

MANILA – UTTARAKHAND

A trip report

Some one-hundred kilometres from Ramnagar, Uttarakhand, via Marchula, is Manila (29°44.670'N – 079°11.847'E – Altitude 1797m). The place has a few private houses besides the KMVN Tourist Lodges, one new and one old (both KMVN tourist lodges have since been closed down). The old one is better situated and its room number four is recommended. We stayed in room four. It was in a corner, had good view and from its slip of a veranda we did bird watching when not exploring the place. The caretaker provided us with meals – very basic – during the time we stayed at the tourist lodge. We reached the place from Ramnagar by public transport with a tea-break at Marchula.

Manila has no shops not even a *paan* shop. We were in need of some glue for which we had to walk about two kilometres where there were shops selling such items as are required by people. Manila is quiet, green and has lots of *chir* pine and not much vehicular traffic which made walking pleasant. The pine trees are tapped for resin because we saw many canisters filled with it in the compound of the forest bungalow.

Our next destination was Maheshkhan via Bhowali. Before we left home we had spoken to the Divisional Forest Officer, Nainital, applied by email for accommodation at the Maheshkhan old FRH, which was never acknowledged. However, we spoke to DFO's office and whoever received the call asked us to come over because a room will be available for us. All this happened sometime before we left Calcutta. However, when we telephoned the DFO's office before we left Manila – just to confirm – we were in for a rude shock. We were told there was no booking in our name and no room could be provided because the place was full on the days that we wanted to be there. They do not acknowledge your application, they do not discourage you to come when you speak to them, and they give you the idea that everything is hunky-dory and give the impression that there will be no problems when you arrive. Yet in the end they turn you away just before you are leaving for the place.

We could not extend our stay at Manila. Therefore, we went to Barapathar, near Nainital (4km), to stay at Van Niwas, Sri Aurobindo Ashram. We had spoken to Nalinji, who is in charge, before we arrived and he very kindly asked us to come over and allocated room F9 where we stayed on an earlier occasion. This room is in a corner and you can see a good deal of the surrounding area from its windows. A school from Delhi was holding a nature camp at the campus. The place though trifle isolated from the main thoroughfare did not seem desolate the days the participants were there. They left before us and with their departure the behaviour of the kitchen changed. When we released they were not inclined to serve food for two people, we left for Kaladhungi, which is not very far from Barapathar.

The KMVN lodge at Kaladhungi is close to Corbett Museum on Nainital Road. This road is good for perambulation vis-à-vis bird watching. You can explore the *sal* forest; walk the road scanning both sides for birds. You can go straight ahead for about 100 metres to reach a path which will take you to Boar River where, on an earlier visit, we found pugmarks of tiger on its bank. However, you have to be on the look out for elephant because they do frequent the area. Besides, you can take the road on the left of the lodge, walk some distance past the forest bungalow and gain the path that runs parallel to a fast flowing canal. The bird life of the area did not disappoint us.

A walk along the Kota Road will not be a bad idea. A short distance from the lodge is the Boar Bridge. After you cross the bridge, the first turning right is the Kota Road. There isn't much vehicular traffic nor are there people moving about. The jungle on the left of the road made us a bit uneasy because of the sneaking feeling it may harbour not very friendly animals. On the right is scrub jungle that extends up to the river where very few people may be seen. After walking some distance towards Powalgarh we turned back. After spending three very pleasant days at Kaladhungi we left for home.

