

CLIVE IN INDIA
GOA 10 - 25 January

An uninterrupted flight to Mumbai and a connection to Goa went to plan. Spent the next ten days at the Marinha Dourada, a super tourist hotel and the food was pretty good. I joined up with Birdfinders with Vaughn and Svetlana Ashby. The group was a little large for my liking so I stayed on the periphery as the noise from the crowd got a bit much at times and tempers flared when birds were missed. There is a lot to be said for the smaller group. Most days were split into two outings as it gets too hot from 1130 a.m. to 15:00 p.m. Our guide was Leio a most enthusiastic chap and very knowledgeable of the birds and habitat. We used the last four days in the well established Backwoods camp, staying in tents with good facilities and the food was better than the hotel. It is run by three guides. My plan was to get as many endemics as possible and catch up with a friend and head to the Andamans, but a crisis at work caused a curtailment and I'll save that for another day. For the report I will try not to repeat any bird, but rather add new ones for the following day. Also I have omitted a lot of the common species we encounter here in the UK.

DAY 1

Baga Hill

A couple of hours in the afternoon got us off with Little Cormorant, Striated Heron, Indian Pondheron, Cattle Egret, Black Kite, Brahminy Kite, Red-wattled Lapwing, Common Sandpiper, Alexandrine Parakeet, Rose-ringed Parakeet, Greater Coucal, Barn Owl (dark breasted), Little Swift, Stork-billed Kingfisher, Green Bee-eater, Indian Roller, White-cheeked Barbet, Coppersmith Barbet, Wire-tailed Swallow, Black Drongo, Ashy Drongo, Rose-coloured Starling, Common Mynah, Jungle Mynah, House Crow, Large-billed Crow, Oriental Magpie Robin, and White-browed Wagtail.

DAY 2

Arpora Woods, Siolin Marsh - a.m.

Beira Mar - p.m.

The morning was used for marsh birds and the late afternoon for the Painted Snipe which has all but disappeared due to overgrowth> the Beira Mar is not what it used to be and really not a place for birders as many previous reports mention.

Additions as follows: Purple Heron, Great Egret, Intermediate Egret, Asian Openbill, Lesser Adjutant, Black-shouldered Kite, Oriental Honey Buzzard, Shikra, Western-marsh Harrier, Osprey, Indian Peafowl, Bronze-winged Jacana, Marsh Sandpiper, Pintail Snipe, Black-winged Stilt, Small Pratincole, River Tern, Spotted Dove, Spotted Owlet, Little Swift, Pied Kingfisher, Black-capped Kingfisher, Blue-tailed Bee-eater, Common Hoopoe, Eurasian Wryneck, Greater Short-toed Lark, Malabar Lark, Streak-throated Swallow, Long-tailed Shrike, Indian Golden Oriole, Black-hooded Oriole, White-bellied Drongo, Malabar Starling, Common Woodshrike, Black-headed Cuckooshrike, Small Minivet, Common Iora, Golden-fronted Leafbird, Red-whiskered Bulbul, Red-vented Bulbul, White-browed Bulbul, Square-tailed Bulbul, Bluethroat, Pied Bushchat, Orange-headed Thrush, Indian Blackbird, White-throated Fantail, Common Tailorbird, Blyth's Reed-warbler, Indian Tit, Richard's Pipit, Blyth's Pipit, Paddyfield Pipit, Pale-billed Flowerpecker, Plain Flowerpecker, Purple-rumped Sunbird, Crimson-backed Sunbird, Purple Sunbird, Little Spiderhunter, White-rumped Munia, and Scaly-breasted Munia.

DAY 3

Morjim Beach, Siolin Marsh - a.m.

Port Aguada - p.m.

The beach heats up very quickly, but is worth a few hours viewing on the incoming tide.

New birds today included Greater-spotted Eagle, White-bellied Sea-eagle, White-breasted Waterhen,

(Indian) Purple Swamphen, Kentish Plover, Lesser Sandplover, Greater Sandplover, Steppe Gull, Pallas's Gull, Brown-headed Gull, Gull-billed Tern, Caspian Tern, Little Tern, Lesser-crested Tern, Grey-bellied Cuckoo, Asian Koel, Alpine Swift, Fork-tailed Swift, Chestnut-headed Bee-eater, Red-rumped Swallow, Brown Shrike, Rufous Treepie, Zitting Cisticola, Grey-breasted Prinia, Plain Prinia, Ashy Prinia, Greenish Warbler, Baya Weaver, and Bay-backed Shrike.

DAY 4

Caranbolim Lake - a.m .

Donna Puala - p.m.

Indian Cormorant, Oriental Darter, Glossy Ibis, Black-headed Ibis, Eurasian Spoonbill, Woolly-necked Stork, Ruddy Shelduck, Indian Spot-billed Duck, Cotton Pygmy-goose, Comb Duck, White-eyed Buzzard, Indian Spotted Eagle, Yellow-wattled Lapwing, Pacific Golden Plover, Marsh Sandpiper, Little Stint, Ruff, Plum-headed Parakeet, Banded Bay Cuckoo, Jungle Owlet, Black-rumped Flameback, Ashy-crowned Sparrow-lark, and Indian Robin.

