



BIRDING TOUR INDIA: ANDAMAN ISLANDS ENDEMIC SET DEPARTURE TRIP REPORT

08 – 12 FEBRUARY 2025

By Dominic Rollinson

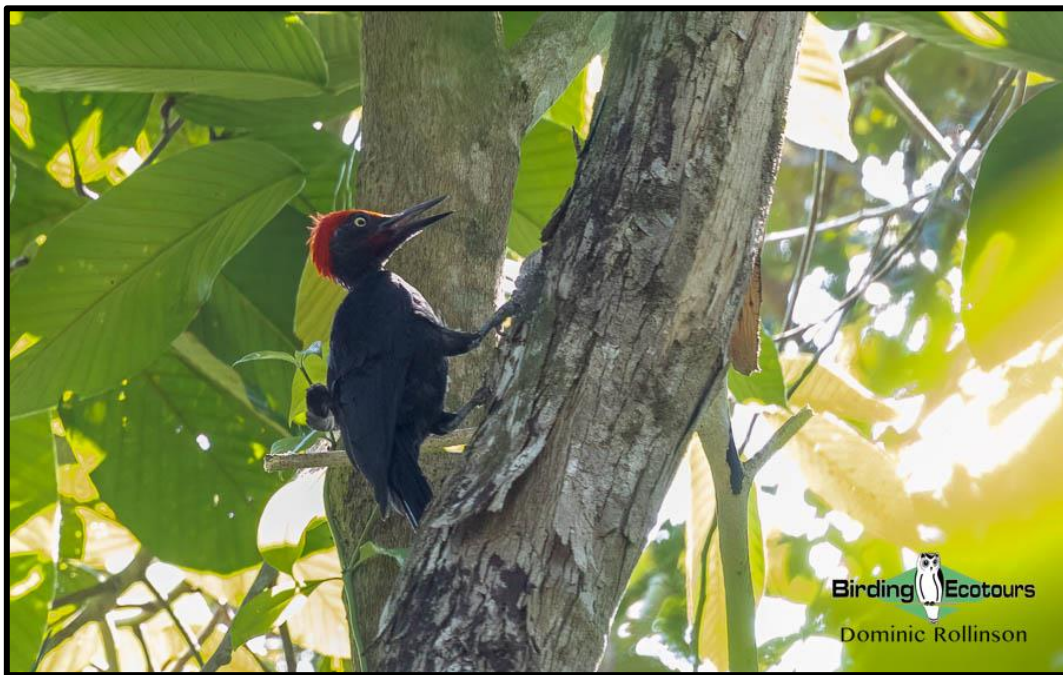


Hume's Boobook was one of four endemic owl species we saw on this tour.

Overview

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands is an archipelago owned and governed by India, located at the merging of the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea, approximately 170 miles (280 kilometers) southwest of Myanmar. The archipelago is comprised of around 570 islands and the territory is divided into three districts: Nicobar, South Andaman and Middle and North Andaman. On this tour we spent our entire time birding on South Andaman Island, where all of the Andaman bird endemics can be found.

Due to the archipelago's geographical isolation it has meant several endemic bird species have evolved on the islands. Twenty Andaman endemics are currently recognized as occurring on the main Andaman Islands, with an additional nine endemics occurring on the Nicobar Islands and one other species (Narcondam Hornbill) occurring on a distant outer island. Unfortunately, visiting the Nicobar Islands is logistically tricky, with birders mostly being denied access in recent years, while Narcondam Island (for the hornbill) is entirely off limits to all tourists (both local and foreign). It was fun to chat to mainland Indian birders who regularly bird the islands to increase their Indian bird lists, with the added bonus of perhaps finding obscure vagrants which do not make it to mainland India.



Andaman Woodpecker proved a real crowd pleaser!

