

# Birding Ecotours



**INDIA: THE NORTH – TIGERS, AMAZING BIRDS,  
AND THE HIMALAYAS**

**24 JANUARY – 9 FEBRUARY 2023**



*Bengal Tiger is the big mammalian target on this trip.*

India, with its fabulous scenery, incredible wildlife, fascinating culture, and wonderful monuments, must truly be on any world-birder's and traveler's wish list! This small group birdwatching tour will visit world-famous national parks such as Ranthambhore, Keoladeo Ghana (formerly known as Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary), and Jim Corbett National Parks and spend time in the breathtaking scenery of the Himalayan foothills at Pangot and Sattal. A visit to this part of India would not be complete without taking in the majestic UNESCO World Heritage Sites of Fatehpur Sikri and the Taj Mahal, and we will visit both of these very impressive places to soak up the sights and sounds. India is well-known for its amazing food, and we will sample a great deal of different, interesting, and tasty local dishes throughout the tour.

The tour gives the possibility of connecting with numerous exciting birds, such as **Ibisbill** (a monotypic family), **Indian Skimmer**, **Indian Courser**, **Kalij Pheasant**, **Koklass Pheasant**, **Cheer Pheasant**, **Painted Spurfowl**, **Bearded Vulture** (Lammergeier), **Indian Vulture**, **Indian Spotted Eagle**, **Collared Falconet**, **Sarus Crane**, **Painted Sandgrouse**, **Black-bellied Tern**, **River Tern**, **Tawny Fish Owl**, **Brown Fish Owl**, **Blue-bearded Bee-eater**, **Great Hornbill**, **Sirkeer Malkoha**, **Great Slaty Woodpecker**, **Himalayan Woodpecker**, **Long-billed Thrush**, **Spotted Forktail**, **Slaty-backed Forktail**, **Little Forktail**, **Brown Dipper**, **Golden Bush Robin**, **Himalayan Bluetail**, **Himalayan Rubythroat**, **Rufous-breasted Accentor**, **Altai Accentor**, **White-capped Bunting**, and **Wallcreeper** (another monotypic family). Furthermore the tour offers the chance to search out one of the world's most highly sought but elusive big cats, the **Bengal Tiger**, with a supporting cast that could include **Indian Leopard**, **Asian Elephant**, **Ganges River Dolphin**, **Gharial**, **Mugger**, and **Indian Python**.



*Ibisbill is the sole member of its own family and a huge target bird for any family listers or world birders.*

You could combine this tour with our preceding **Birding Tour India: The South – Western Ghats and Nilgiri Endemics** and with our following tours: **Birding Tour India: The Northwest – Lions and Desert Birding in Gujarat** followed by **Birding Tour India: The West – Forest Owlet Extension**, which is followed by our **Birding Tour India: The Northeast – Spectacular Birds and Mammals** that visits the mountains of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. We can also easily offer you extensions at each location if you would like to extend your stay in this wonderful and vibrant country.

### Itinerary (17 days/16 nights)

#### Day 1. Arrival in New Delhi, nearby afternoon birding

After your late-morning arrival in New Delhi we will transfer to our nearby hotel for check-in (check-in is usually at noon). After lunch we will spend the first afternoon of the tour birding at a fantastic wetland site near New Delhi, where we could see some interesting species such as **Painted and Black-necked Storks, Bar-headed Goose, Knob-billed Duck, Indian Spot-billed Duck, Northern Shoveler, Garganey, Ferruginous Duck, Eastern Imperial, Indian Spotted, and Booted Eagles, Brook's Leaf Warbler, Sind Sparrow, Striated Babbler, Citrine Wagtail, Baillon's Crake, Spotted Owlet, and Moustached Warbler**. This site is a great introduction to Indian birding and is the perfect first birding site for those who have never been to India/Asia before, but it is also really enjoyable for those who do already know the birds of the region. Our guides love visiting this site time after time, and a great afternoon will be had by all.

Overnight: New Delhi

#### Day 2. Travel to Ranthambhore and tiger safari in Ranthambhore National Park

As New Delhi wakes up we will take the early morning train out of the city and head south to the Ranthambhore area, where we will arrive in time for lunch in our luxurious hotel on the outskirts of the national park. We will keep our eyes peeled along the way in case of any birds close to the train. Sometimes we get close views of waders/shorebirds, raptors, and storks during the train ride.

