Lama Camp, Eaglenest.

Spot-winged Starling, *Saroglossa spiloptera*

A group of 2-4 birds including a male feeding in flowering trees in Central Range, Kaziranga 12/3.

Chestnut-tailed Starling, *Sturnus malabaricus*

Turned out to be not uncommon in Kaziranga and was also seen on a few occasions in Nameri.

Asian Pied Starling, *Sturnus contra*

Fairly common in the lowland.

Common Myna, *Acridotheres tristis*

Abundant in the lowland and around human settlements.

Bank Myna, *Acridotheres ginginianus*

Several groups at Delhi airport 12/3. 4-6 birds both days in Kaziranga.



Starlings and Mynas were only seen in the lowlands. Here, from Kaziranga, a Chestnut-tailed Starling, *Sturnus malabaricus*.

Jungle Myna, *Acridotheres fuscus*

10-15 birds daily in Kaziranga. Also recorded in small numbers in Nameri.

White-vented Myna, *Acridotheres cinereus*

A total of 3-4 birds together with Jungle Mynas.

Hill Myna, *Gracula religiosa*

5+ daily in the open forest around Nameri.

Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch, *Sitta castanea*

2 Nameri 15/3 and 2 between Bompou and Sessni, Eaglenest 19/3.

White-tailed Nuthatch, *Sitta himalayensis*

Seen in small numbers almost daily in Eaglenest, with highest count of 8-10 birds in one day. Seen down to 1500m.

Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, *Sitta frontalis*

Two in Nameri 14/3 was the only record.

Beautiful Nuthatch, *Sitta formosa*

2 birds of this target species was found just above Sessni, Eaglenest, 19/3. 2+2 birds seen around Sessni also on the 20/3.

Rusty-flanked Treecreeper, *Certhia nipalensis*

2 birds above Bompou on the 16/3 and one bird on the 23/3. This and the next species possibly a bit overlooked after the first observations.

Brown-throated Treecreeper, *Certhia discolor*

1 above Bompou 16/3 and one 21/3.

Great Tit, *Parus major*

6 birds in the hotel grounds in Kaziranga. 2-4 birds in Nameri 15/3.

Green-backed Tit, *Parus monticolus*

1 seen above Bompou, Eaglenest 18/3, much more common around Lama Camp with up to 10 birds seen daily.

Yellow-cheeked Tit, *Parus sibilotus*

3 birds 16/3, 10 birds 17/3 and 5 birds 18/3 in Eaglenest. Not recorded around Lama Camp.

Yellow-browed Tit, *Sylviparus modestus*

Fairly common in Eaglenest with up to 20 birds above Bompou 17/3.

Sultan Tit, *Melanochlora sultanea*

3 birds near Sessni in a mixed flock with Cutias and Rufous-backed Sibias 19/3.

Black-throated Tit, *Aegithalos concinnus*

2 birds on the 16/3. 2-3 birds daily around Lama Camp, Eaglenest 21-24/3.

Plain Martin, *Riparia paludicola*

5-10 birds in Kaziranga and rather common along the Jia Bhorelli River, Nameri. No certain records of Sand Martin *R. riparia*.

Barn Swallow, *Hirundo rustica*

Recorded in small numbers in Kaziranga and Nameri.

Asian House-Martin, *Delichon dasypus*

Martins were noted on a few occasions of which 5 of this species were identified the last day in Nameri 25/3.

Striated Bulbul, *Pycnonotus striatus*

Fairly common in Eaglenest with up to 15 birds daily.

Red-whiskered Bulbul, *Pycnonotus jocosus*

Several daily in Kaziranga and in Nameri.

Red-vented Bulbul, *Pycnonotus cafer*

Common in the lowland. Interestingly, birds around Tenga seemed even darker than birds in the lowland.

White-throated Bulbul, *Alophoixus flaveolus*

Fairly common in Nameri and at lower altitudes in Eaglenest.

Mountain Bulbul, *Hypsipetes mcclllandii*

At least one bird seen below Bompou 18/3.

Black Bulbul, *Hypsipetes leucocephalus*

Up to 10 birds daily in Eaglenest.

Zitting Cisticola, *Cisticola juncidis*

Several in Kaziranga.

