## India

(primarily for)

## **Tigers**

3<sup>rd</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> March 2019



This trip was put together to maximise our chances of seeing Bengal Tiger (Panthera tigris tigris) in Central India.

March provides a good balance between the heat of the day being tolerable for the watchers and the end of the dry season when water is getting scarcer and grasses are being to die back making it easier to see the wildlife. Temperatures during the day were up to 35C but often around 30C. In April they get into the high 40's!

We used Asian Adventures (asianadventures.net) who we knew to put together a package based around our dates, number of game drives and park choices – Pench and Tadoba. They recommended the hotels and organised everything apart from our international flights. Their organisation was excellent and are highly recommended for their knowledge and expertise. To the extent that we were in mid-air en route to Delhi when our onward flight from Delhi to Nagpur was cancelled. By the time we arrived in Delhi they had arranged an alternate flight (to Jabalpur) and transport from Jabalpur to our hotel at Pench. We arrived in Pench at around the same time so we lost no time.

We stayed at the Vanraj Resort & Spa in the Pench buffer zone, close to one of the park entrances and the Svasara Resort next to the Kolara Gate at Tadoba. Both hotels are very good and recommended, although different in their style and approach. Food and accommodation at both was excellent. After Tadoba we travelled to Agra to do the touristy bit and to see the Taj Mahal and Red Fort.

No mosquitoes and no need for malaria tablets in this part of India which is a bonus. None of us were badly affected by insects although we did get a few bites.

Three of the four participants are birders, but as this was a mammal trip we managed to stick to the focus, at least for most of the time! We didn't do any other active mammal hunting beyond going on the game drives and anything we could find around the hotels. We had seven game drives at Pench and seven in Tadoba.

One piece of advice - take binoculars! It's astonishing how many people don't take binoculars with them, they must miss so much.

Highlights: Bengal Tiger (Panthera tigris tigris) – 11 different individuals with excellent views

Leopard (Panthera pardus) – 3 different individuals, excellent views

Sloth Bear (Melursus ursinus) – 3 different individuals, excellent views

Dhole/Wild Dog (Canis alpinus) – a pack of 8 and three sightings of 2, excellent views

Participants: Dave Parmenter, Catryn Parmenter, Mike Collard, Rose Collard.

Mammal and bird lists are included at the end of the report.

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Daily summary

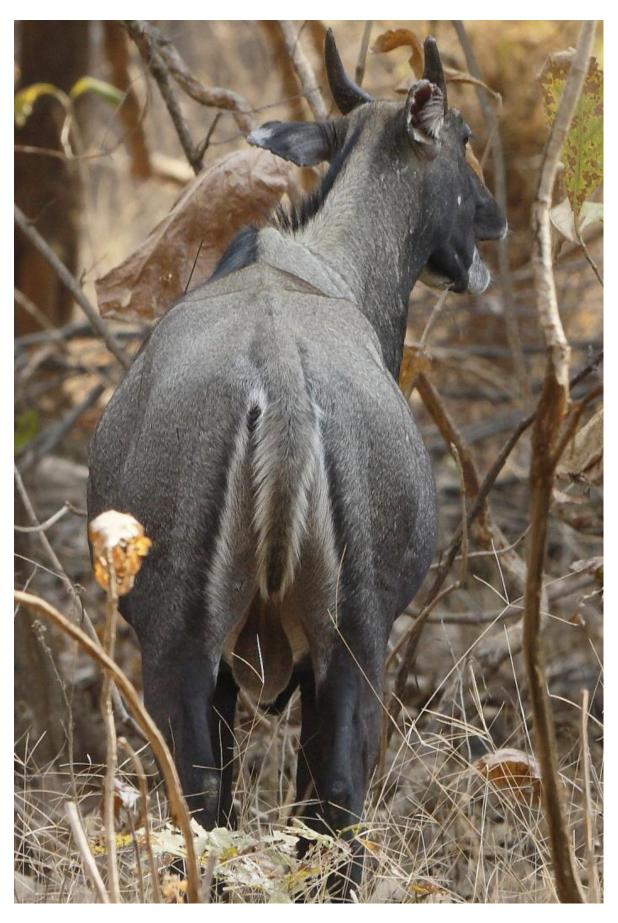
March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2019

Travel direct London to Delhi.

Delayed flight out due to having to circumvent Pakistani airspace. Flight times increased by 1.5-2 hours as a result. Arrived early hours  $4^{th}$  March. We had got our visas online which made for a quicker transition through immigration, although it still took over an hour at 3am in the morning.