During the afternoon we will take our first game drive (called 'safari' in India), our prime target being the majestic **Bengal Tiger**. Seeing one of these incredibly huge and stunningly beautiful big cats is sure to be an early trip highlight. Ranthambhore is a great place to find them, yet they are generally never easy, and patience and careful scanning will be required; it is amazing how such a large animal can hide in grass! However, it is definitely worth the effort.

Overnight: Ranthambhore

#### Day 3. Ranthambhore National Park, all day birding/wildlife watching

We will have a full day in and around Ranthambhore National Park; this will include two game drives to look again for **Bengal Tiger** and other wildlife. Target birds include **Indian Peafowl**,



**Painted Spurfowl, Plum-headed, Alexandrine, and Rose-ringed Parakeets, River Tern, Rufous Treepie, Citrine Wagtail, Indian Vulture, Yellow-legged Buttonquail, Small Minivet, White-browed Fantail, White-bellied Drongo, White-naped Woodpecker, Crested Serpent Eagle, Yellow-footed Green Pigeon, Bluethroat, Bay-backed, Long-tailed, and Southern Grey Shrikes, Indian Bush Lark, and Large Grey Babbler.** In addition to looking for **Bengal Tiger** we will also keep our eyes peeled for the **Mugger** crocodile, **Rhesus Macaque, Southern Plains Grey Langur, Sambar, Chital** (Spotted Deer), and **Wild Boar**.

Overnight: Ranthambhore



*Certainly one of our biggest avian targets in Ranthambhore, **Painted Spurfowl***

#### **Day 4. Ranthambhore to Bharatpur**

Today we will transfer between Ranthambhore and Bharatpur but will make several birding stops along the way, depending on local water levels and our local knowledge of current bird distribution. Birds we will look for during the course of the day include **Indian Stone-curlew, Painted Sandgrouse, Yellow-crowned Woodpecker, and Variable Wheatear** near the hotel, and then **Greater Flamingo, Indian Skimmer, Brown Crake, Great Stone-curlew, Black-bellied Tern, Small Pratincole, Isabelline Wheatear, Greater Painted-snipe, and Yellow-wattled Lapwing** on the way. We are likely to arrive in Bharatpur in the late afternoon.

Overnight: Bharatpur

### Day 5. Keoladeo Ghana National Park (formerly known as Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary)

We will spend the full day birding around the incredible Keoladeo Ghana National Park, one of the best-known birding sites in the country, and with good reason; this is a great place and always popular, with good views of a range of species possible. We will spend the day moving around this vast area on cycle-rickshaws, which is an excellent way to see the site. Time will be spent birding in a range of habitats such as scrub, woodland, lakes, and marshes to try to maximize the number of species seen. Some of the species possible during the day from the wooded/scrubby areas include **Grey Francolin, Indian Peafowl, Indian Scops Owl, Dusky Eagle-Owl, Spotted Owlet, Eurasian Hoopoe, Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher, White-eared Bulbul, Pied Myna, Brahminy Starling, Tickell's Thrush, and Indian Robin**, while the wetlands may produce **Bar-headed Goose, Ruddy Shelduck, Black-necked Stork, Black Bittern, Oriental Darter, Sarus Crane, White-tailed Lapwing, Pheasant-tailed Jacana, and Pied Kingfisher**. We may also find **Western Marsh Harrier, Black-winged Kite, Egyptian Vulture, and Indian Spotted Eagle, Greater Spotted Eagle, and Eastern Imperial Eagle** hunting or scavenging over the wetlands.

Overnight: Bharatpur



*Keoladeo National Park can produce sightings of three bitterns; pictured here is **Black Bittern**.*

### Day 6. Bharatpur to National Chambal Sanctuary via Fatehpur Sikri

We will have an early start today to look for **Indian Courser**, a difficult and local species. We will also keep our eyes peeled for other open-country species such as **Black Francolin, Sarus Crane, Isabelline (Daurian) Shrike, Desert Wheatear**, and a range of larks, pipits, and wagtails such as **Ashy-crowned Sparrow-Lark, Greater Short-toed Lark, Indian Bush Lark,**

**Oriental Skylark, Citrine Wagtail, Western Yellow Wagtail, White-browed Wagtail, Tawny Pipit, and the stunning Indian Roller.**



*The beautiful **Indian Courser** can be found in agricultural fields near the town of Bharatpur.*

After the morning birding session we will commence our journey to the delightful Chambal Safari Lodge for our two-night stay, visiting the very impressive Fatehpur Sikri World Heritage Site along the way. Fatehpur Sikri is one of the best-preserved collections of Mughal architecture in India, the fort was actually (amazingly) abandoned in 1585, only 14 years after the huge building project was completed. We will arrive at our hotel in the late afternoon and look for **Brown Hawk-Owl** and **Indian Scops Owl** in the hotel grounds in the evening. Sometimes there are interesting mammals around the cabins too, such as **Common Palm Civet**.

