



Armchair Birdwatcher

I am largely an armchair birdwatcher! I let the birds visit me rather than chasing them to recognise and identify them. I have been for bird watching a couple of times with some birding enthusiasts. What I noticed was the competitive nature of identifying birds and simply counting them. Stats were more important to them rather than enjoying the beauty of the birds. I never joined the bird watchers again.

I first started watching birds because of S T Bhaskaran's (a close friend, historian and ornithologist) interest in birds, who knows birds and admires them. The more I looked at them my fascination for birds grew stronger. Watching these avian creatures provide me with indescribable pleasure.

Coming back to armchair bird watching, birds are everywhere. If we carefully look at a sparrow or a common myna, one realises how beautifully the colours and textures of their feathers are arranged and how well they are adapted to their surroundings. We do not have to travel far to see the birds, they are all around us. We only need to keep our eyes and mind open to admire them and imbibe the pleasure they generates in our hearts.

I watch birds sitting on my desk looking through the window, on my daily walks, going to office or for shopping. I am also fortunate to have travelled to most exotic places for work and again the birds come to greet me.

From my desk, overlooking a small garden, I have seen amazing number of birds at quite close quarters. No need to use my binoculars as they are so close and me behind the pane is no threat to them. My favorite is the Olive Backed Sunbird. I know from their calls that they have arrived. A couple of them come at specific times of the day when the flowers are open. A few feet away, sucking nectar from flowers of Scarlet Spiral Flag Ginger (*Costus woodsonii*). As I write this, a beautiful Crested Bulbul perches on the same flower, perhaps to say hello to me, as it is not a bird that care for nectar from flowers. I can clearly see the red patch above white cheeks and bright red vent. Another



surprising visitor that I have had in the spring is the Scaly-breasted Munia. I was wondering how come this bird in visiting my little garden as they are often seen in large numbers as flocks. Soon I realised when I noticed that the bird was trying to steal some Spanish Moss hanging from a tree, I guess for nesting. One day, to my surprise, I saw a White-breasted Waterhen, running by the side of the house, surely a lost visitor from the nearby canal or pond. Many other visitors include, Oriental Magpie-robin, Zebra and Spotted Doves, Mynas, Sparrows, Common tailor-bird, Oriental Reed Warbler.

My daily walks provide me with another opportunity to enjoy watching birds that fly past. I generally go for walk by the side of a canal. My regular walk is on the banks of this canal which connects two major roads for a distance of about five kilometers. Apart from the cool breeze and beautiful view of the mountains, there are a number of birds



visiting this water at different times of the year and for diverse reasons.

Doves coming to drink water others looking for food. When the water is low a common Sandpiper paddles through the

water looking for something to eat. When the grass is ripe with seeds several flocks of Scaly-breasted Munias feed on it. Very often a solitary Chinese Pond-heron is looking for food and as soon as I approach, it flies off displaying its pure white underwings and belly. High up flies the Egrets on their way to settle for the night. Once a Common Kingfisher displaying brilliant turquoise back, accompanied me by the canal and demonstrated how it caught a fish on the third hop. Noisy Crested Bulbuls and Mynas fly across the canal and perch on the wires or tree tops. Of course one cannot ignore the call of a Coppersmith Barbet and with a little effort, can be seen high up the top of a tree restlessly calling. I can often hear the hoots of the Greater Coucals but rarely see it. Sometimes, when I take a diversion through the scrub and the Longan (*Dimocarpus longan*) groves, the bird just flies across the path disappearing in the bushes, never to be traced. Loud Koel calls are heard almost daily. Pleasing whistling song of the Oriental Magpie-robin cannot go unnoticed and one finds this beautiful bird perched on top of a tree or an electricity pole.



Although one often sees black Drongos flying across the canal from tall trees, a couple of occasions I have been lucky to see Greater Racket-tailed Drongo flying across. As I return from my walk at sunset, noisy common brown Mynas are preparing to settle down on a particular teak tree. Near our gated community lawns one sees a number of, not so noisy, White-vented Mynas collecting last insects on the ground before settling down for the night. Nearer my house I see a number of Ashy Wood-swallows perched on the wires snuggling in groups of three or five, others flying around hunting for insects.

Recently, on a holiday in sea-side Karabi Resort, I noticed something flying over my head and perching on a palm tree trunk. Thinking it to be some kind of a small bird, I went around the tree trunk to find it and noticed a perfectly camouflaged small lizard clinging to the tree trunk. On close inspection, of course not bird, I realized that it was a flying lizard (*Draco maculatus*), my very first sighting of the creature!

I do not recall getting bored seeing these birds every day, but to appreciate the beauty of each bird each time I see it and continue to enjoy the spectacle. I did not go looking for any of these birds but they happen to be there going around their business and I take the opportunity to admire and enjoy them.

