

Tour Report

Birding in Kewzing and surrounding forest of South and West Sikkim with Lava (N.Begal)

Prepared by **Chewang Bonpo**

Date: 18th October 2010 to 22nd October 2010

Place of Stay: Bon Farmhouse, Kewzing village, South Sikkim

Team Members: Dr. Kshounish Sarkar Ray, Arka Sarkar & Prosenjit Singha Deo

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Acknowledgement

I would like to thank **Dr. Kshounish Sarkar Ray, Arka Sarkar** and **Prof. Prosenjit Singha Deo** for choosing Kewzing as their birdwatching holiday destination and staying in Bon Farmhouse. I admire their high spirits in climbing up the Maenam hill and patience for birds. I will never forget the good moments of the tour we all had.

Lastly to Mother Nature for giving us good weather in between rainy days and to the beautiful birds that we managed to see.



View form Kewzing

Day to Day Report

Day 1: 18th October 2010

After the group landed up in Siliguri from Kolkata in Volvo bus we drove from Siliguri to Kewzing via Namchi and as we reached Damthang Tendong forest we stopped near the 'Gaonthealy Bhir' for a quick birding for the day. We heard the calls of birds like *Streak-breasted Scimitar Babbler*, *Rufous winged Fulvetta* and *Slender-Billed Scimitar Babbler* but as it was raining we decided to drive straight to Kewzing.

On reaching the farmhouse and getting settled down, we decided to bird in the surrounding forest of the Farmhouse. We straight away headed to check out the area of *White-Gorgeted Flycatcher* but were in vain and so we moved further where we heard the call of *Forest Eagle Owl*, we waited patiently in the village road and on scanning the forest below us I spotted a *Brown Wood Owl* sitting on the dead branch and staring at us, I exclaimed Owl! I could see everyone in the group was trying to find the direction and on seeing the bird Dr. Kshounish and Arka busy aiming and clicking their camera while Prosenjit patiently taking a video recording of the Owl.

After a good start we were energised with high spirits and again tried for the flycatcher and this time responded well and we managed to see the bird. We also had a brief view of *Nepal Fulvetta* that popped out of the bush and dashed into other.

Day 2: 19th October 2010

The day started about five in the morning for serious birders, birding in the surrounding forest of Farmhouse where we had a good sighting of two male and one female *Small Niltava* which have been residing in forest surrounding the Farmhouse and a mixed flock of *Red tailed Minlas*, *Blue Winged Minlas*, *Green backed Tits*, *Whiskered Yuhinas* and *White-bellied Yuhina* along with *Brown throated Treecreeper*.

After the flock passed on we moved towards the Farmhouse private forest especially to look out for *Brown Wood Owl* while keeping an eye on Kalij Pheasants which are usually found crossing the path early mornings. As we were walking in the path we heard a couple of *Nepal Fulvetta* calling from the bushes uphill. I tried for the *Pygmy Wren Babbler* which came in very close but was difficult for us in seeing the bird while for Prosenjit it was easy to capture a good video recording of the bird.

As we reached the area I started to scan out every tree climbing uphill in the forest while other team member waited in the path, as I approached the Bamboo forest patch I saw the bird perched low in the tree surrounded by Bamboo and on my signal to the group everyone was there walking in their four legs to photograph the interesting bird.

We moved back to the village road after we had enough of good views of the Owl to see more birds towards the place of *White-Gorgeted Flycatcher* and the first bird to greet us was *Little Pied Flycatcher* two males chasing each other. As we returned towards the farmhouse for breakfast we had a close good view of *Fire-Breasted Flowerpecker* of which Arka managed to take a good photo of the bird.

After Breakfast we decided to bird watch along the Village road to Doling Monastery. The afternoon was silent with only few active birds like Chestnut-crowned Warblers, Ashy throated Warblers, Blyth's leaf Warblers, a flock of Black Bulbul and Grey Treepie. As we came close to Doling Monastery we decided to have rest in the cremation area of the monastery. As we were having our lunch ,I heard a call that went "tit----tit" which reminded me of Pygmy Blue flycatcher so we slowly moved towards the sound during which Arka claimed to had a good view of Mrs Gould's Sunbird and Green tailed Sunbird , As we approached the path going uphill to the main highway the bird stopped calling so we were wondering among woods to find the bird meanwhile Arka who was at a distances of few meters signalled us and exclaimed 'Snowy browed flycatcher' on hearing it we slowly moved towards Arka and saw the bird sitting about few meters form us in a bush. The bird sat down there for ages while we satisfied ourselves with the good view, good photos and videos.