Leopard (Panthera pardus) seen on 8th March



Male Nilgai or Blue Bull (Boselaphus tragocamelus)

March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Travel Delhi to Pench.

Planned flight to Nagpur cancelled, so our ground agent Asian Adventures had already booked us on a flight to Jabalpur and arranged a taxi from there to Pench. As a result we actually arrived at Pench around the same time as originally scheduled. Settled into our hotel and sorted out the plan of action for the next few days.

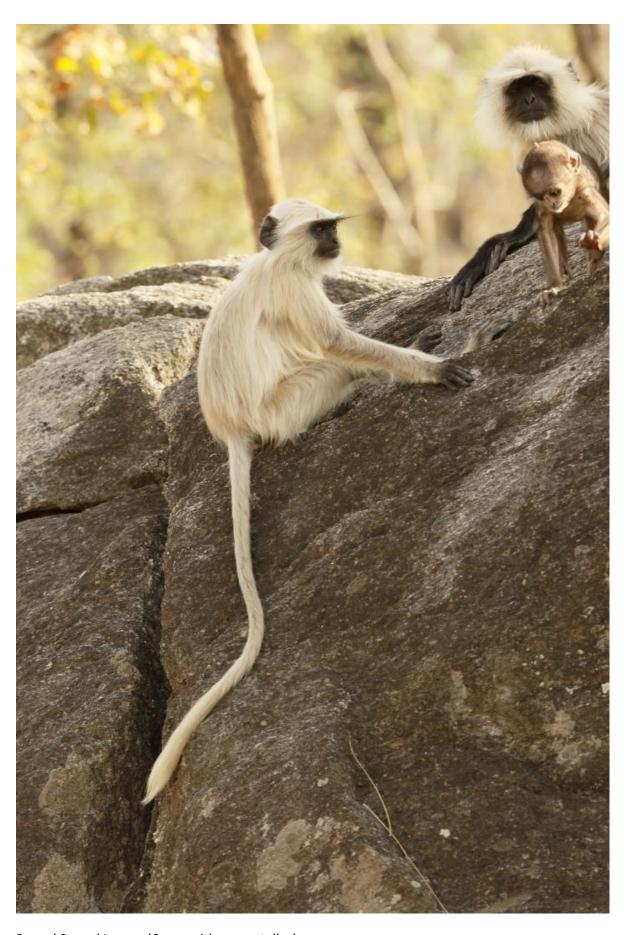
March 5<sup>th</sup> 2019

Pench. Two game drives. Up at 04.30, picked up and driven to gate to queue for entry. Picked up guide (Ajay) who was very knowledgeable and knew his birds too. A great start to the trip - three Tigers! A Tigress with a 14 month old cub giving prolonged views as they relaxed on a hillside. Followed later in the morning by a 4-5 year old male Tiger which we followed for 10-15 minutes as he made his way through the forest, sprainting and sniffing as he went. Also saw Gaur (*Bos gaurus*) and two species of Owl.

Afternoon drive, picked up from Vanraj Hotel and driven to Park gate in what became the usual routine. Refound the Tigress and cub from the morning in a different location, lying on a rock about 10 yards from the track. Watched for well over 30 minutes, from point-blank range, superb. Plenty of Spotted Deer or Chital (*Axis axis*), Bengal Sacred Langur (*Semnopithecus entellus*) and a few Sambar (*Ruso unicolor*).



Female Tiger (Panthera tigris tigris)



Bengal Sacred Langur (Semnopithecus entellus)

March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Pench. A morning game drive only as the Park is closed on Wednesday afternoons.

Went into park via a different gate and visited a different area. A very quiet drive for birds and mammals, although the highlight was a single Chowsingha which gave very good views. The only one seen on the trip. Also at least 4 Nilgai, or Blue Bull, seen – all young/females.



Chowsingha or Four-horned Antelope (Tetracerus quadricornis)



Nilgai or Blue Bull (Boselaphus tragocamelus)

We had the afternoon to ourselves so we explored the hotel grounds and had great views of the exquisite Orange-headed Ground Thrush. Lunch was all fresco in the gardens and in the evening we walked to a local reservoir for the sunset where the hotel staff arrived in a jeep and mixed sundowners for us all as the sun went down, followed by dinner back at the hotel all fresco next to an open fire – completely unexpected and first rate!