This short birding tour was focused on finding all 20 Andaman Islands bird endemics occurring on South Andaman Island and our main goal was achieved. With four endemic owl species (and an endemic nightjar) to target, we went owling every evening, which meant the days were quite long. Despite this, we all thoroughly enjoyed our time here and managed several other exciting non-endemics which kept us entertained. Some of the more popular endemics included

Andaman Woodpecker (voted bird of the trip), **Andaman Cuckoo-Dove**, **Andaman Crake**, **Andaman Serpent Eagle**, **Andaman Masked Owl**, **Hume's** and **Andaman Boobooks**, **Andaman Scops Owl**, **Andaman Treepie**, and **White-headed Starling**. Some other popular endemic Andaman subspecies, which may be split at some point, included **Oriental Scops Owl**, **Crested Serpent Eagle**, **Black Baza**, **Collared Kingfisher**, and **Greater Racket-tailed Drongo**. We also enjoyed some fine wetland birding where we saw an interesting assortment of herons, rallids, terns and shorebirds.



White-headed Starling, yet another Andaman Islands endemic.

A detailed daily account can be read below, with the full bird list located at the end of the report, and the eBird trip report, with additional photos, can be found [here](#).

Detailed Report

Day 1, 8th February 2025. Arrival and Chidiyatapu Forest birding

Our entire group had arrived by around midday today (with Barbara, David, Tim, Kay and Yve having just completed a successful [Sri Lanka birding tour](#), and Tim and Chuck having made their way here independently) into Port Blair, where we would be based for the next four nights. After unpacking our bags, we decided to head out and start ticking off the endemics. We met up with our expert local guide, who would be showing us around the island for the next few days, and made our way south to Chidiyatapu Forest, where we would be birding for the remainder of the afternoon.

Soon after entering Chidiyatapu Forest we found a bird party or two which quickly produced our first Andaman endemic in the form of **Andaman Flowerpecker**, as well as **Green Imperial Pigeon**, **Red-whiskered Bulbul**, **Asian Glossy Starling**, **Alexandrine** and **Long-tailed Parakeets**, **Vernal Hanging Parrot**, **Scarlet Minivet**, **Black-naped Oriole**, and **Oriental Magpie-Robin**. A little further around the corner we had good looks at the endemic subspecies of **Crested Serpent Eagle**, soon followed by an adult **Andaman Serpent Eagle**, which can be one of the trickier endemics to find! Overhead, **Plume-toed Swiftlet** and **Brown-backed Needletails** occasionally showed through the forest canopy, while **Red Collared Dove** showed lower down in the midstratum.



*We were relieved to find **Andaman Serpent Eagle** on our first afternoon's birding.*

We then left the forest and enjoyed a cup of tea as we waited for the sun to set, to begin our first nocturnal birding session. The views out over the bay were beautiful and while we waited, we added **White-bellied Sea Eagle**, **Oriental Dollarbird**, **Eurasian Whimbrel**, **Collared Kingfisher**, and **Greater Racket-tailed Drongo**.

Once darkness had finally set in, we moved around the corner, where we found **Hume's Boobook** without too much difficulty, while the calling **Andaman Boobooks** and **Oriental Scops Owls** would not show themselves for now. At a clearing in the forest, we had good looks at **Andaman Nightjar** and heard a few others calling in the distance. After a productive first afternoon and evening we headed back to our lovely hotel to enjoy dinner, before heading off to bed.

Day 2, 9th February 2025. Birding Kalatang and Chidiyatapu Forest

We left before dawn this morning (armed with breakfast packs) and caught the 6 am ferry across the bay. As we waited for the ferry, we enjoyed views of **Pied Imperial Pigeons** feeding in a nearby fruiting tree. We then spent most of the morning birding the forests of the Kalatang area. The birding was exceptional here and, right as we got out of the vehicles, we were called over to look at **Andaman Cuckoo-Doves** feeding in a fruiting tree, soon followed by **Andaman Bulbul**, **Andaman Drongo**, and **Andaman Cuckooshrike**. We then took a walk along a quiet forest track where the birding was even better and we further added **Andaman Green Pigeon**, **Black Baza**, **Chestnut-headed Bee-eater**, **Freckle-breasted Woodpecker**, **Greater Racket-tailed Drongo**, **Andaman Treepie**, **Common Hill Myna**, **Asian Fairy-bluebird**, and **Grey Wagtail**.