Hill Prinia, *Prinia atrogularis*

Common and recorded daily in Eaglenest. This Himalayan taxon suggested to be split to Black-throated Prinia (with the south-east Asian and Indonesian taxon named Hill Prinia, *P. superciliaris*).

Oriental White-eye, *Zosterops palpebrosus*

Not uncommon in the lowlands in Kaziranga and in Nameri.

Chestnut-headed Tesia, *Tesia castaneocoronata*

Fairly common in Eaglenest. Seen on a number of occasions.

Slaty-bellied Tesia, *Tesia olivea*

Several heard and seen on a few occasions in the roadside undergrowth. Recorded up to 2000m altitude.

Grey-bellied Tesia, *Tesia cyaniventer*

2 singing birds seen in Nameri 15/3.

Brownish-flanked Bush-Warbler, *Cettia fortipes*

2 heard near Bompu 16/3. Fairly common with 2-5 birds heard and/or seen daily around Lama Camp 19-24/3.

Yellowish-bellied Bush-Warbler, *Cettia acanthizoides*

2 birds near Eaglenest Pass 22/3.

Grey-sided Bush-Warbler, *Cettia brunnifrons*

1 singing bird seen and another heard 18/3. 1 bird seen on the 20/3.

Russet Bush Warbler, *Bradypterus seebohmi*

1 heard singing in Kaziranga Eastern range 13/3 and one bird singing Nameri on 15/3.

Thick-billed Warbler, *Acrocephalus aedon*

1 in shrubbery along the river in Nameri 14/3.

Mountain Tailorbird, *Orthotomus cuculatus*

1 seen in Nameri 15/3. Heard almost daily in Eaglenest, but a bit ignored.

Common Tailorbird, *Orthotomus sutorius*

Several in the lowlands in Kaziranga and in Nameri.

Dusky Warbler, *Phylloscopus fuscatus*

Several in Kaziranga and up to 7 birds daily in Nameri.

Tickell's Leaf-Warbler, *Phylloscopus affinis*

3-4 Kaziranga. One in Nameri.

Buff-barred Warbler, *Phylloscopus pulcher*

1-5 birds almost daily in Eaglenest.

Ashy-throated Warbler, *Phylloscopus maculipennis*

By far the most common *Phylloscopus* at higher elevations in Eaglenest.

Lemon-rumped Warbler, *Phylloscopus chloronotus*

1 Nameri, several around Bompu 16/3, 1 bird 18/3, 5-6 birds 21/3.

Inornate Warbler, *Phylloscopus inornatus*

Fairly common at lower elevations in Kaziranga and in Nameri. One heard at around 400 m, Eaglenest.

Greenish Warbler, *Phylloscopus trochiloides*

Several in the lowlands.

Blyth's Leaf-Warbler, *Phylloscopus reguloides*

Rather common in Nameri.

Yellow-vented Warbler, *Phylloscopus cantator*

2 birds 19/3 near Khellong, Eaglenest. An Eastern Himalaya EBA species.

Grey-hooded Warbler, *Phylloscopus [Seicercus] xanthoschistos*

1-2 birds in a mixed flock 15/3 near Khellong. 2 birds near Khellong 19/3. Three birds above Tenga 23/3.

Whistler's Warbler, *Seicercus whistleri*

Several birds seen mostly at higher elevations where song without trill was heard. Birds at lower elevation at around 1000m could very well have been *S. burkii* but none were heard singing and unfortunately too little time was spent trying to identify these birds.

Grey-cheeked Warbler, *Seicercus poliogenys*

Common in Eaglenest with up to 20 birds daily.

Chestnut-crowned Warbler, *Seicercus castaniceps*

Fairly common in Eaglenest.

Broad-billed Warbler, *Tickellia hodgsoni*

1-2 birds around Bompu 16-17/3 and at least three birds heard 21/3. An Eastern Himalaya EBA species.

Black-faced Warbler, *Abroscopus schisticeps*

Common, but never in great numbers, in Eaglenest.

Striated Grassbird, *Megalurus palustris*

2-3 singing birds both days in Kaziranga. One singing bird Nameri.

White-throated Laughingthrush, *Garrulax albogularis*

A party of 10 above Bompu 16/3. 30+15 below Eaglenest Pass 21/3.

White-crested Laughingthrush, *Garrulax leucolophus*

Groups recorded almost daily in Eaglenest.

