

Goa – Arpora, Backwoods and Nature’s Nest Jan 26th - Feb 10th 2018

INTRODUCTION

We are Peter and Rosemary Royle, travelling birders who also like to indulge in food, culture, scenery, plants and mammals. We have made a number of trips to the Indian subcontinent over the years, our first visit (which included Bharatpur) being as long ago as 1982. Many of these trips were not dedicated to birding, however more recently a trip to southern Nepal (E, W and Central) in 2010 and one to Sri Lanka in 2006 were definitely birding trips. Despite this, we found ourselves still missing a number of Indian “Western Ghat” birds and realised that we could find a good number of them in Goa. We finished up with a list of 42 species that we could hope to find during a fortnight stay and decided that such a trip would also provide a welcome relief from the Welsh winter for a relatively modest outlay.

Having read a number of trip reports and invested in Gosney “Finding birds in Northern Goa” we decided to stay at the Marinha Dourada in Arpora, booking both the hotel and flight through Thomson (now Tui) for the princely sum of £1,662.50 (for 2). We also booked a 3 night stay at Backwoods and a 3 night stay at Nature’s Nest.

The trip was a great success. We were not sure how we would like Goa - touristy places are not usually our scene - but in the event it was fine. We went to the beach for about an hour just to see what it was like but spent most of our time either out in the countryside or in areas away from the beach – one of the big advantages of birdwatching being that you get to see places that most tourists don’t see.



(all picture are stills taken from video so not great quality!)

ADMINISTRATIVE AND DOMESTIC DETAILS

Skip this section if you want to get to the birds!

Visas – the current system of visas means that you apply in advance then get an email with the details which you have to print and take with you. This then gets converted to a real stamp in your passport when you arrive. There are a lot of companies on the web trying to get you to pay for their services to help you get a visa. We did not use them – we used the Indian Government site <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/evisa/> and this was relatively straightforward though you need to be a bit tech-savvy to supply the right size of scanned photo, which has to be 2 inches square. You can get photos of this size at photo-booths but we used Adobe Elements to edit a scanned image of a standard English size passport photo to make it square and the right size. We paid £60 though you can pay a lot more than this through an agency. We paid via PayPal which was handy. This system will undoubtedly change in the future.

Money – it does warn you in the Lonely Planet guide but I don’t think it sank in. Hardly any establishments in Goa apart from the hotels and a few upmarket restaurants and shops take credit cards. Cash is the order of the day. How to get that cash is the problem. The hotel changed cash (e.g. pounds for rupees) but would not take cards for cash – in an emergency they would take a Debit Card but they apparently were not supposed to do it and added a 10% charge. Our nearest ATM was 1 km away (Google maps is good for finding them) and there was limit of 11,000 rupees per day withdrawal (about £135). Some ATMS do not take English cards – we found HDFC to be reliable. Given that we needed to pay Backwoods in cash and the transport charge at Natures Nest in cash (see below) it was easy to get into a cash shortage situation. You really need to take a stash of pounds with you to cover all anticipated outlays and then change them as you need them. (Note that you cannot get rupees outside India).

Changing cash at the airport was expensive – very poor rates - but you need to change some there to tide you over. Just outside the Marinha Dourada a hundred metres to the east was Mr Veen’s money changing booth – something of an iconic figure in the area he gave very good rates, liked a chat, had an exchange book library and was recommended by our Thomson rep. I expect there are plenty like him around!

The exchange rate was between 85 and 90 rupees to the pound when we were there but it varies all the time.

Costs – things in Goa are pretty inexpensive – our evening meal (without alcohol) was typically about £15 for two. This would include main course dishes, rice, nan, a veg dish and usually either a sweet, fruit juice or lassi. The only exception to the reasonable prices was the departure lounge at the airport where a large coffee was £3 and a small bottle of Evian(!) water was £2. The whole holiday cost about £2,950 in total for the two of us.

Food We ate almost entirely Indian food and never had a bad meal. The only non-Indian dishes were a burger at the hotel (perfectly OK) and an excellent pizza at You and Me. Food was not very hot (spicy hot) – it is modified for western tastes. The most consistently spicy food was at the hotel where it was what I would describe as medium. If you like hot curries you need to ask for “spicy”. We tried Goan dishes such as Prawn Balchao, Pork Vindaloo, Fish-curry-rice and a sweet called Bebinca. Otherwise the restaurant menus would be familiar to a person from the UK familiar with our Indian restaurants. They all do European and, strangely, Chinese, as well as Indian and Goan. There are some good sweets such as coconut pancake and banana fritters. Lassis were excellent – banana lassi tastes like a banana milk shake but better – less sugar and artificial flavours. The mint and coriander version was also very good.

Apart from Backwoods and Nature’s Nest we ate at the following places:

Nick’s Place – just down the road from the hotel. Patronised by Brits but also some Indians on holiday. We had some good meals here but avoid quiz nights (Friday and Monday) - we waited a whole hour for our food one Friday night and the vindaloo was poor – a characterless red sauce with too much raw vinegar.

Rasa – just over the bridge, the tandoori food here was excellent and it has a nice atmosphere

You and Me – about 500 metres down a little lane opposite Nick’s – we had a good pizza here and had good reports about the evening meals

The Marinha Dourada Hotel – the vegetarian samosas were extremely tasty and made a good lunch. We had good Indian dishes here – King Prawn Zafrical, Prawn Balchao, Paneer Butter Masala, Paneer Tikka Masala and Pork Vindaloo were all excellent.

Drinks - we do not like bottled beer but it appears that most of our fellow guests did as their tables were laden with empties! It is worth trying Feni, the local spirit. It is made from palm sap and also from cashew fruits. The Cashew Feni at the hotel bar was in a wine bottle with a hand-written label! It was about £1.50 for a double measure. I drank multiple Pina Colodas which were always good but very variable in price in different places – hard to compare though as prices are sometimes quoted without tax and sometimes including tax which for alcohol is 22%. Including taxes they were about £2.24 at the hotel.

Flights – Thomson fly Boeing 787 Dreamliners to Goa and they are very comfortable. Generous seat pitch, staggered leather seating, wide aisles and a 3-3-3 configuration. Also good food, free drink, electronic window dimming and mood lighting! And fast – the flight took 9.5 hours on the way out with a tail wind, longer on the way back but still landed on time. Thomson are on to a winner here – making the flight an enjoyable part of the holiday.