We heard some loud drumming, which could only come from one species, and rushed down the track to get brief looks at the large **Andaman Woodpecker**. We then enjoyed our breakfast packs, being distracted by **Long-tailed Parakeet** and **Andaman Cuckooshrike**, before taking another walk down the same track to have a proper go at **Andaman Crake**. We waited in place for a couple minutes and then, as hoped for, a single **Andaman Crake** slowly walked across the road and showed well for us.



Andaman Crake was seen as it walked across the road at Kalatang.

It had been a successful morning and so we loaded up the vehicles and made our way back to Port Blair, stopping in at a roadside wetland to tick off a huge flock of **Andaman Teal**, as well as **Grey-headed Swamphen**, **Pacific Golden Plover**, **Common Snipe**, and **Osprey**.

After lunch and a bit of time off back at our hotel, we headed back to Chidiyatapu Forest (enjoying good looks at **Black Baza** en route, for some) where we were hoping to find the tricky Andaman Wood Pigeon. Unfortunately, we did not have any luck this afternoon with the pigeon

but did find **Stork-billed Kingfisher**, **Freckle-breasted Woodpecker**, **Red-breasted Parakeet**, **Black-naped Monarch**, and **Forest Wagtail** (which was well spotted by Yve).

We then moved to open grassland on the edge of some forest, which further yielded **White-breasted Woodswallow**, **Brown Shrike**, and **Amur Stonechat**. Once the sun had set, we then spent the next couple of hours working the forest patches for our missing owl species and managed to get great looks at **Andaman Boobook**, **Andaman Scops Owl**, and the endemic subspecies of **Oriental Scops Owl** (also known as “Walden’s Scops Owl”). A great end to another productive day out!



Andaman Boobook showed well on our second night of owling.

Day 3, 10th February 2025. Mount Manipur National Park and wetland birding

We again caught the 6 am ferry but this time headed a bit further north to Mount Manipur (formerly Mount Harriet) National Park which is at the southern end of a massive tract of primary forest which continues for many miles further north. While we were sorting out our entrance formalities, we spotted a small flock of **White-headed Starlings** which showed well for us. Over the next few hours we slowly birded the forests and forest edge of the national park, which produced all our targets and more.

Andaman Wood Pigeon was again our biggest target this morning (being about the toughest endemic to find). After some time, our local guide spotted some movement in the canopy, which turned out to be a couple **Andaman Wood Pigeons** and, after much repositioning, we all managed decent looks at them. General birding within the forest further added **Common Emerald Dove**, **Andaman Green Pigeon**, **Asian Koel**, **Indian Cuckoo** (again spotted by the eagle-eyed Yve), **Oriental Cuckooshrike**, **Asian Fairy-bluebird**, **Asian Brown Flycatcher**, and, after a lot of effort, **Andaman Shama** finally showed very well for us.

After lunch and some down-time, we headed out, but this time decided to bird some wetland areas near Port Blair. This proved extremely worthwhile and we added lots of birds to the trip list. The first small wetland that we visited had some fine waders/shorebirds (much to David's delight) including **Pacific Golden Plover**, **Pin-tailed** and **Common Snipes**, **Common**, **Wood**, and **Curlew Sandpipers**, **Common Redshank** and **Long-toed Stint**. Nearby we enjoyed the likes of **Pheasant-tailed Jacana**, **Cinnamon** and **Yellow Bitterns**, **Black-browed** and **Oriental Reed Warblers** and a brief look at **Watercock** as it flew away. The grazed fields surrounding the wetlands had good numbers of **Eastern Yellow Wagtails**.

Next, we moved to some nearby mudflats which were even more productive, with lots of shorebirds around. Working through the shorebirds further added **Tibetan Sand Plover**, **Eurasian Curlew**, **Bar-tailed Godwit**, and **Red-necked Stint**, while we were entertained by **Gull-billed**, **Whiskered**, **White-winged**, and **Little Terns**, all feeding at close range.

Our final stop for the afternoon's birding was a larger wetland which held **Chinese Pond Heron**, **Lesser Whistling Duck**, **Andaman Teal**, and many **Grey-headed Swamphens**, some with tiny chicks that they were feeding.



