

Nepal 20th April – 16th May 2007, Jomsom trekking, Stijn De Win.

List follows Birds of the Indian Subcontinent, Grimmett, Inskipp, Inskipp.

Note ; Many places in Nepal are called Deurali (or Deorali) as it means 'pass'. This can be confusing. The Deurali mentioned below is the one that is reached by following the ridge trail from Ghorapani, takes 2 hours. This is on the trail from either Ghorapani or Chitre towards Ghandrung. (The accommodation area directly below Poon Hill is also called Deurali, with Ghorapani little below towards Ulleri and there is another Deurali near Pothana on the Annapurna Sanctuary trek)

Chukar ; few Jomsom, Kagbeni, Muktinath

Black Francolin ; male seen Pokhara peace Pagoda, heard Pokhara airport, Dana to Sikha, below Ghandrung.

Common Quail ; heard in irrigated wheat fields Kagbeni

**xHill Partridge** ; calling male seen very well near Deurali, one briefly seen Deurali, pair seen briefly near Chitre, commonly heard Ghasa and Deurali.

**xBlood Pheasant** ; 2 pairs seen superbly at treeline on trail up the mountain beyond Deurali, altitude = 3400m

Satyr Tragopan ; 2 different birds were calling on both mornings (5 to 5.30 am and briefly again at 8 am) to the right of the trail towards Chitre, a 150m descent from the Deurali lodges, despite some serious effort (steep slopes!) only got to flush one once, untickable however.

**xKoklass Pheasant** ; 1 male seen flying through forest clearing above Ghasa in the Big Forest, several more heard Ghasa. 2 flushed near Deurali and commonly heard here.

**xHimalayan Monal** ; 2 pairs seen well below and next to Black Forest Ghasa, one pair at at Blood Pheasant spot, see above. A male gliding past down the slope right underneath was a fantastic sight.

Kalij Pheasant ; seen Ghasa

**xCheer Pheasant** ; a male seen very well both on the ground and in flight below the Black Forest at Ghasa. This is a 800m ascent from Eagle Nest guest house.

Fulvous-breasted Woodpecker ; near Birethanti and Pokhara Queens Forest

Rufous-bellied Woodpecker ; female near Sikha

Darjeeling Woodpecker ; one Ghasa and Deurali

Grey-headed Woodpecker ; Chitre, Ghasa, Deurali, Pokhara and Kalopani.

Great Barbet ; common below 2500m

Blue-throated Barbet ; Pokhara, Nagarjung, below Kimche

Coppersmith Barbet ; Pokhara

White-throated Kingfisher ; Pokhara and near Birethanti

Crested Kingfisher ; one in river between Kimche – Birethanti

Blue-bearded Bee-eater ; one Queens Forest Pokhara

Common Hawk Cuckoo ; commonly heard 'brainfever'

Eurasian Cuckoo ; common

Oriental Cuckoo ; commonly heard, only 1 seen

**xLesser Cuckoo** ; Ghorapani – Deurali, several heard but only 1 seen briefly

Asian Koel ; Pokhara

Rose-ringed Parakeet ; few Pokhara

Himalayan Swiftlet ; fairly common

Common Swift ; few Jomsom, Khingar and Kalopani

House Swift ; common

Fork-tailed Swift ; fairly common

A breeding colony on a rock face just below Ghandrung contained previous 2 species and Nepal House Martin.

Mountain Scops Owl ; heard Dana

Indian Scops Owl ; heard Pokhara

Tawny Owl ; heard Dana

Collared Owlet ; seen Kalopani and Deurali

Asian Barred Owlet ; 2 seen Queens Forest Pokhara

Rock Pigeon ; Jomsom – Muktinath (feral)

**xHill Pigeon** ; 1 Jharkot and 2 Muktinath

Speckled Wood Pigeon ; several Kalopani

Oriental Turtle Dove ; common

Spotted Dove

Eurasian Collared Dove ; 1 Kagbeni

Pompadour Green Pigeon ; near Birethanti

Yellow-footed Green Pigeon ; 2 Tatopani

White-breasted Waterhen ; Pokhara lake

Pintail Snipe ; one in stream, Muktinath monastery grounds, NOT a Solitary Snipe!