Transfers – we used the Thomson coach transfers and on the outward journey this was a nightmare. We arrived on Saturday January 27th which was the day after Republic Day, a public holiday on January 26th. It seemed as though all of India had chosen to go to Goa for a long weekend and the traffic was unbelievable. It took 3.5 hours to get to the hotel, which is the last on the run, whereas the return journey was about 1.25 hours.

The Marinha Dourada Hotel – this is definitely not a 5-star resort but it is pretty good on the whole. The rooms used by Thomson are in the newer block which is quieter and all rooms overlook the lake, though it is a long stomp to reception. The room had air-con, fan, mini-bar, balcony, TV etc and everything worked. There were a few “Indian” touches – there was not always hot water, you were not supposed to flush toilet paper, the Goan-style sockets were a bit temperamental and the blanket was frayed - but the room had good storage, plenty of hangers and the bed was comfy. There were good secure safe deposit boxes in reception. No wi-fi in the room though – only in reception – and no lifts.

The big open view over the lakes is a big plus – few other Goan hotels have an open view – but the mystery was why these saline lakes, which are full of fish, never had any cormorants or ospreys taking advantage of the feast. The pools looked clean and inviting though we never actually used them.

The food in the A Veradah restaurant was very good if you stuck to the Indian/Goan dishes – we had some excellent meals. The European food looked less good. Breakfast was served in a huge open-air barn-like construction but was excellent – a good mix of Indian and European food. Omelettes were first-class. Drinks at the hotel bar were reasonably priced. Litre bottles of water in the mini-bar were 40p – we used to see people bringing in 5 litre bottles from the shops but at the min-bar prices we couldn't be bothered! Note that there was no tea/coffee making equipment in the room – lots of people had travel kettles.

Many of the guests are repeat visitors and go there every year – at the time of our visit they were all from either Manchester (older and middle-aged couples), Russia (young couples) or India (families).

Leaving the hotel for two periods of 3 days was no problem – the staff are used to it as some of the standard excursions require guest to be away from the hotel.

Dates and weather– we wanted to travel while the weather was still at its worst in Wales, but before it got too hot in Goa. The peak tourist season is Dec/Jan so we decided to go at the end of Jan (see above for avoiding Jan 26th and the days around it for travel). The weather forecast before we went was relentlessly sunny and hot – usually about 34 degrees and we wondered how we would cope. In fact at this time of the year the climate is very dry and the shade temperature was actually quite comfortable. We had one or two overcast days which were much more humid and even an hour of rain. Evenings and nights were very pleasant at the coast and positively cold (12 degrees!) up in the forest.

Phones Note that when ringing an Indian number on an English mobile you will have to treat it as an international call and precede the number with +91.

Electrical sockets – these are curious and take either 3-pin large or 2-pin small plugs. We found that European 2-pin plugs usually fitted but were sometime loose and needed to be wedged in. They would crackle unhappily if they weren't fully inserted.

Nature's Nest – this is a small eco-lodge up in the forested hills, see the website at <https://www.naturesnestgoa.com>. We knew nothing about this place, though it had favourable TripAdvisor reviews. It offered birding packages, but there was very little mention of species you might see. We decided to book anyway – it sounded fun. We thought we would get a young lad who would show us the more obvious and colourful birds. Not so – we had Ramesh to our ourselves for 2 days and he is a first class guide complete with staked out Frogmouths and a good Pitta site. The new website does actually give a better idea of what you might see and it is quite an impressive list. The cottages were comfortable with fan and patio, and the blanket which we laughed at when we arrived was certainly needed at night! The food here was excellent – always a range of about 6 dishes plus rice and some chapati-type product and also a pudding in the evening. (Rice pudding with coconut milk and cardamom - yum!). We paid 28,320 rupees for the 3 night package for 2 people, plus approx.15,000 rupees for transport (pick-up, drop-off and travel whilst birding). This was about £500 in total. I think you could reduce this by using your transport for the pickup. The package included the Zuari river trip on the final morning.

Nature's Nest is about 10 km from Tamdi Surla temple, and is located in a farmland setting, though there are palms and acacias (which have pink fluffy flowers very attractive to sunbirds and parrots) all around the cabins.

Backwoods – contrary to rumour, Backwoods is still functioning though on a reduced scale. All the accommodation is in the main house – there are no longer any huts or tents. Our room was spacious with a fan and balcony. Hot water was delivered in a large bucket when you needed it. The food was good – similar in concept to Nature's Nest though more vegetarian and less variety. Packages offered are 3 nights starting Sunday for 12500 rupees or 2 nights starting Wednesday 8500 rupees, but they will also accommodate other requirements. We paid 30,000 rupees for the two of us including transport which is about £345. The hotel pickup on the first day is very early so that you arrive for tea and biscuits at 7.00 and get a full day's birding on the first day.

Loven is a guide of the first order who knows his patch like the back of his hand and has exceptionally sharp eyes.

The website <http://www.backwoodsgoa.com/> is essentially defunct. To book, contact Loven on backwoodsgoa@hotmail.com or ring the landline number (+91) 832 2610057 or Loven on (+91) 9420072007 / 9822144939 to book. Other numbers are Leio – (+91) 9822139859, Pramod – (+91) 9822387434.

We had difficulty contacting Backwoods by email – I tried 4 times with no response and no rejection messages. I suspect the problem was something to do with our email address, as when I tried a different one it was all OK. So if you have this problem do not give up.

Backwoods is located quite close to Tamdi Surla temple and is therefore close to Nature's Nest – we had no idea how close when we booked them both! It is set in forest and we saw a Malabar Trogon just outside the front door.



BIRDING NOTES

Telescopes – you will probably want to take a scope to Goa for the waterbirds and seabirds. But it is also useful for forest birds, giving you gob-smacking every-feather views of Trogons etc. Ramesh at Nature's Nest appropriated our scope, both carrying it and using it, and would get on to birds very quickly giving really excellent views. Nature's Nest do have their own scope but is it rather old and cranky and Ramesh obviously coveted our Swarovski ATS 60 HD. Scopes are also useful for Loven's (Backwoods) favourite style of birdwatching which is to stand in a large clearing and watch for birds flying over and in trees at the edges.