Orange-headed Ground Thrush (Zoothera citrina)



Red-vented Bulbul (Pyconotus cafer)

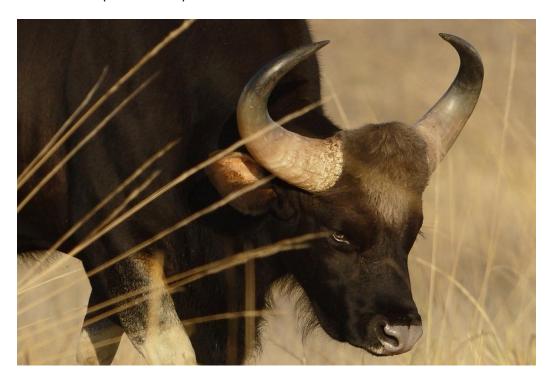
March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Pench. Two game drives.

Morning drive drew a blank for cats, the closest being Sambar alarm calling close by. Best was a Golden Jackal (*Canis aureus*). The afternoon also drew a blank. Plenty of Bengal Sacred Langur, Spotted Deer/Chital, Sambar and a few Gaur.



Golden Jackal (Canis aureus)



Male Indian Gaur (Bos gaurus)

March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Pench. Two game drives.

A much more successful day. The morning drive produced a Leopard (*Pantera pardus fusca*) giving prolonged views as it lazed on top of a rock and a fabulous encounter with a group of 8 Dhole or Asiatic Wild Dog (*Cuon alpinus*) as they moved through the forest and crossed the track in front of us. The group included two young pups.



Dhole or Wild Dog (Canis alpinus)

March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Morning departure for transfer to Tadoba. Arrived midday and had one successful game drive in afternoon.



A large male Sloth Bear (Melursus ursinus) crossing the track in front of the jeep



A large male Tiger, intruding on another male's territory, seen as we were about to leave the park

March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Tadoba. Two game drives.

The morning drive drew a blank for mammals, although a pair of Brown Fish Owls (*Ketupa zeylonensis*) were seen. The afternoon drive was more productive, with a male Sloth Bear, a 3-4 year-old male Tiger, Ruddy Mongoose (*Herpestes smithii*) and Gray Mongoose (*Herpestes edwardsii*) all seen well.

The young male radio-collared Tiger was initially in the shade of shrubs and bushes and then came out to drink and rest in the waterhole. Although it may look like a photo from Whipsnade it is not!

There are a number of solar-powered waterholes around the park to provide extra water for the inhabitants.



Four year old male Tiger (radio-collared) sitting in solar-powered waterhole.

Tadoba. Two game drives.

What a day! A quiet start was somewhat enlivened by a close encounter with two Dhole which gave extended close views as they lazed by the track. We then checked a waterhole which held no mammals. As we were leaving we heard a Sambar alarming, and the park ranger knew a Tiger was coming to the waterhole. We waited and about five minutes later a magnificent male Tiger walked across the track and down towards the waterhole. We followed and watched as he sat in the waterhole and proceeded to drink. Then, three more Tigers appeared behind us and came in to the waterhole to drink! A mother and her two 16-month old cubs (one male and one female). The male in the waterhole was their father and would therefore tolerate their presence. However, the mother, the front of the three in the photograph below, never took her eyes off the male in case of trouble. We had an unbelievable 45 minutes with these four animals all to ourselves, until we had to leave before the park closed for the midday/early afternoon 'siesta'.



Mother and two 16-month old cubs at Waterhole 97, Tadoba

The afternoon drive produced a close Leopard in a tree, followed by three of the four Tigers from the morning at two waterholes, and also the radio-collared male Tiger from the previous day near the main lake. Five Tigers in one day including an unbelievable encounter!

Tadoba. Two game drives.

After the magnificence of yesterday it was after the Lord Mayor's Show for the morning and most of the afternoon drives. A male Nilgai had been the best. We were just about to have to head out of the park when we found two Dhole which gave us good views. As we headed out we had a Sloth Bear which gave OK views as it moved through the forest looking for food. As we were nearly out of the park we saw three jeeps lined up on the track so we hurried to catch up, dust everywhere and the light beginning to fade. As we arrived a female Tiger walked past a jeep and sauntered down the track towards us. As part of the protocol we had to reverse to keep out of the way of the Tiger as she ambled on down the track, scent-marking on trees. As we reversed another jeep caught up and had to start reversing. As did the one behind that. She was literally 5-10 yards behind us and didn't look at us once. Eventually we pulled off the track and she carried on past us creating mayhem for the drivers behind. What a finale!