We decided to move towards Kewzing taking the old path that goes right through the dense forest so as to make it to the Farmhouse in time in order to avoid the rain, we hardly stopped for any birds as we heard the loud Thunder. We reached the first house of Kewzing village where we took shelter form the rain.



Snowy-browed Flycatcher -Male in Doling Monastery

Day 3: 20th October 2010

The day started about three o'clock in the morning for the ambitious trek to Maenam WLS but due to some lack of energy in our group members we started about five o'clock but still were the first to enter the sanctuary. As my brother Sonam was doing the entry for us we were watching a flock of birds in the cherry tree of which the interesting was the **Fire-tailed Sunbird** eclipse male of which Dr. Kshounish managed to take a good photo of the bird.

As we started our walk inside the sanctuary we decide among ourselves to take our own time to reach the top of the hill. The first bird we encountered inside the sanctuary was a flock of **Black faced Warbler** followed by **Rusty-Fronted Barwings**, as we were watching the Barwings I heard **Rufous-throated Wren Babbler** calling from the bushes above the hill so trying for the bird, the bird came right in front of us but was able to see the bird in bit and pieces in the thick vegetation.

We had some rest in the end of the horizontal path where I heard **White-browed Shortwing** and as I was trying for the bird someone among the group called me from the back as I turned around, Prosenjit who was looking at that direction saw the bird flying from one bush to other of which he was sure to be **Lesser Shortwing**.

We started our uphill climb towards the hill much slowly in our own pace, we approached the dense cherry bushes covering almost the entire path where we had a good sighting of **White-browed Fulvetta** moving in such bushes. As we were watching the flock of **Yellow-browed tit**, few **Green-tailed Sunbirds** I heard a faint call coming from the tall tree and scanning the tree I saw a pair of **Fire-tailed Myzornis** moving along the branches of a tall oak tree for which it took me a couple of moment to spot it to the group as it was moving fast in the tree, Later that day we all had good view of the bird feeding on a small tree. As we approached the first trekker's hut as Dr. Kshounish and I was in the front we had a good view of **Golden Bush Robin** chattering in the bush in front of us.

The forest was slowly becoming silent as we moved further uphill and noise trekkers along the path made birding hard for us. Later that day we had a good view of **Hoary throated Barwing**, **Slender billed Scimitar Babbler**, **Rusty Flanked Treecreeper** and **Darjeeling woodpecker**. We decided to return back from few kilometres of the top as it was raining and misty on the top. On our descent from the top we hardly did any birding. As we approached the first trekkers hut there was some sunshine so we decided to have some rest, meanwhile I heard the call of **Scarlet Finch** and on scanning, a beautiful male was sitting in the bare tree about half a kilometres away from us (like Prosenjit commented "it is scoring another goal in extra time), since we did not have any chance for photo we satisfied ourselves with good view from binoculars.

We came out from the sanctuary just before dark.

Day 4: 21st October 2010

The day started for us about six in the morning as we required some rest from the tiring climb to Maenam hill, the day was easy birding in the Ranjit valley combined with Tashiding forest. After our breakfast in the farmhouse we drove towards Ranjit River and our first stop was made just few kilometres from Kewzing market by a flock of about twenty **Scarlet Minivets**, a pair of **White-browed Shrike Babbler**, a pair of **Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch**, few **Spangled Drongos** with a couple of **Himalayan Bulbul**.

We decided to have a straight drive towards Tashiding where we made a first stop in a bamboo mixed forest and started to look out for some Himalayan foothill species. We were slowly getting disappointed as we started our walk in the silent forest, we approached a place near the curve where there was a good shelter from the harsh sunlight, we waited for a long time in the shed trying for **Sultan Tit** which was calling at a distance, as we had just given our hope and walked towards the vehicle, a pair of Sultan Tits came right on the top of the tree where we were taking our shelter and stayed in one of the branch preening and calling at times it was the moment everyone in the group was waiting. As we were all watching the birds there was a flock of **Spangled Drongos**, about **five White-browed Shrike Babbler** with a pair of **Black headed Shrike Babbler**, **Orange bellied leafbird** followed by **Rufous Woodpecker** and few species of warblers (We had no time to identify the Warblers) came right below the road, It happened so suddenly that we were all busy telling direction and species with lot of confusions among ourselves as most of us didn't wanted to miss any species, that was the birding we wanted to experience!