Books – we used **Grimett and Inskipp "Birds of Southern India"**. It is light and portable and does not have too many confusion species like its big brother "Birds of the Indian Subcontinent" – however it has not been revised since 2005 whereas the larger book had a new edition in 2012. Some of the splits relevant in Goa are therefore not covered or illustrated in "Birds of Southern India" which can be confusing. There is an app for I-phone which the guides used but we do not have an I-phone. We also used **Gosney "Where to find birds in Northern Goa"** to plan our expeditions from the hotel, both in the Arpora area and further afield. We also bought **Lonely Planet "Goa and Mumbai"** but it was of limited use except for descriptions of local food to try and descriptions of the curious Goan electrical sockets.

Birding Guides – in addition to Ramesh at Nature's Nest and Loven at Backwoods we also used **Rayman** for trips to Mayem Lake, Carambolim and sites around the coast. We booked him by phone when we were in Goa and we were very happy with his services. He charged about 3,200 rupees for an afternoon or 4,200 for a morning. His details are: Rama M Govekar Mobile: 9922271840. Also 9637724016, 9623876211 email govekar.rama@gmail.com

We also went on a **Birding and Breakfast** trip with **Lloyd Fernandez**. This was very civilised and took us to an interesting location – the Pilerne Plateau - as well as to Saligao Zor. The whole morning including breakfast was only 3,000 rupees for the two of us but may have been cheap as he already had 4 people booked. Contact Lloyd on fatimgoa@gmail.com or 9822149002.

Other recommended guides are:

Santosh Redkar by e-mail goabirdingsantosh@hotmail.com 91 98811 804241

Rama Govekar govekar.rama@gmail.com Tel: 99 222 71 840

Rahul Alvares www.rahulalvares.com +91-9881-961071 +91-0832-226-8617

Breeding plumage and breeding season – we were not sure when we booked where the birds would be in their breeding cycle and whether they would be in breeding plumage. We needn't have worried – apart from the weavers and egrets, everything was in spanking breeding plumage which seems a bit odd

as most birds don't breed till the beginning of the rains which is early June. Some birds were actively breeding while we were there – we found nests of 2 sunbird species and a spiderhunter, and the sunbirds were all busy singing away defending territories. We also saw White-browed Bulbuls feeding young.

Backwoods compared to Nature's Nest – both operations offer birding packages and both have good guides. By the time we got to Backwoods we had seen many of our target species so we spent our time there targeting the remaining ones – we therefore did not spend time looking for birds we had seen well before such as the Pitta. Despite this we still built up a sizeable list. Combining Backwoods and Nature's Nest we had a total of 135 species. We saw 110 at Nature's Nest and 120 at Backwoods. (But we did effectively have an extra day at Backwoods as you have a full first day in the field with a hotel pick up at 5:15). If you can only do one and you are a really keen birder then I suggest Backwoods. For a slightly more sophisticated setup which is probably better for non-birding partners then I would suggest Nature's Nest, especially if you have your own scope.

MAIN BIRDING LOCATIONS

Near the hotel, the Arpora area: We managed to find 94 species within walking distance of the hotel.

Baga Hill: We followed the instructions in Gosney for this location. We found our best birds along the roads at the bottom of the eastern access near a laundry where there were flowering trees and gardens, and also a patch of scrub between a building site and a house where we found about 10 species of birds. It looks unpromising and the many building sites are noisy but the birds are there (but probably not for much longer). We found our only Vigor's Sunbird here, in what is apparently a regular spot, though after showing really well for a couple of minutes it disappeared completely. The top of the hill was dry and burnt and pretty birdless.

Arpora Woods: Again as per Gosney, but the distance from Club Cubana to the woods at the end of the path is not very far. Note that to get on to this path you have to fork left and contour round the hill – the main path goes straight on down into open deserted farmland and then presumably into the nice looking scrub on the far side of the valley. On a slow walk here in the early morning as the sun came up we had 25 species including low flying Crested Serpent-eagle, Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike and 3 species of Bee-eater. Good bushy habitat.

Fields and pool in the immediate vicinity: The field across the road, used as a cricket pitch in the evening, was a good place to watch parakeets fly over at dusk. Mostly Alexandrine but some Rose-ringed. Occasionally the Alexandrine Parakeets would perch in view when you could see their prominent red shoulder patches. Other wet fields towards Arpora had various waders, Zitting Cisticola and Paddyfield Pipits.

Baga fields: We tried the track as per Gosney but this soon petered out after passing a house, and the fields were too wet to tramp through (I could not work out how or why they were wet). We did find Short-toed Lark, Paddyfield Pipit and Pintail Snipe. A short way further along the main road is a new dirt road to the new sewage treatment works – we found very little along here apart from munias.

The Tamdi Surla area – this area is in the Bhagwan Mahaveer National Park and is basically a mixture of forest, forest edge and farmland. Both Backwoods and Nature's Nest are located here and we visited maybe 12 locations in this area, some of these in the forest, some at the edge and some near villages. We visited the temple itself a number of times – the stream behind the temple is supposed to be a good spot for Blue-eared Kingfisher but in 4 visits we did not see it. The clearing to the south has good forest edge habitat and can produce a long list of birds especially pigeons, birds of prey, parakeets, barbets etc. The causeway into the temple provided views of Grey Jungle-fowl and we also had some good birds in the trees over the car park one morning.

Backwoods – the camp itself has really good birds, in fact Loven says that can you find almost everything on the list by just walking along the entrance track enough times but visitors might find that a bit boring!

Bondla – the area referred to as Bondla is really two locations.

The first is “outside Bondla” – this is the area outside the forest at the bottom of the hill which often seems to be teeming with birds. There is a turning to the right not long after entering the Bondla approach road which leads to a temple – this is a standard birding spot which we went to twice and always met other birders there. (Shown as 1 on Gosney’s diagram) There are also two bridges over the river either side of the Bondla turn-off which can be very good for bee-eaters and swallows, and at one spot there were flowering trees at the far side of the bridge which were dripping with birds.

“Bondla forest” is the forest proper which seems quiet but repays close attention with woodpeckers, warblers etc.