Female Tiger (radio collared) walking along track towards us as we're reversing to keep out of her way. No apologies for quality of photo as she was 5 yards away in the gloom (1/10<sup>th</sup> second).



Female Tiger creating mayhem for jeeps leaving the park. A fantastic end to this part of the trip.

March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Morning taxi to Nagpur for flight to Delhi, collected by Asian Adventures staff and driven to Agra for overnight stay.

March 14<sup>th</sup> – 15th, 2019

Early morning at Taj Mahal and then the Red Fort. Return to Delhi for overnight no-stop flight to London. However, flight delayed over 12 hours, so put up in (bad) hotel and eventually flight left at lunchtime following day.

Mammal Species	Scientific name	1	2	ယ	4	<b>5</b> 1	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	ವ
		03/03/2019	03/03/2019 04/03/2019 05/03/2019 06/03/2019 07/03/2019 08/03/2019	05/03/2019	06/03/2019	07/03/2019	08/03/2019	09/03/2019	10/03/2019	11/03/2019	12/03/2019	13/03/2019	12/03/2019 13/03/2019 14/03/2019 15/03/2019	15/03/2019
		Travel	Travel	Pench	Pench	Pench	Pench	Travel/Tadoba	Tadoba	Tadoba	Tadoba	Travel	Agra	In transit
Rhesus Macaque	Macaca mulatto		γ			γ	γ	γ					γ	
Bengal Sacred Langur	Semnopithecus entellus			100+	30+	γ	γ	γ	γ	γ	γ	γ		
Bengal Tiger	Panthera tigris tigris			1 º, 2 cubs			1	1♂	1 o*	5 (2 ở ở , 1 º, 2 cubs)	19			
Leopard	Pantera pardus						2			1				
Grey Mongoose	Herpestes edwardsi							1	1	1				
Ruddy Mongoose	Herpestes smithii							2	1		1			
Jackal	Canis aureus			1		1	3							
Wild Dog	Canis alpinus						8			2	2 and 2			
Sloth Bear	Melursus ursinus							1♂	1 o*		1			
Indian Flying Fox	Pteropus giganteus			1										
Three-striped Palm Squirrel	Funambulus palmatum			ω	ω	2	ω		1	Υ	γ	Υ	Υ	
Indian Gaur	Bos gaurus			6	6	4	12	γ	1		2			
Four-horned Antelope	Tetracerus quadricomis				1									
Nilgai	Boselaphus tragocamelus				4+						1 ở			
Sambar	Cervus unicolor			20	γ	γ	γ	γ	γ	γ	γ			
Spotted Deer	Axis axis			100'S	γ	γ	γ	γ	γ	γ	γ			
Indian Wild Boar	Sus scrofa			9		Υ	γ		γ		γ			
Other Species														
Mugger Crocodile	Crocodylus palustris							1	1	2	ယ			