Common Sandpiper ; few Kali Gandaki river

Ibisbill ; 2, possibly 3 birds seen while crossing Kali Gandaki flat at Larjung

White-winged Tern ; one breeding plumage Pokhara lake

Black Kite

Lammergeier ; 2 Kalopani, 1 Ghasa, 3 Muktinath

Egyptian Vulture ; Sikha, Ghandrung, Pokhara

White-rumped Vulture ; up to 8 birds seen at World Peace Pagoda, Pokhara, also 2 at airport.

Himalayan Griffon ; common

Eurasian Griffon ; around 10 birds near Ghandrung

Cinereous Vulture ; 1 Sikha

Red-headed Vulture ; 3 Kimche, 1 at World Peace Pagoda Pokhara and probably same bird seen from Damside, 1 seen straight below me in the same thermal while paragliding from Sarangkot, Pokhara!

Crested Serpent Eagle ; several on trekking and Pokhara, incl. close up while paragliding!

Black Eagle ; near Chitre and Ghandrung

Besra ; a male seen well, perched in the pine wood at Ghasa village.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk ; few

Northern Goshawk ; Ghasa

Common Buzzard ; Ghasa

Golden Eagle ; an adult near Deurali

Bonelli's Eagle ; 2 Kalopani, 1 near Kimche

Booted Eagle ; one Jharkot

Mountain Hawk Eagle ; Chitre, Ghorapani

Common Kestrel ; few

Peregrine Falcon ; pair near Tukuche, one above Deurali

Little Grebe ; Pokhara lake

Little Egret ; Pokhara

Cattle Egret ; Pokhara and Kathmandu

Indian Pond Heron ; Pokhara

Golden-fronted Leafbird ; Nagarjung forest (Kathmandu)

Long-tailed Shrike ; few Tatopani, Pokhara

Grey-backed Shrike ; common between Tukuche and Muktinath  
 Eurasian Jay ; only 2 seen near Chitre  
 Yellow-billed Blue Magpie ; few Deurali  
 Red-billed Blue Magpie ; Sikha-Chitre and Pokhara  
 Common Green Magpie ; one Queens Forest Pokhara  
 Rufous Treepie ; Queens Forest and Pokhara lakeside  
 Grey Treepie ; fairly common on trek and Pokhara  
 Spotted Nutcracker ; 2 birds near Deurali, spp hemispila  
 Red-billed Chough ; Jomsom and up  
 Yellow-billed Chough ; Muktinath  
 House Crow  
 Large-billed Crow  
 Common Raven ; 2 Muktinath area  
 Eurasian Golden Oriole ; Sikha, Chitre  
 Maroon Oriole ; few Chitre  
 Large Cuckooshrike ; one Sarangkot  
 Black-winged Cuckooshrike ; near Sikha  
 Long-tailed Minivet ; Kalopani, Deurali, Chitre  
 Yellow-bellied Fantail ; Ghorapani area, Deurali  
 Black Drongo  
 Ashy Drongo  
 Bronzed Drongo ; Queens Forest Pokhara only  
 Spangled Drongo ; near Birethanti, Pokhara  
**xBlue-capped Rock Thrush** ; 3 males, 1 female Ghasa, male Ghasa to Dana, male Dana to  
 Tatapani, male Sikha to Chitre  
 Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush ; several on Poon Hill and near Deurali, 2 females near  
 Banthanti  
 Blue Rock Thrush ; Jomsom and up  
 Blue Whistling Thrush ; common all over (Muktinath monastery to Pokhara)  
 Orange-headed Thrush ; one Queens Forest Pokhara (citrina)  
 Scaly Thrush ; 8 birds seen in Deurali area  
 White-collared Blackbird ; several Kalopani and common in Ghorapani-Deurali area  
 Grey-winged Blackbird ; few near Sikha and fairly common near Chitre  
 Dark-throated Thrush ; one near Sikha and one on mountain above Deurali, both atrogularis  
 White-browed Shortwing ; male Poon Hill and several males and 1 female Deurali area  
 Dark-sided Flycatcher ; one Ghorepani, one Deurali  
 Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher ; fairly common above Ghasa, Deurali etc.  
 Ultramarine Flycatcher ; fairly common, Kalopani, Chitre, Ghorapani area  
 Slaty-blue Flycatcher ; female near Kokethanti, female Ghorepani  
 Verditer Flycatcher ; fairly common  
 Small Niltava ; male Sikha to Chitre  
 Rufous-bellied Niltava ; male and female above Ghasa, male below Tarapani (Tadapani)  
 Blue-throated Flycatcher ; male near Sikha  
 Indian Blue Robin ; common Kalopani, Chitre, Ghorapani, Deurali...  
 Orange-flanked Bush Robin ; 2 birds only, Deurali ridge trail  
 Golden Bush Robin ; small numbers Deurali area  
**xWhite-browed Bush Robin** ; 2 males and a female Deurali area  
 Oriental Magpie Robin ; Pokhara  
 Black Redstart ; few Jomsom and up  
 Blue-fronted Redstart ; few Muktinath and mountain above Deurali