In the same mode, I want to share my experience with some of the beautiful birds I have come across, going around my business or pleasure, in different parts of the world:

Papua (Indonesia) and Papua New Guinea: Bird watchers paradise! My favorite - *Electus roratus*, a beautiful parrot with marked difference of colour in male and female and the characteristic roar of the female parrot. Papuan or Blyth's Hornbills – if you observe them over a period of time, male and female are always together, you hear them flying before seeing them. All of a sudden you notice only one of them is flying and after a period of time you see the family flying together - the fascination of how male seals the female in tree trunk and feeds her through whilst she incubates, generally two eggs, until the chicks are ready to fly. The famous birds of paradise, more often heard than seen, as it is difficult to spot them in the thick forests. In the low lands of Papua, whilst driving to work, once I had the pleasure of watching a family of Crakes cross the road. Domesticated cassowaries and southern crowned pigeons were a common site in the villages.

Australian birds are incredible. Some of the Australian birds that have left impression on my mind are the Galahs, Kookaburras, Sulphur-crested cockatoo, Yellow-tailed Black-



cockatoo, Red-tailed Black-cockatoo, Crimson Rosella, Rainbow Lorikeet, various Corellas, Australian King Parrot, Red-winged Parrot. These are just a few of the terrestrial birds and water birds are a delight and is another world altogether. There are so many birds in Australia to see and cannot be listed in one go.

Jalandhar (Punjab, India): Watching from my balcony - beautiful red-wattled Lapwings, the Red-naped ibis, Brown Indian-Chat, common Hoopoe, Black Drongo, red-vented bulbul.

On walks - Brown Crake, the Bayas (weaver bird) building incredibly complicated nests, Wire-Tailed Swallow, Bee Eaters, Cattle Egret, large pied Wagtail, spotted Munias, Indian Pond-heron, Black Francolin, Shikra, Asian Pied-myna, Crow Pheasant, white breasted Kingfisher and many other common birds.

Srinagar and Kashmir



I consider myself lucky to have observed a pair of Ibis Bill in Lider River in Pahelgam over three days. Also to enjoy watching paradise fly catcher in Tyndale Bisco School garden in Srinagar.

Lesotho (where I often go for work): Hadedda Ibis, Southern Bald Ibis, Red-winged Starling, Little Swift, Gray Lourie (go-away-bird), Southern Red Bishop, Long Tailed Widowbird, Bald Eagle, Southern Masked Weaver, African Stonechat, Jackal Buzzard, African Paradise Flycatcher, Pied Crow, White-necked Raven to name a few.

Bird Siting Records from 2010





Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush Blue Whistling Thrush
Both in Doi Inthenon, Chiang Mai, Thailand on 3rd January 2018.

No	English Name	Scientific Name	Date	Sighted	Remarks
India (Various places)					
1.	Ibis bill	<i>Ibidorhyncha struthersii</i>	11 Nov 2010	Pahalgam	Lider River - pair
2.	Forktail, Little	<i>Enicurus scouleri</i>	10 Nov 2010	Pahalgam	Lider River
3.	Woodpecker, Himalayan	<i>Dendrocopos himalayensis</i>	8 Nov 2010	Pahalgam	Near LVCP office
4.	Dipper, Brown	<i>Cinclus pallasii</i>	8 Nov 2010	Pahalgam, Jibhi	Lider River
5.	Wren, Winter	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	3 Dec 2010	Bisco School	Srinagar
6.	Redstart, White capped	<i>Chaimarrornis leucocephalus</i>	8 Nov 2010	Pahalgam	Lider River
7.	Redstart, plumbeous	<i>Rhyacornis fuliginosa</i>	8 Nov 2010	Pahalgam, Jibhi	Lider River
8.	Sunbird, Crimson - male	<i>Aethopyga siparaja</i>	7 Feb 2011	Page's House	Jammu
9.	Flycatcher, Paradise Asian	<i>Terpsiphone paradisi</i>	19 Apr2-11	Srinagar & Manali	LWH (A pair)