Greater Necklaced Laughingthrush, *Garrulax pectoralis*

A party of 5+ birds near Khellong, Eaglenest 19/3. Another 1-2 sightings of unidentified Necklaced Laughingthrushes.

Striated Laughingthrush, *Garrulax striatus*

Recorded several times daily and by far the most commonly seen laughingthrush in Eaglenest.

Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush, *Garrulax erythrocephalus nigrimentus*

2 birds 17/3, 2 birds 22/3 and 4 birds 23/3, Eaglenest.

Spotted Laughingthrush, *Garrulax ocellatus*

1 above Lama Camp 23/3.

Grey-sided Laughingthrush, *Garrulax caerulatus*

5 above Bompu, Eaglenest 21/3.

Scaly Laughingthrush, *Garrulax subunicolor*

3+3 below Sundevuew 17/3, 1 at Bompu and 7+4 near Sundevuew 21/3 and 2 at Lama Camp 22/3.

Streaked Laughingthrush, *Garrulax lineatus imbricatus*

One seen in roadside bushes below Lama Camp 22/3. The eastern taxon sometimes treated as a full species, Bhutan Laughingthrush, *Garrulax (Trochalopteron) imbricatum*.

Blue-winged Laughingthrush, *Garrulax squamatus*

1 in a mixed flock above Khellong, Eaglenest on the evening 16/3.

Black-faced Laughingthrush, *Garrulax affinis*

4-5 birds recorded near Sundevuew 16/3 and 17/3.

Red-faced Liocichla, *Liocichla phoenicea*

1 in a mixed flock above Khellong, Eaglenest 16/3, 1 bird near Sessni 18/3 and 1 bird seen and another 2 birds heard near Sessni 20/3.

Bugun Liocichla, *Liocichla bugunorum*.

Needless to say the greatest surprise of the trip! In the morning of the 23/3, Fredrik got to see the bird in secondary scrub below Lama Camp. Peter and Fredrik subsequently relocated the bird and heard the song, reminiscent of Emei Shan Liocichla, *Liocichla omeiensis*, but clearly different.

Abbott's Babbler, *Malacocincla abbotti*

At least two birds seen in Nameri 14/3.

Puff-throated Babbler, *Pellorneum ruficeps*

One noted in Nameri 14/3.

Streak-breasted Scimitar Babbler, *Pomatorhinus ruficollis*

Nine birds recorded all in all, Eaglenest.

Coral-billed Scimitar Babbler, *Pomatorhinus ferruginosus ferruginosus*

This beautiful bird was seen on four days in Eaglenest, most observations of 2-3 birds from around Bompu at 2000 m.

Slender-billed Scimitar Babbler, *Xiphirhynchus superciliaris*

A pair was seen well 16/3 after some struggling at about 2200 m.

Long-billed Wren Babbler, *Rimator malacoptilon*

After some really hard work on the 19/3 this fantastic bird was seen by all. A trip highlight and a new species for Eaglenest.

Eye-browed Wren Babbler, *Napothera epilepidota*

Ramana's remark on the 18/3 that the habitat near Sessni at 1300m looked good for this species paid off as soon as he played the tape. First record for Eaglenest.

Scaly-breasted Wren Babbler, *Pnoepyga albiventer*

Six birds heard or seen, Eaglenest.

Pygmy Wren Babbler, *Pnoepyga pusilla*

Several heard almost every day in Eaglenest.

Rufous-throated Wren Babbler, *Spelaeornis caudatus*

10 + birds heard. Seen very well on two occasions. Recorded from approximately 1600m to 2300m, Eaglenest. An Eastern Himalaya EBA species.

Bar-winged Wren Babbler, *Spelaeornis troglodytoides*

One bird responded to tape and was seen very well below Eaglenest Pass 22/3.

Spotted Wren Babbler, *Spelaeornis formosus*

Approximately ten birds heard from 1100m to 2200m, Eaglenest. Good looks were had at below Lama Camp.



An impressive 8 species of Wren-babbler are found in Eaglenest. The birds are very vocal during March-April but are as usual hard to spot in the dense vegetation. Bar-winged Wren Babbler, *Spelaeornis troglodytoides* (left) and Rufous-throated Wren Babbler, *Spelaeornis caudatus* (right).