White-capped Water Redstart ; pair Muktinath monastery and fairly common along rivers and streams lower down  
Plumbeous Water Redstart ; common along rivers  
Little Forktail ; 3 birds Deurali to Tarapani.  
Siberian Stonechat ; pair near Khingar, Kalopani, Ghandrung...  
Grey Bushchat ; common  
Chestnut-tailed Starling ; Sikha and Pokhara  
Common Myna  
Jungle Myna  
White-tailed Nuthatch ; Kalopani, Chitre, Deurali  
Eurasian Treecreeper ; one Deurali  
Rusty-flanked Treecreeper ; fairly common Deurali area  
Rufous-vented Tit ; Ghorapani and Deurali area  
Grey-crested Tit ; fairly common Ghorapani and Deurali area  
Great Tit ; Birethanti and Pokhara  
Green-backed Tit ; fairly common on trekking  
Black-lored Tit ; Tatopani and Pokhara  
Yellow-browed Tit ; few Chitre  
Black-throated Tit ; 2 groups Kalopani  
Plain Martin ; 2 birds Pokhara lake  
Eurasian Crag Martin ; encountered few times on the trek  
Barn Swallow ; very few on trek, few in Pokhara area  
Red-rumped Swallow ; few Pokhara  
Asian House Martin ; few Khingar  
Nepal House Martin ; several groups Deurali to Birethanti  
Himalayan Bulbul ; Ghasa, Dana, Ghandrung, Sikha-Chitre, Peace Pagoda Pokhara  
Red-vented Bulbul ; Sikha, Pokhara  
Mountain Bulbul ; Nagarjung forest Kathmandu  
Black Bulbul ; common  
Striated Prinia ; common Ghasa  
Oriental White-eye ; fairly common  
Chestnut-headed Tesia ; 1 near Chitre, 2 Deurali area  
Slaty-bellied Tesia ; 1 Ghasa  
Aberrant Bush Warbler ; several Poon Hill  
Grey-sided Bush Warbler ; common Poon Hill and Deurali area  
Blyth's Reed Warbler ; 1 near Ghasa village  
Common Tailorbird  
Tickell's Leaf Warbler ; Jomsom and Marpha  
Buff-barred Warbler ; Ghorapani  
Ashy-throated Warbler ; common  
Lemon (Pale)-rumped Warbler ; Kalopani  
Hume's Warbler ; Ghorapani  
Greenish Warbler ; fairly common  
Western Crowned Warbler ; 1 seen very well (incl. diagnostic habit of flicking one wing)  
Ghorapani, 1 near Deurali  
Blyth's Leaf Warbler ; few Kalopani, Deurali  
Whistler's Warbler ; common  
Grey-hooded Warbler ; Chitre and Nagarjung  
Chestnut-crowned Warbler ; Chitre