No	English Name	Scientific Name	Date	Sighted	Remarks
10.	Parakeet, Slated-headed	<i>Psittacula himalayana</i>	30 Apr 2011	Jibhi	Jibhi CHAI
11	Treepie, Rufous	<i>Dendrocitta vagabunda</i>	30 Apr 2011	Jibhi	Jibhi CHAI
12.	Thrush, Blue Whistling	<i>Myophonus caeruleus</i>	Apr 2011	Jibhi	Jibhi CHAI
13.	Oriental White eye	<i>Zosterops palpebrosus</i>	2 May 2011	Jibhi	Jibhi CHAI
14.	River Tern	<i>Sterna aurantia</i>	23 Jun 2011	Srinagar	Dul Lake
15	Asian Pied Starling	<i>Sturnus contra</i>	7 Dec 17	Park	The Green County
16.	Shikra	<i>Accipiter badius</i>	8 Dec 17	Park	The Green County
17.	Common tailorbird	<i>Orthotorus sutorius</i>	12 Dec 17	D4 Balcony	The Green County
18.	Indian-Chat, Brown	<i>Cercomela fusca</i>	1 may 2013	4B DH Balcony	The Green County
19	Myna, Jungle	<i>Acridothores fuscus</i>	April 2013	4B DH Balcony	The Green County
20.	Ibis Red-Naped	<i>Pseudibis papillosa</i>	14 May13	4B DH Balcony	The Green County
21.	Myna, Asian Pied	<i>Sturnus contra</i>	27 May 13	On my walks	Moti Bagh
22.	Water-hen, White-breasted	<i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i>	27 May 13	On my walks	Moti Bagh
23.	Coot, Common	<i>Fulica atra</i>	27 May 13	On my walks	Moti Bagh



No	English Name	Scientific Name	Date	Sighted	Remarks
24.	Moorhen, Common	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	27 May 13	On my walks	Moti Bagh
25.	Pheasant, Crow	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>	27 May 13	On my walks	Moti Bagh
26.	Kingfisher, White-Breasted	<i>Halcyon smyrnensia</i>	28 May 13	On my walks	Moti Bagh
27.	Swallow, Wire-Tailed	<i>Hirundo smithii</i>	28 May 13	On my walks	Moti Bagh
28.	Crake, Brown	<i>Amaurornis akool</i>	28 May 13	On my walks	Moti Bagh
29.	Bee-eater, Small	<i>Merops orientalis</i>	28 May 13	On my walks	Moti Bagh
30.	Koel, Asian	<i>Eudynamis scolopacea</i>	28 May 13	On my walks	Moti Bagh
31.	Hoopoe, Common	<i>Upupa epops</i>	28 May 13	On my walks	Moti Bagh
31.	Baya Weaver	<i>Ploceus philippinus</i>	4 Aug 13	On my walks	Moti Bagh
32.	Francolin, Black	<i>Francolinus francolinus</i>	5 Aug 13	On my walks	Moti Bagh
33.	Lapwing, Red-Wattled	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>	Everyday	4B DH Balcony	The Green County
34.	Drongo, Black	<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>	Everyday	4B DH Balcony	The Green County
35.	Bulbul, Red-vented	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>	Often	4B DH Balcony	The Green County
36.	Egret, Cattle (Plumaged)	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	1 Aug 13	4B DH Balcony	The Green County



No	English Name	Scientific Name	Date	Sighted	Remarks
37.	Dove, Eurasian Collared	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	1 Jun 13	County Park	The Green County
38.	Wagtail, Large Pied	<i>Motacilla maderaspatensis</i>	1 Jun 13	County Park	The Green County
39.	Munia, Spotted	<i>Lonchura malacca</i>	1 Jun 13	County Park	The Green County
40.	Heron, Indian Pond-	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>	5 Jun 13	On my walks	Moti Bagh
Chiang Mai, Thailand					
1	Dove, Common Emerald	<i>Chalcophaps indica</i>	27 Jun 13	Nakai Guesthouse	Laos
2	White-vented Myna	<i>Acridotheres cristatellus</i>	2 Jul 13	Rungaroon Park	Chiang Mai
3	Sunbird, Olive-backed	<i>Cinnyris jugularis</i>	3 Jul 13	Hangdong (female)	Chiang Mai
4	Vireo, Red-eyed	<i>Vireo olivaceus</i>	18 Jul 13	Hangdong	Chiang Mai
5	Oriental Magpie-robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>	28 Nov 15	Everywhere	Hangdong
6	Lesser racket-tailed drongo	<i>Dicrurus remifer</i>	11 Dec 15	Canal road	Hangdong
7	Red vented bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>	Often	From My Desk	Our House
8	Red Jungle fowl	<i>Gallus gallus</i>	15 Dec 15	The only CM Hash	Chiang Mai
9	Olive-backed sunbird – M/F	<i>Cinnyris jugularis</i>	18 Feb16	My Desk	Our House
10	White-tailed Robin	<i>Myiomela leucura</i>	12 Mar 16	Our house	Our House
11	Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	Often	Walk around canal	Hangdong