Wedge-billed Wren Babbler, *Sphenocichla humei*

This Eaglenest jewel was of course one of the absolute highlights of the trip. Two birds, presumably a pair, were seen at very close range, although still hard to lay eyes on due to the dense vegetation, Eaglenest. An Eastern Himalaya EBA species.

Rufous-capped Babbler, *Stachyris ruficeps*

Common throughout Eaglenest.

Golden Babbler, *Stachyris chrysaea*

Commonly seen in small numbers on most days in Eaglenest.

Grey-throated Babbler, *Stachyris nigriceps*

Seen in few numbers at lower elevations in Eaglenest 18-19/3.

Striped Tit-Bbbler, *Macronous gularis*

A few seen and heard in Nameri. One heard at the lower slopes below Khellong, Eaglenest.

Chestnut-capped Babbler, *Timalia pileatea*

A few seen at Central Range, Kaziranga 13/3.

Yellow-eyed Babbler, *Chrysomma sinense*

Despite much effort, the only *Chrysomma* we managed to find at Central Range, Kaziranga, was a pair of this species.

Silver-eared Mesia, *Leiothrix argenteauris*

Several flocks below Sessni seen on three dates, 18-20/3, Eaglenest.

Cutia, *Cutia nipalensis*

High on the wish list it took us several days in Eaglenest before we found our first party of four near Sessni 19/3. Another band of nine was encountered later the same day.

Black-headed Shrike-Babbler, *Pteruthius rufiventer*

Minimum six birds seen or heard on both sides of the Eaglenest Pass, e.g. one singing male from Lama Camp. We obtained recordings of several variations of the song. A male seen very well at about 2400 m above Bompu.

White-browed Shrike-Babbler, *Pteruthius flaviscapis*

Seen on three days in Eaglenest, mostly around 1200 m.

Green Shrike-Babbler, *Pteruthius xanthochlorus*

Singles seen on two days near Lama Camp in Eaglenest.

Black-eared Shrike-Babbler, *Pteruthius melanotis*

Seen on five days over a broad altitudinal span in Eaglenest.

White-hooded Babbler, *Gampsorhynchus rufulus*

Four birds, including a juvenile, seen together above Khellong, Eaglenest 15/3.

Rusty-fronted Barwing, *Actinodura egertoni*

Commonly seen from approximately 2000 m and lower in Eaglenest.

Streak-throated Barwing, *Actinodura waldeni daflaensis*

Seen on four days at altitudes above 2000m. Eaglenest should be in the zone where one could expect hybrids between this taxon and Hoary-throated Barwing *A. nipalensis* according to Anderton & Rasmussen. Birds seemed to be slightly variable in the amount of streaking on the throat. Further study is probably needed before a correct classification of these birds can be made. An Eastern Himalaya EBA species.

Blue-winged Minla, *Minla cyanouroptera*

20+2 birds seen 20-21/3 at about 500m, Eaglenest.

Chestnut-tailed Minla, *Minla strigula*

Seen most days in Eaglenest.

Red-tailed Minla, *Minla ignotincta*

A party of 8-10 birds above Khellong 15/3 was surprisingly the only sighting.

Golden-breasted Fulvetta, *Alcippe chrysotis*

Seen on five days in Eaglenest, largest flock was of about 20 birds 20/3.

Yellow-throated Fulvetta, *Alcippe cinerea*

Commonly seen throughout Eaglenest, often a major constituent of the mixed flocks.



More Eaglenest high-lights, Ludlow's Fulvetta, *Alcippe ludlowi* (left) and Greater Rufous-headed Parrotbill, *Paradoxornis ruficeps* (right).

Ludlow's (Brown-throated) Fulvetta, *Alcippe ludlowi*

Four birds seen on one day, at about 2500 m near Eaglenest Pass. An Eastern Himalaya EBA species.

Nepal Fulvetta, *Alcippe nipalensis*

Seen at low altitudes in Eaglenest on three dates, including a large flock of about 40 birds.

Rufous-backed Sibia, *Heterophasia annectens*

Seen near Sessni together with Cutias and Beautiful Nuthatch. Three singles seen 19/3 and two more birds the next day.

Beautiful Sibia, *Heterophasia pulchella*

Common above 2000m, more sparse at lower altitudes, in Eaglenest. Seen in many different habitats. An Eastern Himalaya EBA species.