White-throated Laughingthrush ; Chitre, below Deurali, Tarapani to Ghandrung  
 White-crested Laughingthrush ; Queens Forest Pokhara and Nagarjung Kathmandu  
 Striated Laughingthrush ; Kalopani and near Banthanti  
 Spotted Laughingthrush ; fairly common Deurali area  
 Streaked Laughingthrush ; Chitre and near Banthanti  
**xScaly Laughingthrush** ; small parties seen several times Deurali area, few Poon Hill  
 Variegated Laughingthrush ; Khingar and Jharkot  
 Black-faced Laughingthrush ; common Poon Hill to Deurali  
 Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush ; only one near Deurali  
 Streak-breasted Scimitar Babbler ; hear Poon Hill  
**xScaly-breasted Wren Babbler** ; white morph seen three times Deurali area, at altitudes of  
 3000, 2700, 2600m, one bird observed for 15! minutes.  
**xNepal Wren Babbler** ; a pair of the fulvous morph observed for 10 min. from room 19,  
 Tukuhe Peak View Hotel, which was a perfect hide. Birds were gathering  
 nesting material.  
**xSpiny Babbler** ; 2 birds in scrub at the hill top viewpoint near the World Peace Pagoda,  
 Pokhara (where trail through Queens forest opens up out of forest), birds showed  
 very well and 1 was singing for a moment too. One bird with white throat and breast,  
 and one with buff. No tape was needed. It's a small area of scrub on the hilltop and  
 easy to find.  
 I had no intensions of trying again to see this species at the usual site at Godaveri  
 Botanical Garden (Kathmandu) as I never expected to find it there, it's a difficult site  
 with no exact locations available. So, these birds at this new location were a very  
 welcome surprise.

Red-billed Leiothrix ; only seen in Ghasa  
**xGreen Shrike Babbler** ; one Deurali  
 Hoary-throated Barwing ; few Deurali area  
 Blue-winged Minla ; one Chitra to Ghorapani  
 Chestnut-tailed Minla ; common Ghorapani – Deurali – Chitre  
 Rufous-winged Fulvetta ; seen several times Chitre and Deurali area  
 White-browed Fulvetta ; Poon Hill and Deurali  
 Whiskered Yuhina ; Chitre  
 Stripe-throated Yuhina ; very common Deurali ridge trail  
 Rufous-vented Yuhina ; common Deurali area  
 White-bellied Yuhina ; 1 Nagarjung forest reserve Kathmandu  
 Rufous Sibia ; Ghasa, Chitre, etc.  
**xGreat Parrotbill** ; one Poon Hill, 3 times one bird seen Deurali area  
**xBrown Parrotbill** ; several groups seen Deurali ridge trail and trail above Deurali  
**xFulvous Parrotbill** ; one group of 4 birds Deurali ridge trail  
 Black-throated Parrotbill ; group of approx. 10 birds Deurali ridge trail  
 Greater/Hume's Short-toed Lark ; one in stony river flat at Larjung  
 Oriental Skylark ; several above Kagbeni performing song flights  
 Fire-breasted Flowerpecker ; Sikha – Chitre  
 Purple Sunbird ; one male near Dana  
 Mrs Gould's Sunbird ; Kalopani to Ghasa, Deurali area  
 Green-tailed Sunbird ; Ghorapani  
 Black-throated Sunbird ; Ghasa  
 Fire-tailed Sunbird ; male above Black Forest Ghasa, male on mountain above Deurali  
 House Sparrow ; Pokhara  
**xRusset Sparrow** ; few Ghasa, common Sikha to Ghorapani (no Tree Sparrows here), several