No	English Name	Scientific Name	Date	Sighted	Remarks
12	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	27 Mar 16	Walk around canal	Hangdong
13	Chinese Pond-Heron	<i>Ardeola bacchus</i>	Often	Walk around canal	Hangdong
14	Ashy Woodswallow	<i>Artamus fuscus</i>	Daily	On the wires	Hangdong
15	Scaly-breasted Munia	<i>Lonchura punctulata punctulata</i>	Many Times Flocks	From my Desk On walks	Our house Canal Road
16	Coppersmith Barbet	<i>Megalaima haemacephala</i>	30 Oct 17	Phase III & R Ville	Rungaroon
17	Greater Coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>	Often	Near the gate	Rungaroon
18	Zebra Dove	<i>Geopelia striata</i>	Often	Rungaroon	Rungaroon
19	Olive-backed Sunbird (M/F)	<i>Cinnyris jugularis</i>	Often	From my desk	Our House
20	Spotted Dove	<i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>	Often	Everywhere	Our House
21	Common Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>	4 Jul 17	Mulberry tree	Our House
22	White-breasted Water hen	<i>Amauornis phoenicurus</i>	22 Sep 17	Front yard	Our House
23	Oriental Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus orientalis</i>	15 Nov 17	From my Desk	Our Home
24	Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax erythrocephalus</i>	3 Jan 18	From Coffee Shop	Doi Inthenon
25	Bar-throated Minla	<i>Chrysominla Strigula</i>	3 Jan 18	From Coffee Shop	Doi Inthenon
26	Blue Whistling Thrush	<i>Myophonus caeruleus</i>	3 Jan 18	From Coffee Shop	Doi Inthenon
27	Dark-backed Sibia	<i>Heterophasia melanoleuca</i>	3 Jan 18	From Coffee Shop	Doi Inthenon
28	Eurasian Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	Daily	Walk around canal	Hangdong



No	English Name	Scientific Name	Date	Sighted	Remarks
29	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	8 Mar 18	Walk around canal	Hangdong
30	Asian Koel	<i>Eudynamys scolopaccus</i>	Heard daily	Walk around canal	Hangdong
31	Flying lizard (not a bird)	<i>Draco maculatus</i>	23 Mar 18	Krabi Resort	Krabi
Lesotho and South Africa					
1	The Hadeda Ibis	<i>Bostrychia hagedash</i>	24 Aug13	Cranberry Cottage	Ladybrand
2	Lesser Masked Weaver	<i>Ploceus intermedius</i>	25 Aug13	Cranberry Cottage	Ladybrand
3	Red Winged Starling	<i>Onychoganthus morio</i>	25 Aug 13	Cranberry Cottage	Ladybrand
4	White Eye ??		25 Aug 13	Cranberry Cottage	Ladybrand
5	Southern Balled Ibis	<i>Geronticus calvus</i>	4 Sep 13	On Site Visit	Mokhotlong
6	Jackal Buzzard	<i>Buteo rufofuscus</i>	4 Sep 13	On Site Visit	Mokhotlong
7	Red-winged Starling	<i>Onychognathus morio</i>	4 Sep 13	On Site Visit	Mokhotlong
8	African Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquatus</i>	4 Sep 13	On Site Visit	Mokhotlong
9	Grey Go-away (Grey Lourie)	<i>Corythaixoides concolor</i>	8 Sep 13	Cranberry Cottage	Ladybrand
10	Black-collared Barbet	<i>Lybius torquatus</i>	28 Oct 14	D4 Kingsway	Maseru
11	Spur-winged Goose	<i>Plectropterus gambensis</i>	8 Nov 14	Airport	Maseru



No	English Name	Scientific Name	Date	Sighted	Remarks
12	Southern Bishop	<i>Euplectes orix</i>	29 Nov 14	Albert's House	Ladybrand
13	Southern Masked Weaver	<i>Ploceus velatus</i>		D4 Kingsway	Maseru
14	Crested Barbet	<i>Trachyphonus vaillantii</i>	10 Jan 15	D4 Kingsway	Maseru
15	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	21 Jan 15	Villages	Mokhotlong
16	Lanner Falcon	<i>Falco biarmicus</i>	21 Jan 15	Villages	Mokhotlong
17	Amur Falcon	<i>Falco amurensis</i>	22 Jan 15	Villages	Mokhotlong
18	Karoo Thrush	<i>Turdus smithi</i>	21 Feb 15	D4 Kingsway	Maseru
19	Red-eyed Dove	<i>Streptopelia capicola</i>	21 Feb 15	D4 Kingsway	Maseru
20	Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>	21 Feb 15	LHDA Bldg	Maseru
21	Speckled Pigeon	<i>Columba guinea</i>	21 Feb 15	D4 Kingsway	Maseru
22	Jackal Buzzard	<i>Buteo rufofuscus</i>	25 Mar 15	Sunny Pass	Mokhotlong
23	Pied Starling	<i>Lamprotornis bicolor</i>	16 Apr 15	Near Libibing	Mokhotlong
24	African Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone viridis</i>	8 Nov 15	Cranberry Cottage	Ladybrand
25	Southern Bishop	<i>Euplectes orix</i>	10 Nov 15	Kick4Life	Maseru