Species	Scientific name	Plate	Day 1	Day?	Day?	Day 4	Dav E	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10	Day 11	Day 12	Day 13
Species	Sciencific name	no.	Day 1 03/03/2019	Day 2 04/03/2019	Day 3 05/03/2019		Day 5 07/03/2019	Day 6 08/03/2019	Day 7 09/03/2019	10/03/2019			Day 11 13/03/2019		
			Travel	Travel	Pench	Pench	Pench	Pench	Travel	Tadoba	Tadoba	Tadoba	Travel	Agra	In Transit
Grey Francolin	Francolinus pondicerianus	1									2				
Jungle Bush Quail	Perdicula asiatica	2							12		_				
Red Spurfowl  Grey Junglefowl	Galloperdix spadicea Gallus sonneratii	3 5							1		3	3			
Red Junglefowl	Gallus gallus	5	<u>L</u>			1			L		L	L			
Bar-headed Goose	Anser indicus	8									100+				
Comb Duck	Sarkidiornis melanotos	9												1	
Common Teal	Anas crecca	9			6	2		6							
Eurasian Wigeon Gadwall	Anas penelope Anas strepera	9				6									
Lesser Whistling-duck	Dendrocygna javanica	9				Ť					15				
Northern Pintail	Anas acuta	9			12	6									
Ruddy Shelduck	Tadorna ferruginea	9			4	4	Y	Y							
Spot-billed Duck	Anas poecilorhyncha	9				4									
Black-rumped Flameback Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker	Dinopium benghalense  Dendrocopos nanus	14			3	Y 2	Y	Y	Y	Y 1	Y	Y			
Rufous Woodpecker	Celeus brachyurus	14				1				-					
Yellow-crowned Woodpecker	Dendrocopos mahrattensis	14			2										
Brown-headed Barbet	Psilopogon zeylanicus	17				1	1	1							
Coppersmith Barbet	Psilopogon haemacephalus	17			2		1		1						
Indian Gray Hornbill	Ocyceros birostris	18			2	1	5	Y	2					2	
Common Hoopoe Indian Roller	Upupa epops  Coracias benghalensis	20			2 Y	1 Y	1 Y	1 Y	1 Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Common Kingfisher	Alcedo atthis	21			·	2	·	·	·	1		1		·	
Pied Kingfisher	Ceryle rudis	21				3			1						
White-throated Kingfisher	Halcyon smyrnensis	21			Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Green Bee-eater	Merops orientalis	22			1	2	3	3	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		
Greater Coucal	Centropus sinensis	24			-	2			2		1	2			
Alexandrine Parakeet Plum-headed Parakeet	Psittacula eupatria Psittacula cyanocephala	25 25			10+	3 6	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y			
Rose-ringed Parakeet	Psittacula krameri	25			Υ Υ	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Crested Treeswift	Hemiprocne coronata	27			2		1				1				
House Swift	Apus affinis	27							100			Y	Y	Y	
Brown Fish Owl	Ketupa zeylonensis	28								2					
Indian Scops-Owl	Otus bakkamoena	28			1				-						
Jungle Owlet Spotted Owlet	Glaucidium radiatum Athene brama	28 28			1		1		2		1	1			
Eurasian Collared Dove	Streptopelia decaocto	32						1			-	2			
Spotted Dove	Streptopelia chinensis	32			Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Yellow-footed Green Pigeon	Treron phoenicoptera	32			1	2	1		1		1				
Brown Crake	Amaurornis akool	38						2				1			
White-breasted Waterhen	Amaurornis phoenicurus	38 39								1		1 Y			
Common Coot Common Moorhen	Fulica atra  Gallinula chloropus	39										Y			
Black-winged Stilt	Himantopus himantopus	41			2			2			2	1		Y	
Bronze-winged Jacana	Metopidius indicus	41								1		1			
Common Sandpiper	Actitis hypoleucos	41			1										
Common Snipe	Gallinago gallinago	41			_			1							
Eurasian Thick-knee Green Sandpiper	Burhinus oedicnemus Tringa ochropus	41			5	1		1	1	1		1			
Little Ringed Plover	Charadrius dubius	41			2	2	1	-	-	1		-			
Little Stint	Calidris minuta	41						2							
Red-wattled Lapwing	Vanellus indicus	41			Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y			
Wood Sandpiper	Tringa glareola	41					1	1							
Yellow-wattled Lapwing	Vanellus malabaricus	41			6	Y	Y	Y			1				
Spotted Redshank River Tern	Tringa erythropus Sterna aurantia	55			2	4	4	Y	Y	1	1				
Black Kite	Milvus migrans	60		2		-	-						Y	Y	
Black-shouldered Kite	Elanus caeruleus	60			4	1	1	1							
Changeable Hawk Eagle	Spizaetus cirrhatus	60				1	2								
Common Kestrel	Falco tinnunculus	60					1								
Crested Serpent Eagle Egyptian Vulture	Spilornis cheela Neophron percnopterus	60			1			1			1	1		Y	
Grey-headed Fish Eagle	Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus	60						1			1				