## Ghandrung

Eurasian Tree Sparrow ; common

White Wagtail

White-browed Wagtail ; few Jomsom to Tukucho

Citrine Wagtail ; one Jomsom to Tukucho and one Birethanti

Grey Wagtail

**xUpland Pipit** ; one seen Kimche, incl. song flights

Olive-backed Pipit ; fairly common

Rosy Pipit ; common higher elevations

**xRobin Accentor** ; one Kimche, fairly common Muktinath

Rufous-breasted Accentor ; one Muktinath

Scaly-breasted Munia ; near Tatopani

Fire-fronted Serin ; few between Jomsom and Kagbeni

Yellow-breasted Greenfinch ; several Ghandrung

Red Crossbill ; Ghorapani

Dark-breasted Rosefinch ; Deurali area incl. males

Common Rosefinch ; common Ghasa village

Beautiful Rosefinch ; Muktinath incl. males

Pink-browed Rosefinch ; fairly common Ghasa incl. males seen

Spot-winged Rosefinch ; one female Deurali ridge trail

**xStreaked Rosefinch** ; 3 females Khingar, one female and a male! Jharkot

**xBrown Bullfinch** ; 2 birds Kalopani

Collared Grosbeak ; few above Black Forest Ghasa and common Deurali area

Spot-winged Grosbeak ; few near Ghasa village

Gold-naped Finch ; male and female on trail above Deurali

Crested Bunting ; near Tatopani, Sikha and Ghandrung

Rock Bunting ; several times seen from Jomsom up

234 species

22 lifers

## Mammals

Pika above Muktinath

4 Goral Ghasa east slopes, 3 Goral Ghasa west slopes, 2 Goral high above Larjung

2 Yellow-throated Marten near Deurali

Hanuman Langurs, Ghasa and Deurali

Barking Deer, pair with young ridge trail Deurali

Jackal between Kagbeni and Khingar

## Flowers-butterflies

Rhododendrons had finished flowering except on the mountain beyond Deurali, it's higher up and facing north there.

Otherwise no or little flowers to see. Over-grassing? After having trekked in October I had expected to see flowers now! Disappointed. Go to Alps.

Numerous beautiful butterflies made up for it however, even at higher altitude.

## **Itinerary – day accounts.**

### Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2007

Brussels-Frankfurt-Doha with Brussels Airlines and Qatar Airways.

### Friday 20 April

Doha-Kathmandu, Qatar Airways.

Arrival Kathmandu 15h30

Hotel Nature in Thamel

### Saturday 21 April

Flight to Pokhara 11h45 with Buddha Air.

Hotel Green Tara in Pokhara lakeside.

After heavy rain in the afternoon it cleared in the evening with superb mountain views from the hotel roof.

### Sunday 22 April

Flight to Jomsom 9h30 (a 2 hour delay) with Gorkha Air.

Hotel Himalayan Inn, Jomsom.

Walk in village in strong winds.

Strong winds from 9h00, mostly sunny but 1 hour of heavy rain in afternoon while at lodge.

### Monday 23 April

Walk around village and opposite side river.

Didn't feel well so took plenty of rest for the remainder of the day.

Strong winds from 9h00 and sunny all day.

### Tuesday 24 April

Start trekking in Jomsom 7h30, arrival at Kagbeni 11h30. (2700 to 2800m and 9 km)

Explored beautiful Kagbeni village in the afternoon.

New Asia Trekker's Home, clean room with attached bathroom and Nilgiri views for 200Rs (2,2 euro) Delicious flambé vegetable sizzler and weird Tibetan rites to drive out ghosts.

Only working internet access of the trek.

Sunny all day but strong winds from 9h00.

### Wednesday 25 April

Start Kagbeni 6h15, Jharkot 10h45 (lunch), Muktinath 13h40. (2800 to 3560m)

Walk to Muktinath Monastery and birding monastery grounds and surrounding. Had a quick look at the famous eternal flame, pfffff.

Hotel Caravan Muktinath.

All day sunny and no or little wind, morning room temperature in Kagbeni 14°Celsius.

### Thursday 26 April

Walk on stony slopes above Muktinath hotel area up to altitude of 3800m and with fine views of Nilgiri and Tilicho Peak, 5h45 till 8h45.

Walk to Gompa, lake and village below Muktinath, 9h15 till 10h30.

Start trekking Muktinath 11h10, Eklabati 14h10 (lunch), arrival Muktinath 16h55.

All day sun, walking with strong winds head on from above Eklabati.

Morning room temp. 14° Celsius but frost on the ground at 3800m.

### Friday 27 April

Start Jomsom 5h45, Marpha 8h00 (breakfast and a look around in this beautiful village),

Tukuche 10h40 (lunch), start again Tukuche 12h05 and arrival Larjung 13h25

River Side Lodge in Larjung.

All day sunny and windy. Sore knee after yesterdays downhill.

### Saturday 28 April

Perfect Dhaulagiri sunrise views from hotel roof.

Start trekking 6h10, crossed the river flat to start with which produced Ibisbill to join later with the main trekking route again at the suspension bridge little before Kokhetante.

(breakfast at 8h40) Arrival Kalopani 11h00.

Walk in pine forest below and above Kalopani, 13h30 till 17h00.

Hotel Magic Mountain, of which room 101 (up and left) was truly magic, attached bathroom and superb views of Dhaulagiri incl. icefall, Nilgiri and Annapurna 1.

All day sunny and strong winds, less windy in Kalopani.