Overnight: Chambal

### **Day 7. National Chambal Sanctuary**

We will have the full day to explore this area, which is very different from other areas on the tour and gives us the opportunity for a wide range of interesting species of birds and other animals. We will take an early-morning boat ride along the Chambal River, where we will look for **Indian Skimmer** as well as **River Lapwing, Great Stone-curlew, River and Black-bellied Terns**, and the huge **Pallas's Gull**. It is not just birds here, however, as we will keep our eyes firmly peeled for the incredibly rare and Endangered (IUCN) **Ganges River Dolphin** as well as the Critically Endangered (IUCN) **Gharial**. We will spend time checking out the scrub around the river, where we may find the secretive and skulking **Sirkeer Malkoha, Crested Honey Buzzard, Bonelli's Eagle, Plum-headed Parakeet, Yellow-eyed Babbler, and White-capped**



**Bunting.** Farmland in this area can also hold some interesting species, and we will have time there as well as in the wooded grounds of our accommodation to look for numerous species.

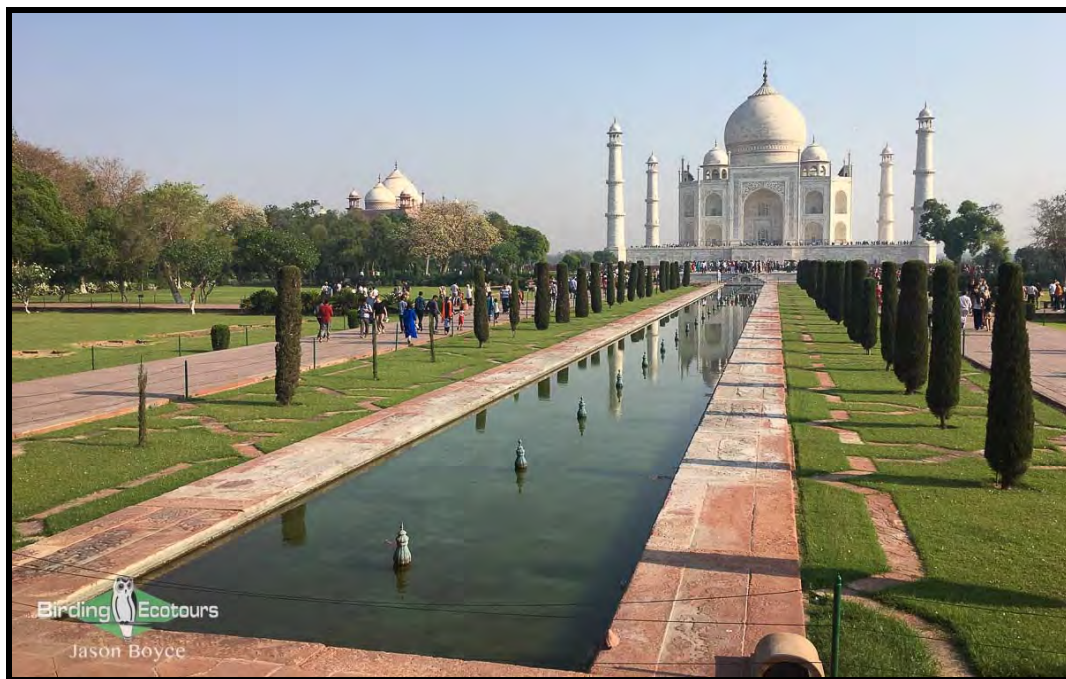
Overnight: Chambal

### **Day 8. Chambal to New Delhi via Agra and the Taj Mahal**

We will do some early-morning birding around the hotel grounds before we swap birding time for some culture. After breakfast we will start the journey back to New Delhi. However, along the way we will stop for a tour of the outside grounds of the majestic Taj Mahal World Heritage Site, allowing you the chance for that ‘must have’ photo souvenir in front of this iconic building. The Taj Mahal was completed in 1648 and is said to be the world’s finest example of Mughal architecture. This architectural masterpiece was described by the poet Rabindranath Tagore as ‘the tear on the face of eternity’. We will spend the late morning here, enjoying the various pavilions, forts, and other attractions of the Taj Mahal, but keep your binoculars with you as there are often interesting birds flying around the grounds and along the river out back.