Long-billed Vulture	Gyps indicus	60			3										
Oriental Honey-buzzard	Pernis ptilorhyncus	60			1	1			2	2	Y	Y			
Osprey	Pandion haliaetus	60							1						
Red-headed Vulture	Sarcogyps calvus	60		<del>                                     </del>	-		1								
Shikra Short-toed Snake Eagle	Accipiter badius Circaetus gallicus	60 60			1	Y	Y				1/1				
Tawny Eagle	Aquila rapax	60					1								
White-eyed Buzzard	Butastur teesa	60			3	Y	Y	Y		1	Y	Y			
White-rumped Vulture	Gyps bengalensis	60			12		1								
Darter	Anhinga melanogaster	77	1	<del>                                     </del>	-		-		-	-		1			
Indian Cormorant  Little Cormorant	Phalacrocorax fuscicollis Phalacrocorax niger	77			1	Y			1	2	Y	Y			
Little Grebe	Tachybaptus ruficollis	77			1	2+						· ·			
Cattle Egret	Bubulcus ibis	78			Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y			
Great Egret	Casmerodius albus	78			Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y			
Grey Heron	Ardea cinerea	78			2	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y			
Little Egret	Egretta garzetta	78 78				Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y 1			
Purple Heron Black Ibis	Ardea purpurea Pseudibis papillosa	78 81				5			Y	Y	Y	γ			
Black-headed lbis	Threskiornis melanocephalus	81			6	1		1	<u> </u>	· ·		· ·			
Eurasian Spoonbill	Platalea leucorodia	81			15		1								
Asian Openbill	Anastomus oscitans	84				3				1	3	Y			
Black Stork	Ciconia nigra	84	1	<del>                                     </del>	-	-	1	2		-					
	Leptoptilos javanicus	84 89	1	<del>                                     </del>						2					
Lesser Adjutant  Bay-backed Shrike	Lanius vittatus			<del>                                     </del>	4						1				
Bay-backed Shrike	Lanius vittatus Lanius schach			l .			<b></b>	l .	<b>.</b>						<b>1</b>
	Lanius vittatus  Lanius schach  Lanius meridionalis	89 89			1				1						
Bay-backed Shrike Long-tailed Shrike	Lanius schach	89			1	Y	Y	Y	Y Y	Y	Y	Y			
Bay-backed Shrike Long-tailed Shrike Southern Grey Shrike	Lanius schach Lanius meridionalis	89 89		Y		Y	Y Y	Y Y		Y Y	Y Y	Y Y	Y	Y	
Bay-backed Shrike Long-tailed Shrike Southern Grey Shrike Rufous Treepie House Crow Large-billed Crow	Lanius schach  Lanius meridionalis  Dendrocitta vagabunda  Corvus splendens  Corvus macrorhynchos	89 89 90 91 91		Υ	4 Y Y	Y Y	Y Y	Y Y	Y Y Y	Y Y	Y Y	Y Y	Y	Y	
Bay-backed Shrike Long-tailed Shrike Southern Grey Shrike Rufous Treepie House Crow Large-billed Crow Black-hooded Oriole	Lanius schach Lanius meridionalis Dendrocitta vagabunda Corvus splendens Corvus macrorhynchos Oriolus xanthornus	89 89 90 91 91			4 Y	Y	Y	Y	Y Y Y	Y	Y	Y			
Bay-backed Shrike Long-tailed Shrike Southern Grey Shrike Rufous Treepie House Crow Large-billed Crow Black-hooded Oriole Large Cuckooshrike	Lanius schach Lanius meridionalis Dendrocitta vagabunda Corvus splendens Corvus macrorhynchos Oriolus xanthornus Coracina macei	89 89 90 91 91		Υ	4 Y Y	Y Y	Y Y	Y Y	Y Y Y	Y Y	Y Y	Y Y			
Bay-backed Shrike Long-tailed Shrike Southern Grey Shrike Rufous Treepie House Crow Large-billed Crow Black-hooded Oriole	Lanius schach Lanius meridionalis Dendrocitta vagabunda Corvus splendens Corvus macrorhynchos Oriolus xanthornus	89 89 90 91 91 92 92		Υ	4 Y Y	Y Y	Y Y	Y Y	Y Y Y	Y Y	Y Y	Y Y			
Bay-backed Shrike Long-tailed Shrike Southern Grey Shrike Rufous Treepie House Crow Large-billed Crow Black-hooded Oriole Large Cuckooshrike Small Minivet	Lanius schach Lanius meridionalis Dendrocitta vagabunda Corvus splendens Corvus macrorhynchos Oriolus xanthornus Coracina macei Pericrocotus cinnamomeus	89 89 90 91 91 92 92 93		Υ	4 Y Y	Y	Y Y	Y Y Y	Y Y Y	Y Y	Y Y	Y			
Bay-backed Shrike Long-tailed Shrike Southern Grey Shrike Rufous Treepie House Crow Large-billed Crow Black-hooded Oriole Large Cuckooshrike Small Minivet White-browed Fantail	Lanius schach Lanius meridionalis Dendrocitta vagabunda Corvus splendens Corvus macrorhynchos Oriolus xonthornus Coracina macei Pericrocotus cinnamomeus Rhipidura aureola	89 90 91 91 92 92 93 93		Υ	4 Y Y 1	Y Y Y	Y Y Y	Y Y Y	Y Y Y Y	Y Y Y	Y Y Y	Y Y Y	Y		