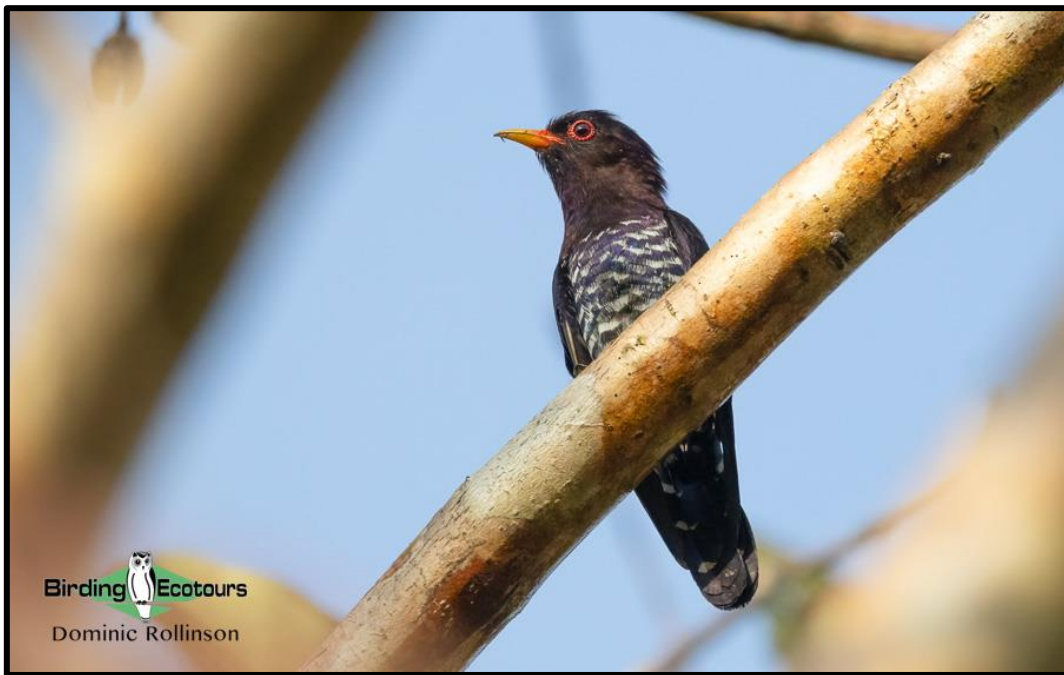
Andaman Teal were surprisingly numerous in the wetlands near Port Blair.

We still had one more endemic owl to find and thus arrived at the **Andaman Masked Owl** stakeout (outside of a teacher's training college) and waited for the sun to set. Unfortunately, the owl was flushed early by another group of overzealous birders, which resulted in a flyby and some brief perched views – all a little chaotic. We were mostly satisfied with our views but decided we would head back again to try to improve our looks the following evening.

Day 4, 11th February 2025. Shoal Bay and more wetland birding

We were now familiar with the morning routine and boarded the 6 am ferry to cross the bay, this time adding a single **Pacific Reef Heron** as we waited. After the ferry ride, we made a longish journey north, as we wanted to reach Shoal Bay. En route to Shoal Bay we enjoyed looks at our final missing endemic, **Andaman Coucal**, which showed well despite the misty conditions.

We made a few birding stops en route, with one particularly birdy stop producing good looks at **White-headed Starling**, **Freckle-breasted Woodpecker**, and a very showy male **Violet Cuckoo**.



*This handsome male **Violet Cuckoo** put on a show for us.*

Arriving at the mangrove forest of Shoal Bay, our local guide soon spotted a **Ruddy Kingfisher** which showed incredibly well for us, along with **Mangrove Whistler**, **Chestnut-headed Bee-eater** and a trio of *Phylloscopus* warblers; **Arctic**, **Dusky**, and **Greenish Warblers**. We then made our way back through the primary forest, which yielded the hoped-for **Andaman Woodpecker**, of which we improved our views considerably. A **Changeable Hawk-Eagle** was another nice roadside addition.

For our final afternoon of birding we headed to a different section of the same wetlands as yesterday, this didn't add too much different, but we did find **Blue-tailed Bee-eater**, **Common**, **Stork-billed**, **White-throated**, and **Collared Kingfishers**, **Brown Shrike**, another **Dusky Warbler**, and **Asian Brown Flycatcher**.

