



## **Goa: Sunbirds, Sea-Eagles and Sandplovers**

### **Day 1: Arrive Goa and transfer to Coastal North Goa Birding**

Most of the group will likely fly through Mumbai or Delhi before making connections to Goa. Once in Goa, we will drive north to the coastal resort of Arpora (1.5 hours).

We are likely to see a selection of common birds along the drive from the airport. Possibilities include Black Kite, Red-wattled Lapwing, Black Drongo, Green Bee-eater, White-throated Kingfisher, Eastern Cattle Egret, Little Egret and Indian Pond Heron.

We will spend six days birding in the mosaic of habitats found in this region. We will find a rich variation in habitat and vegetation ranging from dry grass, scrub and rocky plateaus to patches of mature woodland, together with tropical sandy beaches, rivers, mangrove-lined estuaries, tidal creeks, marshes, paddyfields, saltpans and lakes. This diversity endows this region of Goa with a wide assortment of both birds and butterflies that belies its small area.

We will begin exploring areas close to our hotel this first afternoon. Immediately surrounding Arpora is a sizeable stretch of dry fields. Key species include Blyth's Pipit, Paddyfield Pipit, Tawny Pipit, Olive-backed Pipit, Richard's Pipit, Citrine Wagtail, Western Yellow Wagtail, White-browed Wagtail, Malabar Lark, Rufous-tailed Lark, Bluethroat, Indian Robin, Scaly-breasted Munia, White-rumped Munia, Long-tailed Shrike, Bay-backed Shrike, Brown Shrike, Green Bee-eater, Blue-tailed Bee-eater, Eurasian Golden Oriole, Chestnut-tailed Starling, Brahminy Starling, Common Tailorbird, Indian Black-lored Tit, Purple Sunbird, Purple-rumped Sunbird, Vigor's Sunbird, Loten's Sunbird, Red-rumped Swallow, Wire-tailed Swallow, various raptors including Indian Spotted Eagle, Booted Eagle, Crested Serpent Eagle, Black Kite, Brahminy Kite, Pallid Harrier, Crested Goshawk, Shikra, Osprey and White-bellied Sea Eagle.

We will spend six nights in a comfortable hotel in the coastal resort of Arpora.

## **Days 2-6: Birding the various Coastal sites North Goa**

Over the next five days we will explore the coastal region of northern Goa. On most mornings we will set out after breakfast at our hotel, but we will take a packed breakfast on the days we make excursions further inland into the grasslands and scrub jungle of the central plateau. We can expect to see a good selection of birds during our stay here, from waterfowl to woodland species, including our first regional endemics.

From our base at Arpora we will visit quieter beaches north of the Chapora estuary that act as high tide roosts for gulls, terns and shorebirds. These include Pallas's Gull, Brown-headed Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull (Heuglin's), Slender-billed Gull, Great Crested Tern, Lesser Crested Tern, Gull-billed Tern, Caspian Tern, Greater Sand Plover, Lesser Sand Plover, Kentish Plover and Small Pratincole. We will also explore the mangrove-lined Zuari River and Cumbarjua Canal by boat, providing us the chance to find the scarce and sporadically distributed Collared Kingfisher, along with Stork-billed Kingfisher, Black-capped Kingfisher, Pied Kingfisher, White-throated Kingfisher, Common Kingfisher, Osprey and Lesser Adjutant, with Slaty-breasted Rail often seen in the mangroves.

During the dry season (November to May) water birds congregate in Goa's few sizeable lakes. Here we will look for Grey-headed Swamphen, Bronze-winged Jacana, Pheasant-tailed Jacana, White-breasted Waterhen, Garganey, Northern Pintail, Lesser Whistling Duck, Cotton Pygmy Goose, Indian Spot-billed Duck, Comb Duck, Little Cormorant and Oriental Darter.

We will also visit areas of marsh, mangrove and flooded fields throughout the region. These wetlands host a good selection of waders including Wood Sandpiper, Green Sandpiper, Terek Sandpiper, Little Stint, Temminck's Stint, Painted Stork, Woolly-necked Stork, Asian Openbill, Grey Heron, Purple Heron, Little Egret, Intermediate Egret, Great Egret, Cattle Egret and Glossy Ibis.



## **Days 7-10: Transfer Inland to the Foot of the Western Ghats, Bhagwan Mahaveer Wildlife Sanctuary**

We will have an early start on day 7, driving inland to the base of the Western Ghats, the range of low mountains that run parallel to the west coast of peninsular India. Here we will explore the 240 square kilometer Bhagwan Mahaveer Wildlife Sanctuary, the largest protected area in Goa which also encompasses the area additionally designated as Mollem National Park. The gently undulating terrain within the sanctuary is cloaked in a combination of moist deciduous, semi-evergreen and tropical evergreen forests, intersected by bamboo brakes, cane thickets and trickling streams that become raging torrents in the monsoon. Eighteen of the thirty birds endemic to the Western Ghats are habitually found here, among active feeding flocks and a host of nocturnal species.