Zuari River Trip – this was organised by Nature’s Nest as part of our package on the last morning. It was slightly disappointing for two reasons. First, the tide was very high which reduced our chances of seeing Slaty-breasted Rail to about zero. Secondly, we spent a lot of time keeping photographers happy, getting them into position to take pictures of eagles and ospreys on posts which meant less time poking around the mangroves. We did not see Black-capped Kingfisher although we did see Collared.

Mayem Lake – we went there one afternoon with Rayman and it was a bit quiet, so planned to go back on our final morning as it potentially held some of our missing species. However, Rayman said that there was a big festival there that day so it would not be sensible to go.

Carambolin Lake – the lake itself is completely devoid of birds but the flooded and disused rice fields across the road are hopping (or rather wading and swimming) with birds. You can walk out to the middle after driving down a tiny lane through a village and parking up. We were there at sunset – it was wonderful – birds everywhere and a background soundscape of boys playing football and the Konkan Express hooting its way into the station. Earlier we had visited the woods – rather thin with open areas – but plenty of birds and a Brown Hawk Owl roost.

On the way to the lake we stopped at a roadside bar behind which was a shallow pool with sandy islands which was full of waders. There were small numbers each of about 10 species all mixed up and spread about so it was perfect for comparing and contrasting e.g. Marsh Sandpiper and Greenshank, Greater and Lesser Sandpipers.

Rayman’s local sites for owls etc: One of these was the road up to the Nilaya Hermitage hotel which is almost within walking distance from our hotel in Arpora. The road seemed very birdy – it was the same type of bushy scrub as at Arpora woods – but became even more so when Rayman called up a Jungle Owlet. A whole suite of birds popped up to mob the Owlet – all the species we had been working our socks off to find at Baga and Arpora and all showing on a bare tree!



BIRD LIST

As we were targeting a specific list of birds we made little attempt to see common or widespread species such as gulls and terns. We did not therefore go to Morjim. However we did in the end relent and go to Carambolim Lakes to find some waterbirds on our penultimate afternoon as our list looked so thin! We also did not spend time looking for difficult species which we had seen well elsewhere such as Indian Blue Robin. The same should have applied to Blue-eared Kingfisher – we spent a lot of time

looking for this even though it was not a new bird – I think the guides feel they have failed if they don't locate one!

Birds from our wanted list which we missed were:

Slaty-breasted Crake – *high tide and photo-obsessed passengers put paid to this on the Zuari river trip*;
River Tern – *sometimes seen at the Siolim rice fields but none of the guides seemed confident about that when we were there*; Nilgiri Woodpigeon – *a difficult bird, sometimes seen at Backwoods but not for us. We went to Mayem Lake to try and find it but failed. It is apparently very inconspicuous and keeps below the canopy.*; Banded Bay Cuckoo – *we just never came across this bird though apparently Mayem Lake is a good site*; Common Flameback – *essentially a SE Asian bird with an outpost in the Western Ghats, Loven said he rarely sees it*; Blue-bearded Bee-eater – *we spent plenty of time in the right habitat for this bird (edge of forest) but never ran across it*; Indian Scimitar-babbler – *we heard this bird on several occasions but it completely refused to be tempted into sight*

As compensation we had 5 new species which we weren't expecting – Streaked Weaver, Blyth's Pipit, White-rumped Spinetail, Jungle Nightjar (split) and Grey-bellied Cuckoo.

In the list below, lifers are marked in red.

Lesser Whistling-Duck <i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>	Only two seen, at Carambolim rice fields
Northern Shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i>	Several at Carambolim rice fields
Garganey <i>Anas querquedula</i>	Distant but good views at Carambolim rice fields
Red Spurfowl <i>Galloperdix spadicea</i>	Good views of a pair crossing the road in the area where the Bondla approach road meets the turning to the temple
Grey Junglefowl <i>Gallus sonneratii</i>	Easily heard both scratching around and calling at dawn and dusk. Harder to get good views but we did eventually at Tambdi Surla temple and at Bondla at the top of the road near the bungalows. A very smart bird when seen in a good light.
Indian Peafowl <i>Pavo cristatus</i>	A few birds seen most days
Painted Stork <i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>	Flyovers on the Zuari river trip
Woolly-necked Stork <i>Ciconia episcopus</i>	Seen several times in fields and flying over
Lesser Adjutant <i>Leptoptilos javanicus</i>	A group of 4 in a field seen from our transfer coach
Black-headed Ibis <i>Threskiornis melanocephalus</i>	Several groups in wet fields and also flying
Glossy Ibis <i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	A big flock at Carambolim fields and several big flocks flying over to roost in the mangroves
Eurasian Spoonbill <i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	One or two at Carambolim rice fields
Black-crowned Night Heron <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	Only seen on the Zuari river trip
Striated Heron (Little H) <i>Butorides striata</i>	Seen on the Zuari river trip
Indian Pond Heron <i>Ardeola grayii</i>	Very common
Eastern Cattle Egret <i>Bubulcus coromandus</i>	Very common
Grey Heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i>	A few seen - not common
Purple Heron <i>Ardea purpurea</i>	2 seen - not common
Eastern Great Egret <i>Egretta [alba] modesta</i>	One or two at Carambolim rice fields
Intermediate Egret <i>Egretta intermedia</i>	One or two in several locations
Little Egret <i>Egretta garzetta</i>	One or two in several locations
Western Reef Heron (W Reef-Egret) <i>Egretta gularis</i>	One seen on the Zuari river trip