Some of us decided to have another go at the **Andaman Masked Owl**, with the other vehicle returning for an earlier dinner. We hit some really slow traffic on our way here but eventually arrived at the stakeout to find the **Andaman Masked Owl** waiting for us and providing some

fine views. We eventually made it back to our hotel for a later dinner and said goodbye and a massive thank you to our excellent local guide.



*It took some work, but we eventually saw **Andaman Masked Owl** well.*

Day 5, 12th February 2025. Departure from Port Blair

We did not have any scheduled birding this morning and so, after breakfast, during which **Andaman Woodpecker** was voted bird of the trip, with **Hume's Boobook** a close second, we said our goodbyes and everybody caught transfers to the nearby airport. Thanks everybody for a most enjoyable and highly productive trip, and I look forward to birding with you all again soon.

Bird List – Following IOC (Version 15.1/February 2025)

The following notation after species names is used to show conservation status following BirdLife International: VU = Vulnerable.

Common Name	Scientific Name
Ducks, Geese, Swans (Anatidae)	
Lesser Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>
Andaman Teal	<i>Anas albogularis</i>
Nightjars (Caprimulgidae)	
Andaman Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus andamanicus</i>
Swifts (Apodidae)	
Plume-toed Swiftlet	<i>Collocalia affinis</i>
Edible-nest Swiftlet	<i>Aerodramus fuciphagus</i>
Brown-backed Needletail	<i>Hirundapus giganteus</i>
Cuckoos (Cuculidae)	
Andaman Coucal	<i>Centropus andamanensis</i>
Asian Koel	<i>Eudynamys scolopaceus</i>
Violet Cuckoo	<i>Chrysococcyx xanthorhynchus</i>
Indian Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus micropterus</i>
Pigeons, Doves (Columbidae)	
Rock Dove [Feral Pigeon]	<i>Columba livia [dom.]</i>
Andaman Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumboides</i>
Red Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia tranquebarica</i>
Andaman Cuckoo-Dove	<i>Macropygia rufipennis</i>
Common Emerald Dove	<i>Chalcophaps indica</i>
Andaman Green Pigeon	<i>Treron chloropterus</i>
Green Imperial Pigeon	<i>Ducula aenea</i>
Pied Imperial Pigeon	<i>Ducula bicolor</i>
Rails, Crakes & Coots (Rallidae)	
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
Grey-headed Swamphen	<i>Porphyrio poliocephalus</i>
Andaman Crake	<i>Rallina canningi</i>
Watercock	<i>Gallicrex cinerea</i>
White-breasted Waterhen	<i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i>
Plovers (Charadriidae)	
Pacific Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis fulva</i>
Tibetan Sand Plover	<i>Anarhynchus atrifrons</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
Jacanas (Jacanidae)	
Pheasant-tailed Jacana	<i>Hydrophasianus chirurgus</i>
Sandpipers, Snipes (Scolopacidae)	
Eurasian Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>
Pin-tailed Snipe	<i>Gallinago stenura</i>
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
Curlew Sandpiper - VU	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>
Long-toed Stint	<i>Calidris subminuta</i>
Red-necked Stint	<i>Calidris ruficollis</i>
Gulls, Terns, Skimmers (Laridae)	
Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>
Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>
Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>
White-winged Tern	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>
Hérons, Bitterns (Ardeidae)	
Cinnamon Bittern	<i>Botaurus cinnamomeus</i>
Yellow Bittern	<i>Botaurus sinensis</i>
Pacific Reef Heron	<i>Egretta sacra</i>
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
Little Heron	<i>Butorides atricapilla</i>
Chinese Pond Heron	<i>Ardeola bacchus</i>
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>
Medium Egret	<i>Ardea intermedia</i>
Eastern Cattle Egret	<i>Ardea coromanda</i>
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
Ospreys (Pandionidae)	
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
Kites, Hawks, Eagles (Accipitridae)	
Black Baza	<i>Aviceda leuphotes</i>
Crested Serpent Eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>
Andaman Serpent Eagle - VU	<i>Spilornis elgini</i>