We have four days to explore this bird-rich area and will begin to see the first of many new birds as we drive this morning. We will arrive at our lodge for breakfast and are likely to find a good selection of species on the grounds before we start to explore the wider area. Key birds in the area include Malabar Trogon, White-bellied Woodpecker, White-naped Woodpecker, Malabar Grey Hornbill, Malabar Pied Hornbill, Malabar Whistling Thrush, Indian Blackbird, Orange-headed Thrush, Indian Blue Robin, Malabar Barbet, Malabar Woodshrike, Brown-breasted Flycatcher, Grey Junglefowl, Red Spurfowl, White-rumped Spinetail and Brown-backed Needletail, with forest streams hosting Black-backed Dwarf Kingfisher and Blue-eared Kingfisher.

At the base of the ghats the dense forest of the sanctuary merges into cultivated fields and sleepy villages, creating a mosaic of habitats. These forest edges are frequented by sizeable mixed feeding flocks that contain such delights as Orange Minivet, Asian Fairy-bluebird, Indian Paradise Flycatcher, Tickell's Blue Flycatcher, Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, Heart-spotted Woodpecker, Golden-fronted Leafbird, Black-naped Oriole, Flame-throated Bulbul, Yellow-browed Bulbul, 'Square-tailed' Black Bulbul, Western Crowned Warbler, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, Little Spiderhunter and Dark-fronted Babbler. Flowering bamboo and rice fields attract Yellow-throated Sparrow, Red-headed Bunting, Black-headed Bunting, Grey-necked Bunting, Black-throated Munia, White-rumped Munia and Common Rosefinch. The forests also support a host of nocturnal species including Sri Lanka Frogmouth, secretive Spot-bellied Eagle-Owl,

Oriental Scops Owl, Indian Scops Owl, Brown Hawk-Owl, Jungle Owlet and four species of nightjar – Savanna Nightjar, Indian Nightjar, Jungle Nightjar and Jerdon's Nightjar. We will look for these on night drives and walks, while hoping to see some at their day roosts.

Mammal densities are modest throughout Goa, however there is the prospect here of seeing the endemic Indian Giant Squirrel as well as Northern Plains Grey Langur and Bonnet Macaque. Over 150 species of butterflies have been recorded in the area, including the largest, Southern Birdwing, and two smallest, Tiny Grass Blue and Grass Jewel, to occur in the Indian region, plus a number of species endemic to the Western Ghats, including Tamil Yeoman, Malabar Raven, Malabar Tree Nymph.

We will spend four nights at a comfortable Eco-Lodge on the edge of the sanctuary.



## **Day 11: Bondla Wildlife Sanctuary, Transfer to Coastal South Goa**

We will spend the morning at the Bondla Wildlife Sanctuary, Goa's smallest reserve. This is a productive patch of mixed forest on undulating terrain at the foot of the ghats. Bird life here is largely similar to that of the Bhagwan Mahaveer Wildlife Sanctuary, however some species can be more confiding here. In particular, we will look for Blue-faced Malkoha, White-rumped Shama, Forest Wagtail, Rufous Woodpecker, White-naped Woodpecker, Spangled Drongo, White-browed Bulbul, Grey-headed Bulbul, Blue-capped Rock Thrush and Common Emerald Dove.

The surrounding hills are good for raptors rising in the thermals. These may include Changeable (Crested) Hawk-Eagle, Legge's Hawk-Eagle, Rufous-bellied Eagle, Black Eagle, Crested Honey Buzzard and Besra.

After lunch we will drive into the coastal region of southern Goa to Patnem.

We will spend four nights in a comfortable hotel in the coastal village of Patnem.



## **Days 12-14: Cotigao & Netravali Wildlife Sanctuaries**

From our base at Patnem we will spend three days exploring Cotigao and Netravali Wildlife Sanctuaries. At Cotigao, the mixed deciduous forest is noticeably drier than the vegetation of other forested reserves in the state. Although this is home to a similar array of birds, some of the more sought after forest specialties, such as Forest Wagtail, Malabar Woodshrike, Common Emerald Dove, Yellow-footed Green Pigeon, Green Imperial Pigeon and White-bellied Woodpecker, can be more easily seen here.

Cotigao hosts a small butterfly park stocked with native host plants where species such as Lime Butterfly, Clipper Butterfly, Spot Swordtail and the endemic Tamil Lacewing can be seen. A selection of mammals, including Chital, Sambar and Gaur (Indian Bison) may be seen here, while this is also one of the better places in Goa for a sighting of the elusive Leopard, although notoriously secretive and far from guaranteed.

Around an hour's drive from Patnem, the quiet sanctuary road at Netravali climbs to the peak of the rounded hills and two small villages beyond, allowing access to some untouched forest thick in places with cane and lianas. This scenic reserve is the most reliable site in Goa for Rufous Babbler, an endemic of the Western Ghats more commonly found further south. We will make a special effort to locate a small flock of these birds. The forests support a diversity of species, including Malabar Trogon, Speckled Piculet, Indian Blue Robin, White-bellied Blue Flycatcher, Sri Lanka Frogmouth and vocal groups of Indian Scimitar Bblers. The pastoral setting around the village supports a host of bulbuls, sunbirds and minivets, and provides a good place to watch the open skies for hirundines and raptors.

## Day 15: Depart Goa

On this last day of the tour, we will drive to the airport (1.5 hours) and depart Goa for your onward journey.