Little Cormorant <i>Microcarbo niger</i>	A few seen
Indian Cormorant (I Shag) <i>Phalacrocorax fuscicollis</i>	Commonly seen. At Carambolim, several big flocks were flying over to roost in the mangroves
Oriental Darter <i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>	A few seen e.g. Mayem Lake and flying over
Western Osprey <i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	Seen well eating a fish on a post on the Zuari river trip. Also a fly-over near the hotel.
Black-shouldered Kite <i>Elanus caeruleus</i>	One seen perched on a roadside wire
Crested Honey Buzzard (Oriental H B) <i>Pernis ptilorhyncus</i>	Seen once or twice perched on distant trees or more often flying over forest
Crested Serpent Eagle <i>Spilornis cheela</i>	Splendid views of a perched bird near Nature's Nest and a pair flying over very low and calling at Arpora woods. Also seen in the air quite commonly in the forest.
Crested Hawk-Eagle <i>Nisaetus cirrhatus</i>	Seen near the nest on the road to Tambdi Surla temple
Black Eagle <i>Ictinaetus malayensis</i>	Only seen as distant dots in the sky
Indian Spotted Eagle <i>Clanga hastata</i>	One bird seen well perched by a wetland on the way back from Mayem Lakes and one at Carambolim Lakes
Greater Spotted Eagle <i>Clanga clanga</i>	Seen flying somewhere near Baga
Booted Eagle <i>Hieraetus pennatus</i>	Commonly seen in flight
Crested Goshawk <i>Accipiter trivirgatus</i>	Seen several time in forested areas
Northern Goshawk <i>Accipter gentilis</i>	An amazing find - seen near Backwoods with Loven and a Danish birder. No question about its id. It was an adult male bird and was perched in a distant tree with a Crested Goshawk nearby for comparison. It has been reported as a rarity.
Shikra <i>Accipiter badius</i>	Seen well, perched, on several occasions as well as in flight
Western Marsh Harrier <i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	One bird flying over a marsh near Mayem Lake and another at Pilerne plateau.
Black Kite <i>Milvus [migrans] govinda</i>	The common resident kite, seen everywhere
Black-eared Kite <i>Milvus [migrans] lineatus</i>	We came across a flock of about 50 birds drinking from a pool in a field one evening
Brahminy Kite <i>Haliaastur indus</i>	Common everywhere
White-bellied Sea Eagle <i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>	Seen several times in flight near the coast, one sat on a pole on the Zuari river trip, and a juvenile bird seen eating a fish from the viewpoint at Fort Aguada.
White-eyed Buzzard <i>Buastur teesa</i>	One bird seen perched on pylons at Pilerne plateau
White-breasted Waterhen <i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i>	Seen in pools near the hotel and occasionally while driving
Grey-headed Swamphen <i>Porphyrio poliocephalus</i>	A flock at Carambolim rice fields
Black-winged Stilt <i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	Good numbers at the wader pool near Carambolim
Avocet <i>Recurvirostra avocetta</i>	One bird at Carambolim rice fields
Yellow-wattled Lapwing <i>Vanellus malabaricus</i>	3 birds seen sheltering from the sun under small trees in a small undistinguished patch of land north of Anjuna where they can apparently always be found (there are 9 of them)
Red-wattled Lapwing <i>Vanellus indicus</i>	Seen in quite a few locations in wet fields
Little Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius dubius</i>	One seen in a marshy field near Mayem Lake
Lesser Sand Plover <i>Charadrius mongolus</i>	A few at the wader pool near Carambolim
Greater Sand Plover <i>Charadrius leschenaulti</i>	A few at the wader pool near Carambolim
Bronze-winged Jacana <i>Metopidius indicus</i>	Only one seen! In an unpleasant little roadside pool in Arpora

Pin-tailed Snipe <i>Gallinago stenura</i>	Several at Carambolim rice fields, also one at Baga fields
Black-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa limosa</i>	Flocks at Carambolim rice fields and the wader pool nearby
Common Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>	Several at the wader pool near Carambolim
Marsh Sandpiper <i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	A few at the wader pool near Carambolim
Common Greenshank <i>Tringa nebularia</i>	A few at the wader pool near Carambolim
Green Sandpiper <i>Tringa ochropus</i>	A few at the wader pool near Carambolim
Wood Sandpiper <i>Tringa glareola</i>	A few at the wader pool near Carambolim
Terek Sandpiper <i>Xenus cinereus</i>	A few at the wader pool near Carambolim
Common Sandpiper <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	A single bird seen in several suitable locations
Temminck's Stint <i>Calidris temminckii</i>	One seen at the pool opposite the hotel
Little Stint <i>Calidris minuta</i>	A few at the wader pool near Carambolim
Brown-headed Gull <i>Chroicocephalus brunnicephalus</i>	A couple of birds on the Zuari river trip, also one bird at the wader pool near Carambolim
Gull-billed Tern <i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>	A flock on the Zuari river trip, also a flock at the wader pool near Carambolim
Rock Dove <i>Columba livia</i>	Common in towns
Spotted Dove <i>Spilopelia chinensis</i>	The only common dove in the lowlands, and even then not abundant
Common Emerald Dove <i>Chalcophaps indica</i>	Birds seen At Mayem Lake and near Backwoods
Grey-fronted Green Pigeon <i>Treron affinis</i>	Seen well several times perched on trees at the edge of the forest near Tambdi Surla
Mountain Imperial Pigeon <i>Ducula badia</i>	Easy to hear, not so easy to see well! Not just in the hills.
Greater Coucal <i>Centropus sinensis</i>	One or two birds seen in dense bushes.
Asian Koel <i>Eudynamis scolopacea</i>	Heard all the time, harder to see. Our best views were a male bird climbing through a small bush right next to the road in Arpora
Banded Bay Cuckoo <i>Cacomantis sonneratii</i>	Stunning views of this bird on the Pilerne plateau
Grey-bellied Cuckoo <i>Cacomantis passerinus</i>	A bird flew through and perched for a few seconds near Backwoods
Common Hawk-Cuckoo <i>Hierococcyx varius</i>	One bird seen on the Pilerne plateau
Indian Scops Owl <i>Otus bakkamoena</i>	There is a pair of these owls roosting in bamboos near the staff entrance at the Marinha Dourada. The first time we saw them they were just waking up and we got the full Scops Owl glare!
Jungle Owlet <i>Glaucidium radiatum</i>	A bird was called up by Rayman near Arpora and gave stunning views. It also attracted all the birds in the neighbourhood which was excellent.
Spotted Owlet <i>Athene brama</i>	Roosting birds at Fort Aguada
Brown Hawk-Owl (B Boobook) <i>Ninox scutulata</i>	A calling bird outside the lodge at Backwoods, then views of a hunting bird near the Tambdi Surla temple, then roosting birds at Carambolim
Sri Lanka Frogmouth <i>Batrachostomus moniliger</i>	A roosting pair found by Ramesh in the forest and then a beautifully posed roosting pair about 50m from the front door at Backwoods
Jerdon's Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus atripennis</i>	Two perched birds found on the edge of the forest at the top of a rocky hill near Natures' Nest
Jungle Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus indicus</i>	One perched bird found on the edge of the forest at the top of a rocky hill near Natures' Nest. Also seen at Tambdi Surla at dusk.
Crested Treeswift <i>Hemiprocne coronata</i>	Seen well perched with Ramesh and several times flying. Ramesh also showed us a last-year's nest - incredibly small and exposed.