DAY 5

Baga Hill - a.m.

Beira Mar - p.m.

Another try for painted Snipe with no luck. Otherwise we had Cinnamon Bittern, Temminck's Stint, Blue-bearded Bee-eater, Ashy Woodswallow, , Brown-cheeked Fulvetta, Tickell's Blue-flycatcher, Asian Paradise-flycatcher, Tree Pipit, Thick-billed Flowerpecker, Long-billed Sunbird (Loten's).

DAY 6

River trip on Zuari River - a.m.

Batin Lake, Club Cabana - p.m.

Western Reef Egret, Black-crowned Night-heron, Lesser Whistling-duck, Garganey, Booted Eagle, , Slaty-legged Crake, Ruddy-breasted Crake, Great Crested Tern, Brown Hawk-owl, Crested Treeswift, Collared Kingfisher, Spangled Drongo, and Red-breasted Flycatcher.

DAY 7

Saligao, Bilene - a.m.

Morjim Beach - p.m.

As is the norm, new birds were thinning out. Crested Goshawk, Tawny Eagle, Black Eagle, Eastern Imperial Eagle, Montagu's Harrier, Yellow-legged Buttonquail, Slender-billed Gull, Brown Wood-owl, Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike, Grey-headed Bulbul, Tawny-bellied Babbler, and Large-billed Leaf-warbler.

DAY 8

Mayem Lake (ferry terminal) - a.m.

Charao - p.m.

Things got a little difficult on a single track with 17 people probably spread over 40-50 metres! I was the only one to miss Greater Racket-tailed Drongo although I got one later at Backwoods. I then decided to stay away from the group as much as possible in tight situations. Crested Serpent-eagle, Pallid Harrier, Terek Sandpiper, Orange-breasted Pigeon, Malabar Grey Hornbill, Rufous Woodpecker, Bronzed Drongo, Blue-winged Leafbird, Malabar Whistling-thrush, and Jungle Babbler were amongst other birds seen.

DAY 9

Baga Hill - a.m.

Saligao - p.m.

A surprise today came in the form of an Indian Pitta, found by Helen who got me onto it as we were the only two to suffer the heat and make the most of our time. Puff-throated Babbler, Tawny-bellied Babbler, and Black-naped Monarch were the only new birds today.

DAY 10

Donna Paula, Lake Carambolim - a.m.

Paitona Wetlands - p.m.

This was the last before an early start for Backwoods and what a day it would turn out to be. A first for Goa that caused great excitement and found by yours truly. The group were their usually chirpy selves, so as was becoming a regular habit of mine, I moved off the group and looked at a promising area and it gifted me with a single beautiful **Indian Thick Knee**. Leio our guide was over the moon. And so another Glamorgan birder in the Indian rarities ranks [well done Clive - Ed]. Pheasant-tailed Jacana, Oriental Lark, Pale Sand Martin, Two-barred Greenish Warbler were added to the list from the coastal region.

DAY 11 to 14

Backwoods camp

A very early start to miss rush hour traffic and travel the ninety or so kilometres inland to the promising jungle camp which is run by three very adept guides. We birded in nearby areas each day for the sort after specialist species. Very hard going in a big group.

DAY 1

Changeable Hawk-eagle, Rufous-bellied Eagle, Mountain Hawk-eagle, Besra [an accipiter], Pompadour Green-pigeon, Mountain Imperial-pigeon, Malabar Parakeet, Vernal Hanging Parrot, Spot-bellied Eagle-owl, Sri Lankan Frogmouth, Jerdon's Nightjar, Indian Swiftlet, White-rumped Needletail, Blue-eared Kingfisher, Malabar Pied Hornbill, Crimson-fronted Barbet, , Greater Flameback, Heart-spotted Woodpecker, Dusky Crag-martin, Black-naped Oriole, Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, Scarlet Minivet, Asian Fairy-bluebird, Dark-fronted Babbler, Asian Brown Flycatcher, Brown-breasted Flycatcher, Verditer Flycatcher, Western-crowned Leaf-warbler, and Chestnut-shouldered Petronia.

DAY 2

Bar-buttoned Quail, Indian Scops-owl, Malabar Trogon, Black-backed Kingfisher, White-bellied Woodpecker, Flame-throated Bulbul, Yellow-browed Bulbul, Blue-capped Rock-thrush, White-bellied Blue-flycatcher, and Rusty-tailed Flycatcher.

DAY 3

Oriental Turtle-dove, Emerald Dove, Brown-headed Barbet, White-naped Woodpecker, Indian Blue Robin, Taiga Flycatcher, White-browed Fantail, Forest Wagtail, and Black-headed Munia.

DAY 4

Bondla Wildlife Sanctuary

Rufous-bellied Eagle, and Besra again, and Grey Junglefowl, Brown Fish-owl, White-rumped Shama were the last.

Overall a very good tour, but as I have already mentioned the group size is at a disadvantage on narrow trails. On the other hand, more eyes more birds. Goa is becoming more touristy and that's where the money is. Baga Hill has a limited life due to expansion. Beira Mar Hotel is not an option anymore. New areas will have to be explored in the future. Backwoods bird numbers are not great, but you can count on variety.

By Clive Ellis - some editing by John Wilson