



Partnership for
International Birding

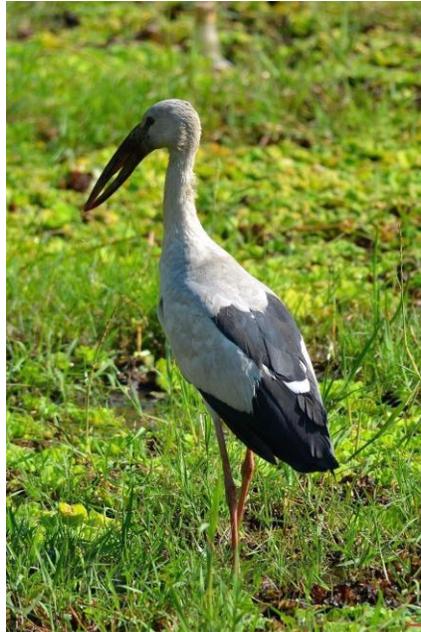
Goa: From the Coast to the Sahyadri Hills

Days 1-5: Arrive Goa, Coastal North Goa Birding

Arrive Goa on day 1, driving north to the coastal resort of Arpora (1.5hrs) to spend five days birding in the varied habitats to be found in this region. The variation in habitat and vegetation, 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, endows this region of Goa with a diversity of both birds and butterflies that belies its small area. Key species include Blyth's, Paddyfield, Tawny, Olive-backed and Richard's Pipits, Citrine, Yellow and White-browed Wagtails, Malabar and Rufous-tailed Larks, Bluethroat, Indian Black Robin, Scaly-breasted and White-rumped Munias, Long-tailed, Bay-backed and Brown Shrikes, Little Green and Blue-tailed Bee-eaters, Eurasian Golden Oriole, Grey-headed and Brahminy Starlings, Common Tailorbird, Black-lored Tit, Purple, Purple-rumped, Vigor's and Loten's Sunbirds, Red-rumped and Wire-tailed Swallows, various raptors including Indian Spotted and Booted Eagles, Crested Serpent-eagle, Black and Brahminy Kites, Pallid Harrier, Crested Goshawk, Shikra, Osprey, and White-bellied Sea-eagle.

Quieter beaches north of the Chapora estuary act as high tide roosts for gulls, terns and shorebirds, including Great Black-headed, Brown-headed, Heuglin's and Slender-billed Gulls, Great and Lesser Crested, Gull-billed and Caspian Terns, Greater and Lesser Sandpipers, Kentish Plover and Small Pratincole. Exploring the mangrove-lined Zuari River and Cumbarjua Canal by boat provides a good chance to find the scarce and sporadically distributed Collared Kingfisher, alongside Stork-billed, Black-capped, Lesser Pied, White-throated and Common Kingfishers, Osprey and Lesser Adjutant, with Slaty-breasted Rail often seen in the mangroves. Other more easily accessible areas of marsh, mangrove and flooded fields can be explored for waders including Wood, Green and Terek Sandpipers, Little and Temminck's Stints, Painted and Woolly-

necked Storks, Asian Openbill, Grey and Purple Herons, Little, Intermediate, Great and Cattle Egrets, and Glossy Ibis. During the dry season (November to May) waterbirds congregate in Goa's few sizeable lakes - key species include Purple Swamphen, Bronze-winged and Pheasant-tailed Jacanas, White-breasted Waterhen, Garganey, Northern Pintail, Lesser Whistling-duck, Cotton Teal, Indian Spot-billed Duck, Comb Duck, Little Cormorant and Oriental Darter. Spend five nights in a comfortable hotel in the coastal resort of Arpora.



Days 6-7: Transfer Inland into the Western Ghats, Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary

Drive inland in the morning of day 6 to the Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary, ascending into the foothills of the Western Ghats to spend two days in the Sahyadri Hills, a region that contrasts starkly with the coastal plains in terms of topography, vegetation, and fauna. The Western Ghats, a range of low mountains running parallel to the west coast of peninsular India, are one of the most ecologically rich regions in the world, home to a number of restricted range endemics. From a biological perspective the ghats, which form the state's eastern border, are Goa's most notable region, with the entire stretch falling within Goa's boundaries protected in a series of sanctuaries. To enable us to thoroughly explore the habitats represented here, and their associated species, we will spend two nights in the higher hills at Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary, before descending to the base of the hills on day 8. The Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary is the northernmost of Goa's hinterland reserves, encompassing 209 sq km of semi-evergreen and moist deciduous forest. The terrain here is undulating, with steep escarpments dotted with waterfalls characteristic of the northern Western Ghats, reaching an elevation of 1166m at Sonsogor, Goa's highest peak. Key species here include a number of Western Ghat endemics, notably Nilgiri Woodpigeon, Malabar Grey Hornbill, Malabar Parakeet, Grey-

headed Bulbul, uncommon Rufous Babbler, White-bellied Blue Flycatcher and Small Sunbird, alongside Indian Scimitar-babbler, Great Pied Horbill, Blue-bearded Bee-eater and Indian Pitta. Nights in a comfortable eco-resort at Mhadei.