As the flock passed on we decide to have a rest and calm ourselves with some tea and snacks. After our rest we moved upwards to bird in some shady area of the forest as the day was very warm. We got down in patch of the forest with tall trees where we sighted **Ashy Bulbul** in one of the trees followed by **White-bellied Yuhina**, **Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch** and **Yellow vented Warbler**. As we started to move down hill we had good views of a pair of **Green tailed Sunbirds** followed by a female **Blue-capped Rockthrush** and a pair of **Yellow-bellied Warblers** in the Bamboo patch. We also heard the call of **Abbot's Babbler** and **Puff Throated Babbler**.

We decided to move down the bridge to the river to get some water birds(since all of them was eager for Crested Kingfisher), As we were scanned the river from the bridge, Dr Kshounish heard the call of the **Crested Kingfisher** and simultaneously we saw the bird flying from under the bridge and later landed on the small dead tree on the south district bank of Sikkim, so we decided to move down the river to have better views, as we approach the bank of the river we split ourselves looking for the Kingfisher which had moved from the tree.

Prosenjit and I were together while Arka had gone bit lower near the bridge. As we were near the river we saw a **Brown Dipper** flying upstream and **Little forktail** in the middle of the river while I was conveying directions to Prosenjit, a bird that looked like River Lapwing flew upstream when I looked at the bird from by binocular it was **Ibisbil** (later learnt to be flushed by Arka), We found out the place where it had perched after lot of scanning and thus we were able to have good views, good photograph and good video recording of the bird.

The day got over with a local birding around the Farmhouse.

Day 5: 22nd October 2010

The last day of the tour and the group were all disappointed to leave Kewzing after seeing so many special birds, the day started with a down pour of rain so we decided to bird from the veranda of the cottage. The first species that was calling close to the cottage was Small Niltava followed by a pair of **Grey-throated Babbler** that came very close which Dr. Kshounish was busy photographing from the window of the cottage.

After the rain stopped there was mixed flock of birds that came in the cherry trees outside the cottage in the lawn of the farmhouse. The mixed flock consisted of **Red tailed and Blue Winged Minlas, White-bellied Yuhinas, Grey hooded Warblers, Chestnut crowned Warblers, Brown throated Tree creeper and Green Backed Tits.**

We started heading towards Siliguri at about eleven in the morning and made few stop near Damthang to look out for Nepal house Martin Nest's in the cliff followed by the last view of a pair of **Fire-tailed Myzornis** and a male **Chestnut-bellied Rockthrush.**

As decided earlier Arkar and I bit farewell to Dr. Kshounish and Prosenjit at Chitray and headed towards Lava for birding, all the arrangements of the stay was done by Arkar himself so we landed up in Reshab at seven in the night in a hotel which was one of the worst nightmare experiences for us with the room very small and tourist in the next door singing all night.

Day 6: 23rd October 2010

After a nightmare experiences we started our day about five in the morning heading towards the 9th mile roads from Reshab, It took us a lot of time and wondering around the hotels to find the proper path as each time we took the narrow path we landed up in door step of a hotel in this mean time we had a very good views of **Streak-breasted Scimitar Babbler** and **Rusty checked scimitar Babbler** near a hotel.

We started to head towards the 9th mile Road and after an hour walk found some decent forest to bird watch where we had a good view of three **Sapphire Flycatchers** and a mixed flock of **Whiskered Yuhinas & Stripe throated Yuhinas.** As we went deep in the forest I heard a flock of **Himalayan Cutia** calling from far trees and on my trying for the bird a flock of about five birds landed in the tall tree near us which Arka were able to photograph it well.

Later that day we had a small break in Lava town and headed towards Sherpa village to look out for **Long billed Wren Babbler** which I had recorded two years before. As we started to walk the path, the forest was very silent and the only bird we saw was a **Black Eagle** flying very low among the trees. As I pushed on myself trying for the bird Arka was becoming impatience. After half an hour trying in one of the gully which to me looked promising the bird responded and we saw the bird very well while Arka took a fairly good photograph of the bird. After the mission got accomplish I was in no mood for birding anymore so Arka did some birding in Lava Alghara while I had some rest on the road in the evening and spend the night in Lava.