Long-tailed Sibia, *Heterophasia picaoides*

The low altitude Sibia seen on four dates in Eaglenest.



Black-breasted Parrotbill, *Paradoxornis flavirostris* Kaziranga is one of the more reliable sites to see this species with a highly restricted range.



Stripe-throated Yuhina, *Yuhina gularis* (left) and White-naped Yuhina, *Yuhina bakeri* (right).

White-naped Yuhina, *Yuhina bakeri*

Several seen on four days, Eaglenest. Mostly at 1000-1200 m. An Eastern Himalaya EBA species.

Whiskered Yuhina, *Yuhina flavicollis*

Seen in over a broad altitudinal span at five days, Eaglenest.

Stripe-throated Yuhina, *Yuhina gularis*

Seen on six days in Eaglenest, never numerous but rather common.

Rufous-vented Yuhina, *Yuhina occipitalis*

Seen on two dates, 17/3 and 22/3, in Eaglenest at altitudes above 2000 m.

Black-chinned Yuhina, *Yuhina nigrimenta*

Seen on six days in Eaglenest, largest flock of about 40 birds.

White-bellied Yuhina, *Yuhina zantholeuca*

One bird seen 19/3 below the Eaglenest sanctuary proper, at about 500 m.

Grey-headed Parrotbill, *Paradoxornis gularis*

A party of about 30 birds seen once 18/3 at about 1100 m.

Black-breasted Parrotbill, *Paradoxornis flavirostris*

A pair was seen very well in the grassland at Debeswary, Eastern Range, Kaziranga.

Black-throated Parrotbill, *Paradoxornis nipalensis poliotis*

Surprisingly only one flock of about 50 birds seen.

Greater Rufous-headed Parrotbill, *Paradoxornis ruficeps*

Flocks seen on four days in Eaglenest, roughly between 1000 and 2000 m. Maximum number was 30 birds just above Bompou 16/3.

Bengal Bushlark, *Mirafra bengalense*

Five birds in Kaziranga and another five in Nameri.

Sand Lark, *Calendrella raytal*

Maximum five birds were counted along Jia Bholeli, Nameri.

Oriental Skylark, *Alauda gulgula*

One singing bird in Kaziranga 13/3

Fire-breasted Flowerpecker, *Dicaeum ignipectus*

Six birds identified in Eaglenest. Several birds heard were likely to be this species.

Mrs Gould's Sunbird, *Aethopyga gouldiae*

Males seen on two dates in Eaglenest. Sunbirds was another group of birds that was not scrutinized thoroughly in Eaglenest.

Green-tailed Sunbird, *Aethopyga nipalensis*

Common at higher altitudes in Eaglenest.

Black-throated Sunbird, *Aetopyga saturata*

A little more than ten birds seen in Eaglenest. A male at 2400 m was unusually high up.

Crimson Sunbird, *Aethopyga siparaja*

One male in Nameri 14/3.

Fire-tailed Sunbird, *Aethopyga ignicauda*

Three males of this handsome species were seen at about 2500 m, Eaglenest.

Streaked Spiderhunter, *Arachnothera magna*

Not uncommon at altitudes roughly up to 1700 m, Eaglenest.



Three subspecies of White Wagtail were observed. Here a *leucopsis* from Nameri.

House Sparrow, *Passer domesticus*

Common in Kaziranga and in Nameri. Noticeable clear white underparts.

Cinnamon Sparrow, *Passer rutilans*

One pair seen at Bompu camp site on one morning 19/3.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow, *Passer montanus*

Seen in Kaziranga 12-13/3.

White Wagtail, *Motacilla alba*

Common in Kaziranga and in Nameri. In Kaziranga *leucopsis* was by far the most common subspecies with a few *alboides* seen. In Nameri *alboides* was in majority with quite a few *leucopsis* seen. Both subspecies calling with a Grey Wagtail like call. In Nameri two *ocularis* were seen. These birds were calling like *alba*.

Citrine Wagtail, *Motacilla citreola*

Common in Kaziranga and a few seen in Nameri. Though males mostly seemed to be in winter plumage, and therefore difficult to identify, none showed anything reminiscent of subspecies *calcarata*.