Changeable Hawk-Eagle	<i>Nisaetus cirrhatus</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
White-bellied Sea Eagle	<i>Ichthyophaga leucogaster</i>
Barn Owls (Tytonidae)	
Andaman Masked Owl	<i>Tyto deroepstorffi</i>
Owls (Strigidae)	
Hume's Boobook	<i>Ninox obscura</i>
Andaman Boobook	<i>Ninox affinis</i>
Andaman Scops Owl	<i>Otus balli</i>
Oriental Scops Owl	<i>Otus sunia</i>
Rollers (Coraciidae)	
Oriental Dollarbird	<i>Eurystomus orientalis</i>
Kingfishers (Alcedinidae)	
Stork-billed Kingfisher	<i>Pelargopsis capensis</i>
Ruddy Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon coromanda</i>
White-throated Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>
Collared Kingfisher	<i>Todiramphus chloris</i>
Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
Bee-eaters (Meropidae)	
Blue-tailed Bee-eater	<i>Merops philippinus</i>
Chestnut-headed Bee-eater	<i>Merops leschenaulti</i>
Woodpeckers (Picidae)	
Freckle-breasted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos analis</i>
Andaman Woodpecker - VU	<i>Dryocopus hodgei</i>
Old World Parrots (Psittaculidae)	
Red-breasted Parakeet	<i>Psittacula alexandri</i>
Long-tailed Parakeet - VU	<i>Psittacula longicauda</i>
Alexandrine Parakeet	<i>Psittacula eupatria</i>
Vernal Hanging Parrot	<i>Loriculus vernalis</i>
Woodswallows, Butcherbirds & Allies (Artamidae)	
White-breasted Woodswallow	<i>Artamus leucorhynchus</i>
Cuckooshrikes (Campephagidae)	
Small Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus cinnamomeus</i>
Scarlet Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus speciosus</i>
Oriental Cuckooshrike	<i>Coracina javensis</i>
Andaman Cuckooshrike	<i>Coracina dobsoni</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
Whistlers & Allies (Pachycephalidae)	
Mangrove Whistler	<i>Pachycephala cinerea</i>
Figbirds, Old World Orioles, Piopios (Oriolidae)	
Black-hooded Oriole	<i>Oriolus xanthornus</i>
Black-naped Oriole	<i>Oriolus chinensis</i>
Drongos (Dicruridae)	
Greater Racket-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus paradiseus</i>
Andaman Drongo	<i>Dicrurus andamanensis</i>
Monarchs (Monarchidae)	
Black-naped Monarch	<i>Hypothymis azurea</i>
Shrikes (Laniidae)	
Brown Shrike	<i>Lanius cristatus</i>
Crows, Jays (Corvidae)	
Andaman Treepie - VU	<i>Dendrocitta bayleii</i>
House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>
Eastern Jungle Crow	<i>Corvus levaillantii</i>
Bulbuls (Pycnonotidae)	
Andaman Bulbul	<i>Brachypodius fuscoflavescens</i>
Red-whiskered Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus jocosus</i>
Swallows, Martins (Hirundinidae)	
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Leaf Warblers (Phylloscopidae)	
Dusky Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus fuscatus</i>
Greenish Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochiloides</i>
Arctic Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus borealis</i>
Reed Warblers & Allies (Acrocephalidae)	
Oriental Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus orientalis</i>
Black-browed Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus bistrigiceps</i>
Fairy-bluebirds (Irenidae)	
Asian Fairy-bluebird	<i>Irena puella</i>
Starlings, Rhabdornises (Sturnidae)	
Asian Glossy Starling	<i>Aplonis panayensis</i>
Common Hill Myna	<i>Gracula religiosa</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>
White-headed Starling	<i>Sturnia erythropygia</i>
Chats, Old World Flycatchers (Muscicapidae)	
Oriental Magpie-Robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>
Andaman Shama	<i>Copsychus albiventris</i>
Asian Brown Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa dauurica</i>
Amur Stonechat	<i>Saxicola stejnegeri</i>
Flowerpeckers (Dicaeidae)	
Andaman Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum virescens</i>
Sunbirds (Nectariniidae)	
Ornate Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris ornatus</i>
Old World Sparrows, Snowfinches (Passeridae)	
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Wagtails, Pipits (Motacillidae)	
Forest Wagtail	<i>Dendronanthus indicus</i>
Eastern Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla tschutschensis</i>
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>
Total seen	115