After lunch in Agra we will continue our journey to New Delhi, arriving in time for dinner.

Overnight: New Delhi



*The majestic Taj Mahal*

### **Days 9 – 10. By train from New Delhi to Kathgodam, continue to and birding at Sattal**

We will wake early in the morning and check in at the station for our morning train ride to the city of Kathgodam in the north. Here we will experience an altogether different yet incredibly exciting birding experience in the cooler and stunningly beautiful Himalayan foothills as we

make our way to Sattal. On arrival at our hotel around lunchtime we will be immediately impressed by the landscape, cooler air, and a whole suite of new birds. After lunch we will spend the rest of the day, and the whole of the next day, birding in this fascinating and bird-filled area.

Possible highlights during our time in Sattal may include **Jungle Owlet**, **Great**, and **Blue-throated Barbets**, **Speckled Piculet**, **Greater** and **Lesser Yellownapes**, **Grey-headed Woodpecker**, **Slaty-headed Parakeet**, **Black-headed Jay**, **Red-billed Blue Magpie**, **Grey Treepie**, **Yellow-bellied Fantail**, **Chestnut-headed Tesia**, **Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler**, **Red-billed Leiothrix**, **Himalayan Rubythroat**, **Siberian Rubythroat**, **Golden Bush Robin**, **Himalayan Bluetail**, **Spotted Forktail**, **Rufous-bellied Niltava**, **Blue Whistling Thrush**, **Slaty-blue Flycatcher**, **Crimson Sunbird**, **Russet Sparrow**, **Rufous-breasted Accentor**, **Olive-backed Pipit**, **Common** and **Pink-browed Rosefinches**, **Yellow-breasted Greenfinch**, and **White-capped Bunting**. There will also likely be a number of laughingthrushes to keep us entertained: **Rufous-chinned**, **White-throated**, **Streaked**, and **Striated Laughingthrushes** (the latter is often voted one of the birds of the trip as it is rather nice-looking).

Overnight: Sattal



*The Spotted Forktail is one of the most beautiful in the whole family.*

### Day 11. Sattal to Nainital and Pangot

The day will be spent birding around Sattal and Nainital, finally arriving at our wonderful lodge high in the mountains in Pangot. We will have a second chance at some of the species listed above, as well as many others, including **Kalij Pheasant**, **Green-backed Tit**, **Himalayan Black-lored Tit**, **Himalayan** and **Black Bulbuls**, **Black-throated Bushtit**, **Rufous Sibia**, **Bar-tailed Treecreeper**, **Small Niltava**, **Slaty-backed Forktail**, **Blue-capped Redstart**, **Plumbeous Water Redstart**, **White-capped Redstart**, **Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush**, **Crested**



**Kingfisher, Chestnut-headed Tesia, Long-billed Thrush, Green-tailed Sunbird,** and so many more!

The grounds around our accommodation offer some great birding, and either today or tomorrow we will be sure to pay them due attention. We could find **Black Francolin, Black-headed Jay, Great Barbet, Grey-headed and Brown-fronted Woodpeckers, Striated Prinia, Altai Accentor, White-throated Laughingthrush, Blue Whistling Thrush,** and **Rock Bunting** here, as well as plenty more. A photographic hide also gives good photo opportunities.

Overnight: Pangot

### Day 12. Pangot

There will be an early start this morning to gain some further elevation to allow us to focus on some high-elevation key targets, which will include both **Cheer Pheasant** and **Koklass Pheasant** along with commoner and more widespread **Kalij Pheasant, Hill Partridge, Bearded Vulture** (Lammergeier), **Griffon Vulture, Himalayan Vulture, Altai Accentor, Rufous-bellied Woodpecker, Himalayan Woodpecker, Himalayan Bluetail,** (Spot-winged) **Coal Tit,** and **White-tailed Nuthatch.** We will also hope to get some great landscape views of the even higher snow-capped Himalayan mountain ranges, which really are spectacular. We will have the full day to explore this area, and it could be one of the best days of the trip with some very special birds.