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Ibisbill-Bird of the Tour



Sultan Tit in Tashiding



Chiewang Bonpo

Brown wood Owl in Kewzing



List of birds that we seen in the Tour

SL.No	Species	Scientific name	Location	Remarks
	FALCONIFORMES:Accipitridae			
	Crested Serpent-Eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>	Kewzing	Seen flying low in Bakhim
	Black Eagle	<i>Ictinaetus malayensis</i>	Lava	Seen flying low b/w Trees
	GALLIFORMES: Phasianidae			
	Common Hill Partridge	<i>Arborophila torqueola</i>	Damthang	Heard at a Distance
	IBIDORHYNCHIDAE			
	Ibisbill	<i>Ibidoryncha struthersii</i>	Ranjit Valley	Seen well in the bank of t River
	COLUMBIFORMES:Columbidae			
	Rock Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	Ravangla,Kewzi ng	Everywhere in the Marke
	Speckled Wood-Pigeon	<i>Columba hodgsonii</i>	Lava	Seen flying b/w Reshab & Mile Road
	Oriental Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia orientalis</i>		
	Barred Cuckoo Dove	<i>Macropygia unchall</i>		
	PICIFORMES: Picidae			
	Rufous Woodpecker	<i>Celeus brachyurus</i>	Tashiding	Two bird with the Mixed in the Bamboo forest
	Bay Woodpecker	<i>Blythipicus pyrrhotis</i>	Maenam WLS	Heard in the evening
	Grey-Capped Pygmy Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos canicapillus</i>	Kewzing	Seen feeding and calling one of dead branch of a t near the farmhouse
	Grey-Headed Woodpecker	<i>Picus canus</i>	Kewzing	Seen both the sexes near Farmhouse
	Darjeeling Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos darjellensis</i>	Maenam WLS	Seen both the sexes
	Greater Yellownape	<i>Picus flavinucha</i>	Kewzing	Flying across the road to Doling Monastery
	Lesser Yellownape	<i>Picus chlorolophus</i>	Kewzing	Seen Perched near the farmhouse
	PICIFORMES: Capitonidae			
	Great Barbet	<i>Megalaima virens</i>	Kewzing	One seen well near the Kewzing Monastery and heard calling throughout tour
	Golden-throated Barbet	<i>Megalaima franklinii</i>	Lava	Heard one in Lava-Algara Road
	CORACIIFORMES:Alcedinidae			
	Crested Kingfisher	<i>Megaceryle lugubris</i>	Ranjit Valley	Heard calling and seen fly and perched on the bank the river
	PASSERIFORMES: Hirundinidae			
	Nepal House Martin		Tashiding	Seen Flying
	PASSERIFORMES:Montacillidae			
	Grey Wagtail	<i>Montacilla cinerea</i>		

	Olive Backed Pipit	<i>Anthus hodgsoni</i>		
	PASSERIFORMES: Campephagidae			
	Long tailed Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus ethologus</i>		
	Scarlet Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus speciosus</i>		
	PASSERIFORMES:Pycnonotide			
	Striated Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus striatus</i>		
	Red-Vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>		
	Ashy Bulbul	<i>Hemixos flavala</i>		
	Mountain Bulbul	<i>Ixos mcclllandii</i>		
	Himalayan Bulbul	<i>Hypsipetes leucocephalus</i>		
	Black Bulbul			
	PASSERIFORMES:Chloropseidae			
	Orange-bellied Leafbird	<i>Chloropsis hardwickii</i>		
	PASSERIFORMES:Cinclidae			
	Brown Dipper	<i>Cinclus pallasii</i>		
	PASSERIFORMES:Turdidae			
	Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola rufiventris</i>		
	Blue Whistling Thrush	<i>Myophonus caeruleus</i>		
	Grey-winged Blackbird	<i>Turdus boulboul</i>		
	Lesser Shortwing	<i>Brachypteryx leucophrys</i>		
	White-browed Shortwing	<i>Brachypteryx montana</i>		
	PASSERIFORMES:Sylviidae			
	Chestnut Headed Tesia	<i>Tesia castaneocoronata</i>		
	Grey-bellied Tesia	<i>Tesia cyaniventer</i>		
	Yellowish –Bellied Bush Warbler	<i>Cettia acanthizoides</i>		
	Common Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>		
	Tickell’s Leaf-Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus affinis</i>		

	Ashy-throated Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus maculipennis</i>		
	Blyth's Leaf Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus reguloides</i>		
	Yellow-vented Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus cantator</i>		
	Grey-Hooded Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus seicerus</i>		
	Golden Speckled Warbler	<i>Seicurus burkii</i>		
	Grey Cheeked Warbler	<i>Seicercus poliogenys</i>		
	Chestnut-crowned Warbler	<i>Seicercus castaniceps</i>		
	Yellow-bellied Warbler	<i>Abroscopus superciliaris</i>		
	Black-faced Warbler	<i>Abroscopus schisticeps</i>		
	PASSERIFORMES:Muscicapidae			
	Dark-sided Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa sibirica</i>		
	Snowy-browed Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hyperythra</i>		
	White-gorgeted Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula monileger</i>		
	Little Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula westermanni</i>		
	Sapphire Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula sapphira</i>		