Yellow Wagtail, *Motacilla flava*

Fairly common in Kaziranga and two birds recorded in Nameri. All males in Kaziranga seen well enough for identification displayed characteristics of subspecies *thunbergi*.

Richard's Pipit, *Anthus richardi*

A few birds noted in Nameri seen well along the river.

Paddyfield Pipit, *Anthus rufulus*

A few birds seen in Kaziranga and in Nameri.

Olive-backed Pipit, *Anthus hodgsoni*

A few seen in Kaziranga and in Nameri. Common in Eaglenest. All birds seen well showed weak streaking on the mantle suggesting wintering *yunnanensis* subspecies.

Rosy Pipit, *Anthus roseatus*

Common in Kaziranga.

Rufous-backed Accentor, *Prunella strophiatea*

A total of 8 birds seen near Eaglenest Pass 19/3, Lama Camp 22/3 and Tenga 23/3.

Maroon-backed Accentor, *Prunella immaculata*

2 birds seen in roadside scrub below Bompu 16/3 and 1 bird above Lama Camp 22/3 in Eaglenest.

Black-breasted Weaver, *Ploceus philipinus*

Two birds Central Range and one bird Eastern Range, Kaziranga 12/3.

Baya Weaver, *Ploceus manyar*

Rather common in Kaziranga 12-13/3.

Red Avadavat, *Amandava amandava*

20 birds Central Range, Kaziranga and five birds in Nameri 25/3.

Yellow-breasted Greenfinch, *Carduelis spinoides*

20 birds seen around cultivation above Tenga 23/3.

Scarlet Finches & a Golden-throated Barbet



Common Rosefinch, *Carpodacus erythrinus*

One female at about 500 m 16/3, three birds at Bompu 20/3 and another female Sessni 19/3, Eaglenest.

Crimson-browed Finch, *Pinicola subhimachalus*

One male feeding in roadside scrub 22/3 at about 2600 m above Lama Camp.

Scarlet Finch, *Haematospiza siphai*

This strikingly coloured species seen on three dates at about 1100 m, Eaglenest. Largest flock was of 7 males and 4 females.

Red-headed Bullfinch, *Pyrrhula erythrocephala*

One male and two females seen at Lamacamp, Eaglenest.



Grey-headed & Red-headed Bullfinch

Grey-headed Bullfinch, *Pyrrhula erythaca*

Three birds seen on the south side of Eaglenest Pass. An estimated 25 birds around Lamacamp, Eaglenest.

Gold-naped Finch, *Pyrrhoplectes epauletta*

Two female/immature birds in roadside shrub at about 1600 m and one male at 2300 m, Eaglenest.

Chestnut Bunting, *Emberiza rutila*

A first winter male at 2000 m in scrub just above Bompou seen on several occasions at first provided some identification problems, Eaglenest.

Black-faced Bunting, *Emberiza spodocephala*

3 birds at Middle Range, Kaziranga 12/3 and 3 males and a female in Nameri 25/3.

Some mammals during the trip

Indian Elephant, *Elephas maximus indicus*

Kaziranga offers very nice opportunities to watch wild Indian Elephants. Together with rhinos and Asian Buffalos they are also the main reason why all transportation within the park is made in open Jeeps.

Indian Rhinoceros, *Rhinoceros unicornis*

Kaziranga is the most important sanctuary for the Indian Rhino currently holding 70% of the some 2.500 animals remaining in the world.

Gaur, *Bos gaurus*

A group of these impressive animals, close relatives to domesticated cattle, was encountered at daybreak in the Nameri forest while approaching a pond with a White-winged duck. The herd was observed for 10-15 minutes until it slowly moved on into the woods.

Asian Buffalo, *Bubalus bubalis*

Again a species with a substantial part (70%) of the total world population in Kaziranga. Here it is commonly seen.

Hog Deer, *Axis porcinus*

Common in Kaziranga and seen at close range during the elephant ride.

Swamp Deer, *Cervus duvauceli*

Also known as Barasingha. Another big mammal with an important population in Kaziranga.

Wild Boar, *Sus scrofa*

Of south Asian race *cristatus*. Common in Kaziranga.

Indian Giant Squirrel, *Ratufa indica*

2 individuals seen in Eaglenest. Other squirrels were not identified.



Indian Rhinoceros in Kaziranga and Gaurs from Nameri.