Blyth's Swift <i>Apus leuconyx</i>	A possible controversial split from Pacific Swift. We saw just one, but well, over Arpora forest
Little Swift <i>Apus affinis</i>	Quite common
White-rumped Spinetail <i>Zonavena sylvatica</i>	Seen with Ramesh near Nature's Nest
Malabar Trogon <i>Harpactes fasciatus</i>	Seen well twice - on the Tambdi Surla road with Ramesh and just outside the front door at Backwoods
Indian Roller <i>Coracias benghalensis</i>	Locally common in certain lowland areas
Stork-billed Kingfisher <i>Pelargopsis capensis</i>	On the Zuari river trip and at a river in the forest
White-throated Kingfisher <i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>	Common - one had a territory over one of the hotel lakes
Collared Kingfisher <i>Todiramphus chloris</i>	Seen eventually on the Zuari river trip but not good views
Common Kingfisher <i>Alcedo atthis</i>	Quite common on streams and rivers
Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher <i>Ceyx erithaca</i>	A beautiful bird seen at a standard stake-out on the Bondla road.
Pied Kingfisher <i>Ceryle rudis</i>	Only seen once at Mayem Lake
Green Bee-Eater <i>Merops orientalis</i>	Common
Blue-tailed Bee-Eater <i>Merops philippinus</i>	Only seen at Arpora woods
Chestnut-headed Bee-Eater <i>Merops leschenaulti</i>	Seen really well at a bridge near Bondla and also elsewhere including Arpora
Eurasian Hoopoe <i>Upupa epops</i>	Seen several times in open areas near forest
Great Hornbill (Great Pied H) <i>Buceros bicornis</i>	One bird flying over at Backwoods - the wings make the most extraordinary sound
Indian Grey Hornbill <i>Ocyrceros birostris</i>	One bird with Malabar Greys at a flowering tree near a bridge outside Bondla
Malabar Pied Hornbill <i>Anthracoceros coronatus</i>	Seen in trees in open areas in the forest, often in pairs
Malabar Grey Hornbill <i>Ocyrceros griseus</i>	Seen wherever there were flowering trees in open areas in the forest
Brown-headed Barbet <i>Psilopogon zeylanicus</i>	Seen at the edges of forest up in the hills
White-cheeked Barbet <i>Psilopogon viridis</i>	This bird seems to be the lowland equivalent of Brown-headed - you do not seem get both species at any place. Seen well at Baga Hill and near Saligao.
Malabar Barbet <i>Psilopogon malabaricus</i>	Seen well perched up on trees at the edge of clearings such as at Tambdi Surla.
Coppersmith Barbet <i>Psilopogon haemacephalus</i>	A few birds seen perched up on trees at the edge of clearings such as at Tambdi Surla.
Heart-spotted Woodpecker <i>Hemicircus canente</i>	Seen very well in a tree over the car park at Tambdi Surla and also on the Backwoods entrance track
Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker <i>Dendrocopos nanus</i>	Seen a couple of times in the forest
White-bellied Woodpecker <i>Dryocopus javensis</i>	Excellent view of a single bird with Ramesh somewhere near Tambdi Surla. I think it is a known nest site.
Black-rumped Flameback <i>Dinopium benghalense</i>	Confusingly the guides often call this "Lesser Goldenback". Seen fairly often in the forest.
Greater Flameback <i>Chrysocolaptes guttacristatus</i>	Seen well at Nature's nest (a noisy group of 3 by the front entrance) and on the entrance track at Backwoods
Rufous Woodpecker <i>Micropternus brachyurus</i>	This is a common bird and we heard it frequently but we had to struggle to get decent views. We did in the end, at Bondla.

Peregrine Falcon <i>Falco peregrinus</i>	One bird perched on a bridge on the Zuari river trip, later seen dismembering a pigeon
Vernal Hanging-Parrot <i>Loriculus vernalis</i>	Easy to see at Nature's Nest where they feed on the pink acacias and gather just after sun-up on a bare tree near the entrance. Also seen elsewhere, usually in the vicinity of a flowering tree.
Alexandrine Parakeet <i>Psittacula eupatria</i>	Fly-over birds, which sometimes perched up in palms, seen from the field opposite the Marinha Dourada.
Rose-ringed Parakeet <i>Psittacula krameri</i>	Fly-over birds seen from the field opposite the Marinha Dourada.
Plum-headed Parakeet <i>Psittacula cyanocephala</i>	One male bird seen really well at Baga Hill competing for a hole in a dead palm tree with a White-cheeked Barbet. Also seen at flowering trees in farmland near the forest
Malabar Parakeet <i>Psittacula columboides</i>	The blue collar on the male is a truly remarkable colour. Flying birds were easy to see, perched less so. The best spots were open areas near the forest.
Indian Pitta <i>Pitta brachyura</i>	We had excellent view of this birds with Ramesh. We stopped the car in the late afternoon and walked along a road bordered by rather scruffy bushes. He soon found his target and we had excellent views under the bushes and then right out in the open.
Bar-winged Flycatcher-Shrike <i>Hemipus picatus</i>	Birds seen at Arpora woods and at Backwoods.
Malabar Woodshrike <i>Tephrodornis sylvicola</i>	Seen in the forest, once with Ramesh and once with Loven.
Common Woodshrike <i>Tephrodornis pondicerianus</i>	Seen a number of times in all types of forest
Ashy Woodswallow <i>Artamus fuscus</i>	Several pairs of birds seen in open areas near forest
Common Iora <i>Aegithina tiphia</i>	A common bird in forests such as Arpora
Black-headed Cuckooshrike <i>Lalage melanoptera</i>	Seen a couple of times in the forest
Small Minivet <i>Pericrocotus cinnamomeus</i>	Seen several times in the forest and at the forest edge
Scarlet Minivet <i>Pericrocotus flammeus</i>	Seen several times in the forest and at the forest edge
Brown Shrike <i>Lanius cristatus</i>	Seen once or twice in open areas
Bay-backed Shrike <i>Lanius vittatus</i>	A very smart bird seen on the Pilerne plateau
Long-tailed Shrike <i>Lanius schach</i>	Seen quite commonly on wires and posts
Indian Golden Oriole <i>Oriolus kundoo</i>	Seen in several locations including Baga Hill. Easy to misidentify as a Black-naped Oriole as it has a large black line through the eye.
Black-naped Oriole <i>Oriolus chinensis</i>	One bird seen in at Arpora attracted to the Jungle Owlet. The first Rayman had seen this year.
Black-hooded Oriole <i>Oriolus xanthornus</i>	Seen quite often in feeding flocks.
Black Drongo <i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>	Common.
Ashy Drongo <i>Dicrurus leucophaeus</i>	Quite common.
White-bellied Drongo <i>Dicrurus caerulescens</i>	Only seen a couple of times in varying places
Bronzed Drongo <i>Dicrurus aeneus</i>	In clearings in the forest
Hair-crested Drongo <i>Dicrurus hottentottus</i>	Only seen at couple of times in the forest
Greater Racket-tailed Drongo <i>Dicrurus paradiseus</i>	Quite common in the forest often with feeding flocks
White-spotted Fantail <i>Rhipidura albigularis</i>	Hard to get a good view of this bird as it whizzes around in circles but the white throat and lack of wing-spots are good field marks. Always in bushy places, e.g. Arpora