### Sunday 29 April

Walk in open pine forest above Kalopani (+160m), 6h35 till 9h45.

Start trekking 12h30, Ghasa 14h50.

Eagle Nest Guest House.

Meet with Nabil Nepali, my guide for tomorrows Pheasant quest.

All day sunny, little or no wind, morning room temp 14,5°C

### Monday 30 April

Ghasa ; toughest walk of my life! On the briefing yesterday Nabil said we would have to climb 300m, a 4 hour walk to see the pheasants. Ok, not to hard I thought, taking 1 liter of water will be plenty! His English isn't that good however and this proved to be some misunderstanding.

Started climbing the steep slopes at 4h30, first on a trail but it soon disappeared. 8h00 saw us 800 m higher (2840m) and just below the so called Black Forest (in fact a fairly small patch of open pine forest on a steep slope) Got rewarded with superb views of Himalayan Monals and a male Cheer Pheasant. Then climbing again, very steep, going on hands and feet in places! Got to the pass above the Black Forest by 11h00, 1200m above Ghasa, drank my last drops of water. Then a steep 400m descent on grassy slopes that was real dangerous in places, one misstep here could easily have made Cheer Pheasant the very last addition to my life list! Up again a 100m and a 1 km struggle through dense bamboo, sunny too on this stretch and me thirsty. Reached the Big Forest with welcome shade, some relatively flat trail and huge rhododendron trees, good to take up some courage again and on the descent through the forest back to Ghasa got Koklass Pheasant. Got back 16h30.

Did a 1200m ascent and descent in a days walk before (Pulchowki...) but this was many times harder because of the extreme steep terrain and no real trail to follow, the lack of enough water to drink wouldn't have helped either.

All in all a success-full trip with 4 lifers and Nabil happy to get 20 USD. (cheap for me and a lot of money in Nepal)

Sun/clouds, dry all day.

### Tuesday 1st May

Rest day in Ghasa with small walks to the pine forest in Ghasa village and near the Eagle Nest guest house.

Sunny all day.

### Wednesday 2 May

Start 4h00 to Tragopan roost which we (with Nabil) reached 6h00, an hour late! (400m ascent) No fresh excrements found and there's some dangerous sections on the trail, so opted to not try this again 3h00 the following morning. Checked some Cheer Pheasant site on the way back, got back to guest house 10h15.

Start trekking 13h15, arrival Dana 16h15.

New Annapurna hotel Dana.

Sunny but some rain in the evening.

#### Thursday 3 May

Start Dana 6h30, Tatopani 8h30 and Sikha 14h00. (700m ascent)

Monalisa Hotel in Sikha.

Sunny and showers/cloudy from 13h30 onwards.

#### Friday 4 May

Start Sikha 7h30, Chitre at 11h00

Afternoon walk on trail towards Ghandrung.

New Dhaulagiri lodge, Chitre. Met Belgische wafels op de menu! Natuurlijk ni te vreten, was te verwachten, brrrrrrwww.

Sunny/cloudy and showers after 16h00

#### Saturday 5 May

Walk on trail towards Ghandrung, 5h45 till 9h00.

Start trekking Chitre 11h20, Deurali (accommodation area above Ghorapani at the start of the trail up Poon Hill) at 13h00.

Hotel Tukuche Peak View had the only bad food on the entire trek. (behalve dan die Belgische wafels) But bird-watching from room 19 here was excellent which made up for the food. Here's my room list ; pair Nepal Wren Babbler, Russet Sparrow, White-collared Blackbird, Rufous-vented Yuhina, Ashy-throated Warbler, Indian Blue Robin, Grey Wagtail, Pink-browed Rosefinch, Green-tailed Sunbird, Slaty-blue Flycatcher, Yellow-bellied Fantail, Thick-billed Crow, Common Cuckoo, Verditer Flycatcher, Red Crossbill, Chestnut-tailed Minla, Oriental Turtle Dove, Grey-crested Tit, Rufous-vented Tit, Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher, Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush, Grey Bushchat, Ultramarine Flycatcher, Western-crowned Leaf Warbler, Dark-sided Flycatcher, Lesser Cuckoo heard, 26 species.

Sun/clouds and between 15h and 16h a hailstorm.

#### Sunday 6 May

5h05-10h15 walk up Poon hill, a 55 min. climb, 300m ascent.