1=Manila; 2=Barapathar; 3=Kaladhungi

Sr. No.	Common Name	Scientific Name	1	2	3
1.	Hill Partridge	<i>Arborophila torqueola</i>		+	
2.	Shikra	<i>Accipiter badius</i>		+	
3.	Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>		+	
4.	Common Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	+		
5.	Oriental Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia orientalis</i>	+	+	
6.	Spotted Dove	<i>Stigmatopelia chinensis</i>	+		+
7.	Rose-ringed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>			+
8.	Plum-headed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula cyanocephala</i>			+
9.	Greater Coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>			+
10.	Asian Barred Owlet	<i>Glaucidium cuculoides</i>	+		+
11.	Jungle Owlet	<i>Glaucidium radiatum*</i>			+
12.	Brown Wood Owl	<i>Strix leptogrammica*</i>		+	
13.	Chestnut-headed Bee-eater	<i>Merops leschenaulti</i>			+
14.	Indian Grey Hornbill	<i>Ocyrceros birostris</i>			+
15.	Great Barbet	<i>Megalaima virens</i>	+		
16.	Lineated Barbet	<i>Megalaima lineata</i>			+
17.	Blue-throated Barbet	<i>Megalaima asiatica</i>		+	
18.	Speckled Piculet	<i>Picumnus innominatus</i>		+	
19.	Rufous-bellied Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos hyperythrus</i>	+		
20.	Fulvous-breasted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos macei</i>	+		
21.	Himalayan Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos himalayensis</i>	+		+
22.	Yellow-crowned Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos mahrattensis</i>	+	+	
23.	Lesser Yellownape	<i>Picus chlorolophus</i>	+		
24.	Streaked-throated Woodpecker	<i>Picus xanthopygaeus</i>	+		
25.	Grey-headed Woodpecker	<i>Picus canus</i>		+	
26.	Lesser Goldenback	<i>Dinopium benghalense</i>			+
27.	White-naped Woodpecker ²	<i>Chrysocolaptes festivus</i>		+	
28.	Long-tailed Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus ethologus</i>	+	+	
29.	Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus remifer</i>	+		
30.	Spangled Drongo	<i>Dicrurus hottentottus</i>			+
31.	Black Drongo	<i>Dicurus marrocercus</i>			+
32.	Ashy Drongo	<i>Dicurus leucophaeus</i>	+		+
33.	White-throated Fantail	<i>Rhipidura albicollis</i>	+		+
34.	White-browed Fantail	<i>Rhipidura aureola</i>		+	
35.	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>		+	
36.	Black-headed Jay ²	<i>Garrulus lanceolatus</i>	+		
37.	Yellow-bill Blue Magpie	<i>Urosissa flavirostris</i>		+	
38.	Rufous Treepie	<i>Dendrocitta vagabunda</i>			+
39.	Grey Treepie	<i>Dendrocitta formosae</i>	+		
40.	Large-billed Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>	+	+	+
41.	House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>			+
42.	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	+	+	+
43.	Green-backed Tit	<i>Parus monticolus</i>	+	+	+
44.	Black-lored Tit	<i>Parus xanthogenys</i>	+	+	
45.	Rufous-vented Tit	<i>Periparus rubidiventris</i>	+		
46.	Black-throated Tit	<i>Aegithalos concinnus</i>	+	+	
47.	Himalayan Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus leucogenys</i>	+		

48.	Red-whiskered Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus jacosus</i>			+
49.	Red-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>			+
50.	Black Bulbul	<i>Hypsipetes leucocephalus</i>	+		
51.	Grey-breasted Prinia	<i>Prinia hodgsonii</i>			+
52.	Common Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>			+
53.	Yellow-browed Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus inornatus</i>	+	+	+
54.	Western Crowned Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus occipitalis</i>	+	+	
55.	Black-faced Warbler	<i>Abroscopus schisticeps</i>		+	
56.	Grey-hooded Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus xanthoschistos</i>	+	+	
57.	Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>	+		
58.	Black-chinned Babbler	<i>Stachyridopsis pyrrhops</i>	+		+
59.	Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler	<i>Pomatorhinus erythrogonis</i>		+	
60.	White-browed Scimitar Babbler	<i>Pomatorhinus schisticeps*</i>		+	
61.	Jungle Babbler	<i>Turdoides striata</i>			+
62.	White-throated Laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax albogularis</i>	+	+	
63.	Streaked Laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax lineatus</i>	+	+	
64.	Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax erythrocephalus</i>		+	
65.	Blue-winged Siva	<i>Siva cyanouroptera</i>		+	
66.	White-browed Shrike-babbler ¹	<i>Pteruthius flaviscapis</i>	+		
67.	Rufous Sibia	<i>Malacias capistratus</i>		+	
68.	Whiskered Yuhina	<i>Yuhina flavicollis</i>		+	
69.	Oriental White-eye	<i>Zosterops palpebrosus</i>			+
70.	Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch	<i>Sitta cinnamoventris</i>	+		
71.	White-tailed Nuthatch	<i>Sitta himalayensis</i>	+	+	+
72.	Bar-tailed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia himalayana</i>	+	+	
73.	Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	+		+
74.	Blue Whistling Thrush	<i>Myophonus caeruleus</i>	+	+	+
75.	Plain-backed Thrush	<i>Zoothera mollissima</i>	+		
76.	Grey-winged Blackbird	<i>Turdus boulboul</i>		+	
77.	Tickell's Thrush	<i>Turdus unicolor</i>		+	
78.	Chestnut Thrush	<i>Turdus rubrocanus</i>		+	
79.	Spotted Forktail ²	<i>Enicurus maculatus</i>			
80.	Grey Bushchat	<i>Saxicola ferreus</i>	+		
81.	Blue Rock Chat	<i>Cercomela fusca</i>			+
82.	Blue-capped Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola sinclorhynchus</i>	+		
83.	Dark-sided Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa sibirica</i>	+		
84.	Red-breasted Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula parva</i>		+	
85.	Ultramarine Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula superciliaris</i>		+	
86.	Verditer Flycatcher	<i>Eumyias thalassinus</i>		+	+
87.	Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher	<i>Culicicapa ceylonensis</i>	+	+	+
88.	Rufous-bellied Niltava	<i>Niltava sundara</i>		+	
89.	Golden-fronted Leafbird	<i>Chloropsis aurifrons</i>			+
90.	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>			+
91.	Russet Sparrow	<i>Passer rutilans</i>	+		
92.	Scaly-breasted Munia	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>			+
93.	Yellow-breasted Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis spinoides</i>	+		

Checklist courtesy Dr Suchitra Ghosh

*Recorded based on call

¹ Seen at Kilbury

² Seen on the way to Pangot