Black-naped Monarch <i>Hypothymis azurea</i>	A lovely blue colour and quite noisy. Often in feeding flocks and seen quite commonly in the forest.
Asian Paradise Flycatcher <i>Terpsiphone paradisi</i>	Seen about once per day in forest everywhere.
Rufous Treepie <i>Dendrocitta vagabunda</i>	Seen a few times perched up on trees but not common.
House Crow <i>Corvus splendens</i>	Common
Indian Jungle Crow <i>Corvus culminatus</i>	Seen in the forest - not particularly common
Oriental Skylark <i>Alauda gulgula</i>	One seen (singing) with the Malabar Larks on the Pilerne plateau
Malabar Lark <i>Galerida malabarica</i>	This bird really gave us the run around. No sign of it at Baga fields or on the many fields near Mayem Lake. We eventually found it with Lloyd at Pilerne plateau where 2 pairs were calling, feeding and showing very well.
Greater Short-toed Lark <i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>	We found this bird several times e.g. at Baga fields, in the coach wash area at Arpora
Grey-headed Bulbul <i>Pycnonotus priocephalus</i>	On our first morning at Baga Hill I thought I saw this bird sitting quietly in some creepers near a noisy feeding tree. A few days later we saw a pair inside some scrub between building sites at the same place. Then two birds came right out in the open in order to mob the Jungle Owlet at Arpora. We also heard it in the forest but it would never come out. It is always in really dense stuff.
Flame-throated Bulbul <i>Pycnonotus gularis</i>	A very attractive bird that we did not see often. We had good views of a perched bird in a bare tree on our first visit to the temple and saw it at the bird bath at Backwoods.
Red-whiskered Bulbul <i>Pycnonotus jocosus</i>	Common
Red-vented Bulbul <i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>	Quite common
White-browed Bulbul <i>Pycnonotus luteolus</i>	Seen about 5 times, usually in quite bushy habitat in open areas
Yellow-browed Bulbul <i>Acritillas indica</i>	Small parties in the forest but not common
Square-tailed Black Bulbul <i>Hypsipetes ganeesa</i>	Often seen flying over, we eventually had a good perched view
Barn Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Common
Wire-tailed Swallow <i>Hirundo smithii</i>	Easy to see near rivers
Dusky Crag Martin <i>Ptyonoprogne concolor</i>	Seen several times in mixed hirundine flocks
Eurasian Crag Martin	Seen once in a mixed hirundine flock
Common House Martin <i>Delichon urbicum</i>	Seen once in a mixed hirundine flock
Red-rumped Swallow <i>Cecropis daurica</i>	Common
Streak-throated Swallow <i>Petrochelidon fluvicola</i>	Two birds in a mixed hirundine flock at Mayem Lake
Green Warbler (Bright-green W) <i>Phylloscopus nitidus</i>	One seen in Bondla forest
Western Crowned Warbler <i>Phylloscopus occipitalis</i>	Common at Backwoods and at Bondla forest often in mixed feeding flocks
Indian Reed Warbler <i>Acrocephalus stentorius brunnescens</i>	Two birds seen on the Zuari river trip
Blyth's Reed Warbler <i>Acrocephalus dumetorum</i>	A common bird - the "chek" call gives it away - our first was seen in a small bush in the hotel grounds.
Sykes's Warbler <i>Iduna rama</i>	Seen at Mayem Lake and one other location