Although this is 'the' famous Himalayan sunrise viewpoint of Nepal I can definitely tell you that the sun comes up pretty much from the wrong side. It's perfect only for Dhaulagiri (but better views from Larjung-Kalopani) with the bad light conditions for the rest. Nevertheless I've been very lucky here with all clear skies and a superb view at 9h00, which was after some birding, after all tourists left (noisy f'ck'g crowd at sunrise), just before the first clouds started rolling in and with the sun higher up thus better light. There's been no clear morning in the next week or so!!! Sunset must be much better here but to get a cloudless one you'll need the luck of a lifetime, in April-May at least.

Afternoon room 19 bird-watching.

Sunny till noon, then clouds building and rain from 16h15.

#### Monday 7 May

Walk to Deurali via ridge and 2 hours return walk on trail beyond Deurali towards the mountain. Returned to Ghorapani. 5h15 – 14h35

First all cloudy day of the trek but with no rain.

#### Tuesday 8 May

Start Ghorapani 4h20 via ridge to Deurali, 6h05. Breakfast in Deurali and 7h20 start on trail to the mountain beyond Deurali. Trail starts between the two Deurali lodges. After the up and downs on the trail started the proper climb at 8h15, arrival out of forest and on the ridge 9h15 were I got Blood Pheasant and Himalayan Monal immediately. Explored the mountain treeline area (3300-3400m) until 12h20 (first low clouds). Back to Deurali 13h50.

Up here was the only area of the trek that still had all rhododendrons flowering.

Sun/clouds with little rain in afternoon.

Cleared up in evening and did little walk in forest near Deurali, nice Annapurna South views.

Green View lodge, Deurali.

Wednesday 9 May

5h00 – 8h30 and again 10h00 – 12h20 birding near Deurali, heard Satyr Tragopan.

Rain from 11h00 onwards. Spend afternoon in lodge, waiting for the next morning.

Thursday 10 May

Decided to try for Tragopan an extra day after hearing them yesterday. (Just only found out yesterday that Tragopans are in the area, don't know this is a known site)

4h30 till 9h30, again only heard Tragopan, also Koklass, lots of leeches!

Start trekking 10h20, Tarapani (Tadapani) 12h40 and lunch, Ghandrung at 16h00.

Hotel Sakura Ghandrung.

30 min. shower during lunch, cloudy in afternoon.

Friday 11 May

Start 8h10, Kimche at 10h00, arrival Naya Pul 14h15.

Taxi to Pokhara with heavy hail and mist on the way. Pokhara at 16h30.

Saturday 12 May

5h55 – 13h00, Walk up to World Peace Pagoda through Queens Forest (Rani Bann) and back same way. Surprise Spiny Babblers!

Afternoon relax and shopping in Pokhara.

Sunday 13 May

Paragliding off Sarangkot with Sunrise Paragliding. Nice thermal on this south facing slope and the birds knew it too. We were circling with 1 Red-headed Vulture, 1 Crested Serpent Eagle, 2 Egyptian Vultures, several Black Kites, Common Kestrel and a few Sparrowhawks.

This is nice and different birding, raptors are not at all frightened by the gliders and a tandem flight makes that you have all the time for birding, photos and enjoying the views and kick.

Recommended!

Monday 14 May

Morning flight to Kathmandu with Yeti Airlines.

Afternoon in Kathmandu.

Tuesday 15 May

Walk up to viewpoint through Nagarjung forest reserve. It's a 665m ascent, 5 km walk. No views due to mist and clouds and few birds.

Wednesday 16 May

Kathmandu – Doha – London with Qatar Airways.

London – Brussels with British Airways.

## **Info, notes, thoughts, tips...**

### **-Ghasa Pheasants (+Deurali)**

Don't ever think this is going to be easy, you'd better be fit! My first impression when arriving in Ghasa ; "whow that's steep, what the hell am I going to have to climb to see something?"