Overnight: Pangot



*A pair of the prized **Cheer Pheasant** found above our base in Pangot*

### Day 13. Pangot and Nainital to Jim Corbett National Park

After some final birding in the Nainital/Pangot area, where we will look for anything that we may want to concentrate our final efforts on, we will head to the Corbett area after lunch. Time permitting we will likely explore the Kosi River area to look for two beautiful and highly sought monotypic species, **Ibisbill** and **Wallcreeper**. We could also find **Brown Dipper**, **Little Forktail**, **Pallas's Fish Eagle**, **Brown Fish Owl**, **Red Junglefowl**, **Besra**, **Himalayan Swiftlet**, **Nepal House Martin**, **White-capped Redstart**, **Plumbeous Water Redstart**, **Blue Rock Thrush**, and **Blue-bearded Bee-eater** here. The grounds of our hotel also offer good birding, and we will look for **Collared Scops Owl** and **Crimson Sunbird** among many others over the next few days.

Overnight: Corbett



*Sighting after sighting, northern India produces so many extraordinary species and never ceases to amaze. Pictured here is a **Crimson Sunbird**.*

### Days 14 – 15. Jim Corbett National Park

We will have two full days to explore the areas within and around Jim Corbett National Park (potentially even spending one night inside the park itself). There are numerous great birds to look for here, and we will also look for some of the park's most spectacular wildlife, maybe getting further sightings of the regal **Bengal Tiger**, with the added possibility of **Indian Leopard**, **Asian Elephant**, and an assortment of other creatures such as **Indian Crested Porcupine** and **Yellow-throated Marten**.

Some of the birds we will look for over these two days will include **Red-headed Vulture**, **Cinereous Vulture**, **Jungle Owlet**, **Asian Barred Owlet**, **Changeable Hawk-Eagle**, **Tawny**

**Fish Owl, Great Hornbill, Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo, Collared Falconet, White-rumped Spinetail, Grey-headed Fish Eagle, Banded Bay Cuckoo, Stork-billed Kingfisher, Himalayan Flameback, White-crested Laughingthrush, Rosy Pipit, Maroon Oriole, Common Green Magpie, Grey-bellied Tesia, and Crested Bunting.**

Overnight: Corbett



*White-crested Laughingthrush can be seen moving through the undergrowth.*

### Day 16. Corbett to New Delhi

After some time birding around our hotel in the morning we will commence our journey back to New Delhi. Depending on exact timings we may grab another opportunity to look along the river for **Ibisbill**, **Wallcreeper**, and **Indian Cormorant** and will keep a lookout for any other new and interesting species along the way. After our final day birding together we will enjoy another great meal and think about our trip highlights before saying goodbye, as the main tour concludes in New Delhi.

Overnight: New Delhi

### Day 17. Departure from New Delhi

You will be transferred to the airport for your flights home or your continuation on the Northwest India tour.

Overnight: Not included.



*Please note that the itinerary cannot be guaranteed as it is only a rough guide and can be changed (usually slightly) due to factors such as availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, roads, or birding sites, the discretion of the guides and other factors. In addition, we sometimes have to use a different international guide from the one advertised due to tour scheduling.*

**Duration:** 17 days  
**Group Size:** 4 - 8  
**Dates:** 24 January - 9 February 2023  
**Start:** Indira Gandhi International Airport, New Delhi  
**End:** Indira Gandhi International Airport, New Delhi  
**Prices:** US\$7,740 per person sharing – based on 4 - 8 participants (2023)  
**Single Supplements:** US\$1,110 (2023)

**Price includes:**

All accommodation (as described above)  
Meals (from lunch on day 1 until breakfast on day 17)  
Drinking water – two bottles of mineral water per day per person from our tour vehicle, please bring a refillable water bottle (if taken from the hotel this will be at your own cost)  
Expert tour leader  
Local bird and wildlife guide fees  
Monument entrance fees and monument guide (Taj Mahal grounds and Fatehpur Sikri grounds)  
National park/birdwatching reserve entrance fees and jeep safaris  
All ground transport and tolls while on tour, including airport pick-up and drop-off

**Price excludes:**

Flights to/from New Delhi International Airport  
Visa  
Items of a personal nature, e.g. gifts, laundry, internet access, phone calls, etc.  
Optional tours (e.g. extra monument entrance fees not included above such as entrance into Taj Mahal building and associated additional travel expenses)  
Any pre- or post-tour accommodation, meals, or birding/sightseeing/monument excursions  
Soft/alcoholic drinks  
Camera (still/video) permits  
Personal travel insurance  
Gratuities (please see our [tipping guidelines blog](#))