	Verditer Flycatcher	<i>Eumyias thalassina</i>		
	Grey-headed Flycatcher	<i>Culicicapa ceylonensis</i>		
	Small Niltava	<i>Niltava macgrigoriae</i>		
	Large Niltava	<i>Niltava grandis</i>		
	Rufous bellied Niltava	<i>Niltava sundara</i>		
	Golden Bush Robin	<i>Tarsiger chrysaeus</i>		
	Plumbeous Redstart	<i>Rhyacornis fuliginosus</i>		
	Little Forktail	<i>Enicurnus scouleri</i>		
	Grey Bushchat	<i>Saxicola ferrea</i>		
	PASSERIFORMES:Rhipiduridae			
	Yellow-bellied Fantail	<i>Rhipidura hypoxantha</i>		
	White-throated Fantail	<i>Rhipidura albicollis</i>		
	PASSERIFORMES:Timaliidae			
	Bhutan Laughingthrush	<i>Trochalopteron imbricatum</i>		
	Scaly Laughingthrush	<i>Trochalopteron subunicolor</i>		

	Red Headed Laughingthrush	<i>Trochalopteron erythrocephalus</i>		
	Black-faced Laughingthrush	<i>Trochalopteron affinis</i>		
	Striated Laughingthrush	<i>Grammatoptila striata</i>		
	White-crested Laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax leucolophus</i>		
	Abbott's Babbler	<i>Malacocincla abbotti</i>		
	Puff-throated Babbler	<i>Pellorneum ruficeps</i>		
	Streak-breasted Scimitar Babbler	<i>Pomatorhinus ruficollis</i>		
	Slender-billed Scimitar Babbler	<i>Xiphirhynchus superciliaris</i>		
	Rusty checked Scimitar Babbler			
	Long-billed Wren Babbler	<i>Rimator malacoptilus</i>		
	Scaly-breasted Wren Babbler	<i>Pnoepyga albiventer</i>		
	Pygmy Wren Babbler	<i>Pnoepyga pusilla</i>		
	Rufous throated Wren Babbler	<i>Spelaeornis caudatus</i>		
	Spotted Wren Babbler	<i>Spelaeornis formosus</i>		
	Rufous capped Babbler	<i>Stachyris ruficeps</i>		

	Grey-throated Babbler	<i>Stachyris nigriceps</i>		
	Jungle Babbler			
	Red-billed Leiothrix	<i>Leiothrix lutea</i>		
	Himalayan Cutia	<i>Cutia nipalensis</i>		
	Black-Headed Shrike Babbler	<i>Pteruthius rufiventer</i>		
	White-browed Shrike Babbler	<i>Pteruthius flaviscapis</i>		
	Rusty-fronted Barwing	<i>Actinodura egertoni</i>		
	Hoary-throated Barwing	<i>Actinodura nipalensis</i>		
	Blue-winged Minla	<i>Minla cyanouropetera</i>		
	Chestnut-tailed Minla	<i>Minla strigula</i>		
	Red-tailed Minla	<i>Minla ignotincta</i>		
	Rufous-winged Fulvetta	<i>Alcippe castaneiceps</i>		
	White-browed Fulvetta	<i>Alcippe vinipectus</i>		
	Nepal Fulvetta	<i>Alcippe nipalensis</i>		
	Rufous Sibia	<i>Heterophasia capistrata</i>		

	Whiskered Yuhina	<i>Yuhina flavicollis</i>		
	Stripe-throated Yuhina	<i>Yuhina gularis</i>		
	Rufous-vented Yuhina	<i>Yuhina occipitalis</i>		
	Black-chinned Yuhina	<i>Yuhina nigrimenta</i>		
	White-bellied Yuhina	<i>Erpornis zantholeuca</i>		
	Fire-tailed Myzornis	<i>Myzornis pyrrhoura</i>		
	PASSERIFORMES:Aegithalidae			
	Black-throated Tit	<i>Aegithalos concinnus</i>		
	PASSERIFORMES:Paridae			
	Green-backed Tit	<i>Parus monticolus</i>		
	Yellow-browed Tit	<i>Parus modestus</i>		
	Sultan Tit	<i>Melanochlora sultanea</i>		
	PASSERIFORMES: Sittidae			
	Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch	<i>Sitta cinnamoventris</i>		
	White-tailed Nuthatch	<i>Sitta himalayensis</i>		