You will need the help of Nabin Nepali who knows the mountains and where the pheasants are. He lives in the house next to Eagle Nest Guest House, you can ask about him there. Be aware that the Eagle Nest owner will try to make some business too if you go with Nabin. Don't let it happen! He wanted me to buy Nabin's food for the day trip at tourist prices, good try! Nabin's fees for the day were ; 'up to you'! Gave him the 20 USD that he was listed for on Birdingpal and he seemed happy with it. ([nabin\\_n.nepali@yahoo.com](mailto:nabin_n.nepali@yahoo.com))

I got Cheer Pheasant and Monal 800m above Ghasa below the Black Forest. Also checked 2 spots for Cheer closer to the village but these sites I think are unreliable to say the least.

Koklass is commonly heard early morning but very shy and hard to get a view of.

Nabin knows a roost for Satyr Tragopan, a 400m climb after having past some dangerous trail section above the river in the dark, set off 3am for this otherwise you're gone be late. Best bet however will be to spend the night on the ridge above the Black Forest, a 1200m climb above Ghasa! Steep, took me 6,5 hours.

Tragopans are close to the Deurali lodges, but still, hard to see.

Blood Pheasant is too high up at Ghasa (way above the Black Forest) and can't be done in a day, better to get it at Deurali. (Or start climbing again after having spend the night on the ridge) Poon Hill is a possible winter site but too low altitude in April-May for Blood Pheasant.

Also read Monday 30 April in day accounts above.

### **-Porters-lodges**

Usually all good with no hassles. Only annoying thing for birders will be that Nepalis don't rise early. (No tourist will agree with me on this but for birders it's late.) Make sure you bring an extra alarm clock for your porter otherwise your first job in the morning will be to find out where he's sleeping to go and wake him up. My porter Bhim on this trek was pretty much OK for this but the one I got on my Langtang trek last year was a real pain.

Birding and carrying your own pack isn't a good idea and at 10 USD a day I can't see why you shouldn't rent a porter. Ask for one that can speak English and he will be your guide at the same time.

Forget about an early breakfast, you'll go hungry or not. Most lodges don't start serving breakfast before 7am. Too late if dawn is at 5am. Chocolates and biscuits might bring relief! I've been the only guest in a lodge on many occasions, tourist arrivals in Nepal are at a low still despite problems with Maoists/safety gone. Had to pay nothing for Maoists on this trek while on the Langtang trek last year I had to pay 1000 Rs.

### **-Road to heaven**

Ghasa to Muktinath has a road (dirt track) that is used by an increasing number of motorbikes and the occasional tractor. Not nice to go trekking along and together with the presence of electricity all over makes me decide that Langtang was a much more enjoyable trekking, it's more authentic, 2 or 3 weeks with only solar power, no engines around, no telephones, no road-works...it has something.

To make matters worse they are busy building a road now from Ghasa to Beni that will open up the entire Kali Ghandaki valley to motorised traffic. Had to walk several (some

dangerous) detours between Ghasa and Tatopani because of road-works. They're actually bringing down entire mountain slopes to build it and the monsoon will do the rest. They're facing some almost impossible sections however and with the means they have it will take at least another 10 (or 20, or never) years for completion. Can't see why they're building it. Why destroy your most important trekking area? Hopefully nobody will be stupid enough to still go trekking Jomsom after the road has been completed. Bye-bye lodges, porters, guides...good luck with begging in Kathmandu!!! Oh, they might dream of bringing in mass-tourism but that's not gone work, not in Nepal!

-Annapurna Conservation Area Project

Plastic bottle mania! Telling tourists not to use plastic bottles seems to be their most important activity. Now all non-bottle users think they're green and clean and conserving the area. Ha ha ha. I'm not going to say bottles and waste aren't a problem but they're not going to spoil the area very much if you manage the waste a bit. I wonder how many of these non-bottle users will see the only real problem up there. Most will probably just think the landscape hasn't changed for ages up there.

Every single square metre above the tree-line in Nepal can best be compared with a logged rainforest I think. It takes 10s of years (if ever) to recover from over-grassing, no area will get the time. No wonder there's no flowers or birds in the high country any more. Scan whatever hillside with your binoculars, inclusive those that appear inaccessible and you will see livestock.

This is about very few poor people fucking up enormous areas to scrape a living with their cheep, goats, yak, cows, horses. If ACAP (and the rest of Nepal) were serious about conservation they should stop all grazing inside (so called) protected areas. But that's gone affect people, can't be done in this world.

So, enjoy that mineral water if you want but please stay away from cheese, milk and so on!

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