Zitting Cisticola <i>Cisticola juncidis</i>	Two birds on a wire in the early morning by a wet field near the hotel
Grey-breasted Prinia <i>Prinia hodgsonii</i>	Seen in noisy groups in bushes in open areas. There was usually only one fully plumaged male in the group to help identify them. They are very un-prinia like with short tails.
Ashy Prinia <i>Prinia socialis</i>	A smart bird with creamy-buff underparts. Pairs in bushes in open areas.
Plain Prinia <i>Prinia inornata</i>	Only a couple of these seen, and always with other prinias.
Common Tailorbird <i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>	A few seen in various places.
Tawny-bellied Babbler <i>Dumetia hyperythra</i>	Small noisy groups moving at speed through the undergrowth were seen near Backwoods several times and then mobbing the Jungle Owlet at Arpora.
Dark-fronted Babbler <i>Rhopocichla atriceps</i>	Seen quite often creeping through small bushes at the edge of the forest
Brown-cheeked Fulvetta <i>Alcippe poiocephala</i>	A poorly named bird - in Goa it has grey cheeks. A forest bird, often in mixed flocks and also comes to the Backwoods bird bath. Has a nice song. We saw it several times.
Puff-throated Babbler <i>Pellorneum ruficeps</i>	Pairs would creep along the ground at the forest edge. Seen in the forest proper and also at Baga Hills and Arpora.
Jungle Babbler <i>Turdoides striata</i>	Noisy groups seen a couple of times in forest edge habitat.
Asian Fairy-Bluebird <i>Irena puella</i>	Pairs seen quite often in the forest.
Velvet-fronted Nuthatch <i>Sitta frontalis</i>	Seen several times always with feeding flocks in the forest .e.g. Bondla and Backwoods
Jungle Myna <i>Acridotheres fuscus</i>	The common myna at the coast
Common Myna <i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	Not so common - pairs would sometimes be found with Jungle Mynas or associating with cattle
Chestnut-tailed Starling <i>Sturnia malabarica</i>	Always in flocks feeding on flowering and fruiting trees
Malabar Starling <i>Sturnia malabarica ss blythii</i>	Quite different from Chestnut-tailed, with a really white head. In pairs in trees in open areas in the forest.
Rosy Starling <i>Pastor roseus</i>	Always in flocks feeding on flowering and fruiting trees
Orange-headed Thrush <i>Geokichla citrina</i>	Really quite common poking around on the forest floor at Backwoods, Bondla at Tambdi Surla
Indian Blackbird <i>Turdus simillimus</i>	We kept missing this shy and retiring bird but Loven managed to find some for us on our last morning at Backwoods, all in the vicinity of the side road to the temple outside Bondla.
Indian Robin <i>Copsychus fulvicatus</i>	Several birds seem in open areas with trees
Oriental Magpie-Robin <i>Copsychus saularis</i>	Common, the first and last songster of the day
White-rumped Shama <i>Copsychus malabaricus</i>	Seen just twice, once at the Backwoods water bath
Asian Brown Flycatcher <i>Muscicapa dauurica</i>	Seen a few time in open areas e.g. at Tambdi Surla temple
Brown-breasted Flycatcher <i>Muscicapa muttui</i>	Seen a few times near water
White-bellied Blue Flycatcher <i>Cyornis pallipes</i>	A walk through some forest one afternoon produced hardly any birds but it did produce this one - a cracking male - and it was not near water. Loven said they just need thick green foliage.
Tickell's Blue Flycatcher <i>Cyornis tickelliae</i>	Quite common - even in the gardens at Baga Hill

Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher <i>Culicicapa ceylonensis</i>	Seen several times in feeding flocks
Malabar Whistling Thrush <i>Myophonus horsfieldii</i>	What an amazing bird when seen in the sunshine! Seen and heard quite often in dry river beds in the forest and at Backwoods camp where one spent a whole minute washing in the water bath.
Taiga Flycatcher (Red-throated F) <i>Ficedula albicilla</i>	Two good views of this bird, the best at the Pilerne plateau.
Blue-capped Rock Thrush <i>Monticola cinclorhynchus</i>	Standing and waiting in the parking area near the bungalows at the top end of Bondla paid dividends - the thrush appeared and very smart it is too.
Blue Rock Thrush <i>Monticola solitarius</i>	One seen at Fort Aguada
Siberian Stonechat <i>Saxicola maurus</i>	Seen in open areas and fields several times
Pied Bush Chat (P Stonechat) <i>Saxicola caprata</i>	Seen in open areas and fields quite frequently
Jerdon's Leafbird <i>Chloropsis jerdoni</i>	Not as common as the next species but seen a number of times on flowering trees in open areas near the forest. The female has an attractive blue throat.
Golden-fronted Leafbird <i>Chloropsis aurifrons</i>	Seen a number of times on flowering trees in open areas near the forest
Thick-billed Flowerpecker <i>Dicaeum agile</i>	Seen in a number of locations
Pale-billed Flowerpecker <i>Dicaeum erythrorhynchus</i>	Only seen once at the Pilerne plateau
Nilgiri Flowerpecker <i>Dicaeum concolor</i>	The most frequently seen flowerpecker though we didn't find it very distinctive
Purple-rumped Sunbird <i>Leptocoma zeylonica</i>	The common lowland sunbird.
Crimson-backed Sunbird <i>Leptocoma minima</i>	Very common at Nature's Nest on the pink acacias and also they came to the bird bath at Backwoods. Not easy to see elsewhere.
Purple Sunbird <i>Cinnyris asiaticus</i>	Quite common
Loten's Sunbird <i>Cinnyris lotenius</i>	Seen once in several locations. A territorial male near the front gate at Nature's Nest.
Vigors's Sunbird <i>Aethopyga vigorsii</i>	One stunning male seen amongst the houses at bottom of Baga Hill.
Little Spiderhunter <i>Arachnothera longirostris</i>	Common at Nature's Nest but seen elsewhere e.g. Arpora forest
Chestnut-shouldered Petronia <i>Gymnoris xanthocollis</i>	Seen several time in edge-of-forest habitat
Baya Weaver <i>Ploceus philippinus</i>	Small groups seen near Mayem Lake and Carambolim
Streaked Weaver <i>Ploceus manyar</i>	A flock at Carambolim rice fields
White-rumped Munia <i>Lonchura striata</i>	Small flocks in a few places
Scaly-breasted Munia <i>Lonchura punctulata</i>	Small flocks in a few places
Tricolored Munia <i>Lonchura malacca</i>	Seen once in Arpora
Forest Wagtail <i>Dendronanthus indicus</i>	Good views at Tambdi Surla temple
Grey-headed Wagtail <i>Motacilla flava</i>	Carambolim rice fields
Grey Wagtail <i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	Seen several time near forest streams
White-browed Wagtail <i>Motacilla madaraspatensis</i>	Common
Paddyfield Pipit <i>Anthus rufulus</i>	The common pipit in the fields e.g. around the Baga area

Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii*

Rayman amazingly found this while driving and it helpfully was walking around with a Paddyfield Pipit to allow comparison. The Blyth's was definitely bigger and paler but we would have struggled with the ID. In the book they look virtually identical.

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*

One seen in Arpora

Lifers are marked in red

MAMMALS and other things

Indian Giant Squirrel

Three-striped Palm Squirrel

Indian Grey Mongoose

Indian Flying Fox

Black-faced Langur

Bonnet Macaque

Eurasian Wild Boar

Chital

Gaur

Grey Hare

Sawscale Viper

Mugger crocodile