Days 8-10: Descend to the Foot of the Ghats, Bhagwan Mahaveer Wildlife Sanctuary & Mollem National Park

Adjoining Mhadei, the 240 sq km Bhagwan Mahaveer Wildlife Sanctuary, encompassing the area additionally designated as Mollem National Park, is the largest of Goa's protected areas. In contrast to Mhadei, the hills of the sanctuary are more characteristic of the southern Western Ghats, their peaks gently rounded and gently undulating, 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. 16 of the 28 birds endemic to the Western Ghats are habitually found here, among active feeding flocks and a host of nocturnal species. Key birds include Malabar Trogon, White-bellied and White-naped Woodpeckers, Malabar Grey and Malabar Pied Hornbills, Malabar Whistling-thrush, Indian Blackbird, Orange-headed Thrush, Indian Blue Robin, Malabar Barbet, Malabar Woodshrike, Brown-breasted Flycatcher, Grey Junglefowl, Red Spurfowl, Indian White-rumped Spinetail and Brown-throated Needletail, with forest streams hosting Black-backed Dwarf and Blue-eared Kingfishers. At the base of the ghats the dense forest of the sanctuary merges into cultivated fields and sleepy villages, creating a mosaic of habitats. Forest edges are frequented by sizeable mixed feeding flocks that contain such delights as Orange Minivet, Asian Fairy Bluebird, Asian Paradise and Tickell's Blue Flycatchers, Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, Heart-spotted Woodpecker, Gold-fronted Leafbird, Black-naped Oriole, Flame-throated, Yellow-browed and 'Square-tailed' Black Bulbuls, Western Crowned Warbler, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, Little Spiderhunter and Dark-fronted Babbler, while flowering bamboo and rice fields attract Yellow-throated Sparrow, Red-headed, Black-headed and Grey-necked Buntings, Black-throated and White-rumped Munias and Common Rosefinch. The forests support a host of nocturnal species including Ceylon Frogmouth, secretive Forest Eagle-owl, Oriental and Collared Scops-

owls, Brown Hawk-owl, Jungle Owlet and four species of nightjar - Savanna, Indian Little, Indian Jungle and Jerdon's. Mammal densities are modest throughout Goa, however there is the prospect here of the endemic Malabar Giant Squirrel as well as Hanuman Langur and Bonnet Macaque. Over 150 species of butterfly have been recorded in our Camp and surrounding areas, including the largest - Southern Birdwing, and 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. Nights at Backwoods Camp, a comfortable birding lodge within the sanctuary.



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

Spend the morning at Bondla Wildlife Sanctuary, Goa's smallest reserve, a productive patch of mixed forest on undulating terrain at the foot of the ghats. Birdlife here is largely similar to that of the Bhagwan Mahaveer Wildlife Sanctuary, however a some species, such as Blue-faced Malkoha, White-rumped Shama, Forest Wagtail, Rufous & White-naped Woodpeckers, Spangled Drongo, White-browed and Grey-headed Bulbuls, Blue-capped Rock-thrush and Emerald Dove can be more confiding here. The surrounding hills are good for raptors rising in the thermals, which may include Crested and Legge's Hawk-eagles, Rufous-bellied and Black Eagles, Oriental Honey-buzzard and Besra. Drive on after lunch heading into the coastal region of southern Goa to Palolem, night in a comfortable hotel.



Day 12-13: Cotigao & Netravali Wildlife Sanctuaries

Spend two days within Cotigao and Netravali Wildlife Sanctuaries. The mixed deciduous forest of Cotigao is noticeably drier than the vegetation of other forested reserves in the state, and although home to a similar array of species some of the more sought after forest specialities, such as Forest Watail, Malabar Woodshrike, Emerald Dove, Yellow-footed Green-pigeon, Green Imperial Pigeon and White-bellied Woodpecker, can be more confiding here. Cotigao hosts a small butterfly park stocked with native host plants where species such as Lime, Clipper, 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. At Netravali, the quiet sanctuary road 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 is the most reliable site in Goa for Indian Rufous Babbler, an endemic of the Western Ghats more commonly found further south. The forests support a diversity of species, including vocal groups of Indian Scimitar-babbler, Malabar Trogon, Speckled Piculet, Indian Blue Robin and Ceylon Frogmouth. 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. Nights in a comfortable hotel.

Day 14: Depart Goa

Depart Goa on your onward journey.