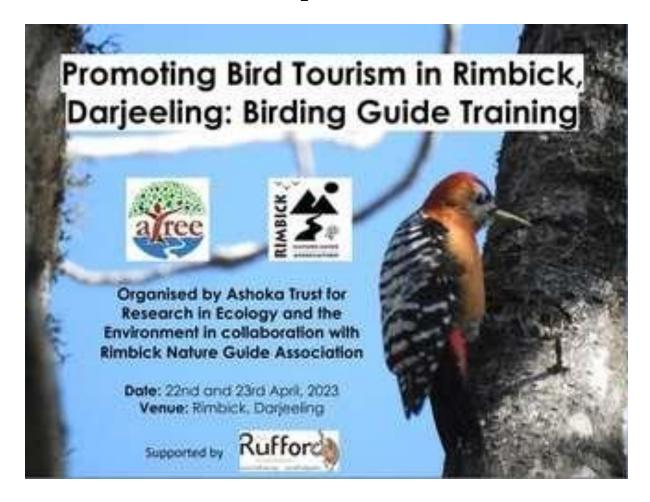


Report on



Prepared by

Aditya Pradhan



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1. BACKGROUND

Darjeeling Himalaya is known to harbor about 50% of all birds found in India, even though the region only contributes to <0.0001% of total area of India. This makes Darjeeling a hotspot of avian diversity, worthy of conservation attention. With a major part of the landscape being outside protected areas, birds in the landscape are threatened by i) habitat alteration, ii) local linear infrastructure development, iii) destruction of key habitats, iv) paucity of ecological information, and awareness among local communities. Thus, it is important to create awareness among local youths, including school students, and inform them about the conservation value of birds and other components of biodiversity found in the region.

Being regarded as one of the most beautiful hill stations in India, Darjeeling is one of the leading tourist destinations in India. As a result, tourism is the major source of revenue for the local economy in Darjeeling. Darjeeling is known for the magnificent view of Mt. Kangchendzonga, which attracts many tourists during autumn and spring months. In recent years, numerous small, yet beautiful villages have emerged as popular tourist destinations. Attracted by the natural beauty, and local culture and traditions, tourism in these villages has flourished. Bird tourism has flourished in a few local sites in Darjeeling, while this section of tourism is still unexplored in most areas. In addition to birds, Darjeeling is also very rich in butterfly diversity, with the Darjeeling-Sikkim Himalaya harboring about 48% of total butterflies found in India. Tourism to unexplored and underrated landscapes of Darjeeling can be a boon, if opportunities which could benefit the landscape through tourism are understood and honed. The capacity building of the inadequately trained frontier stakeholders, like the potential local guides for the visiting tourists, is one such opportunity for promoting sustainable tourism in the landscape.

Hence, we propose to train young local guides of Rimbick, Darjeeling to enhance their capacity as nature guides, and create awareness among local students of the local biodiversity of Darjeeling.

The Birding Guide Training in Rimbick, Darjeeling is a part of the project "Conserving and monitoring woodpeckers and other birds in the differently managed forests of Darjeeling, Eastern Himalaya, India" funded by Rufford Small Grants, and was organized by the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment in collaboration with Rimbick Nature Guide Association.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE TRAINING

- 1. To train the local guides on identification of birds through theory and field sessions
- 2. To apprise the local guides about their roles and responsibilities as local nature guides
- 3. To train potential bird guides on the use of web-based and mobile applications to solicit their participation in future documentation of biodiversity as citizen scientists.

3. TRAINING ACTIVITIES

- Total number of participants: 30 (Annexure II)
- O Total number of trainee guides: 19 (Annexure II)
- o **Resource Persons:** 4 in number
- Dr. Saibal Sengupta, St. Robert's School Nature Club
- Mr. Sanjeeb Pradhan, Rimbick Nature Guide Association
- Mr. Aditya Pradhan, ATREE



a) Day 1 (25-03-2023)

Inaugural Session

The training began with a welcome address by Mr. Aditya Pradhan, ATREE followed by a round of introduction from all participants including the resource people. This was followed by an address by the Secretary, Mr. Sagar Pradhan, Rimbick Nature Guide Association, on what do they expect from this training. Mr. Aditya Pradhan, ATREE then delivered the objectives of the training, and urged the participants to maintain decorum, and participate actively in all the sessions.

Pre-test

The inaugural session was followed by a pre-test for the participants, where the participants were shown pictures of 11 common birds found in the region, and they were asked to identify them by their Nepali local names or English common names. They were also asked to mention if they have had any prior bird-identification or birding-guide training. The results of the pre-test showed that all the participants could identify at least 6 birds by their local names, while three participants could identify all 11 birds. All the participating guides mentioned that they had no prior training.

Technical Session I

How to do birding and bird identification?

Dr. Saibal Sengupta from St. Robert's School Nature Club gave a presentation on Bird Watching, Bird Identification and Conservation. He started the presentation by defining a bird and then moved on to describe different parts of birds. He then talked about how to identify a bird correctly by size, colors, markings, habits, and flight patterns. He talked about the basics of bird watching, and what equipment is required as a beginner. He also emphasized that ears and eyes are the best equipment that a person can possess as a bird watcher. He then gave tips on how to record observations by noting time, location, weather, number of individuals, activity, and habitat. He also talked about sexual dimorphism, which can be helpful to distinguish male and female birds of the same species. He talked about the role of bird watching in conservation of habitats at local level, and the ecological role of birds. He ended his presentation by showcasing some beautiful birds of Darjeeling. This was followed by an interactive session where the participants cleared their doubts on technicalities associated with bird identification.

Bird diversity of Darjeeling and its importance

Mr. Aditya Pradhan started the session by talking about the diversity of birds in Darjeeling, and how Darjeeling even after being a very small region in India, hosts 50% of all birds found in India. He stated that the majority of birds in Darjeeling are residents, and they mostly migrate only altitudinally. He also showed examples of birds that are long distance migrants and visit Darjeeling along their migratory routes. He talked about Darjeeling being an integral part of the Eastern Himalaya, hosting 9 of the 19 Eastern Himalaya endemic birds. He then described and showed pictures of each of the 9 species of birds, also talking about its IUCN status. Following this, he talked about the rich woodpecker diversity in Darjeeling as it hosts 69% of all



woodpeckers found in India. He described the morphological and behavioral characteristics of woodpeckers and highlighted the ecological role of woodpeckers and the services they provide. He then showed pictures of 12 common woodpeckers found in Darjeeling and described their identifying characters.

Field Session I

The session started with Mr. Aditya Pradhan briefing the candidates on birding equipment and how to use it. The candidates were then asked to download a freely available bird identification app called Merlin Bird Id (https://merlin.allaboutbirds.org/), which was used as a field guide during field trips. This was followed by a field trip to a section of the forest, locally called *Dur Bari*. The candidates were accompanied by the Resource Persons. Regrettably, the field session was cut short due to heavy rain. The session lasted for approximately 30 mins.

Data Collation and debriefing

The session ended with participants preparing a checklist of all the birds encountered during the field session. Each of the participants were invited to write the names of all the birds that they encountered during the field session. Data collation was done on a whiteboard, where the participants kept adding to the list, until the list was complete (Annexure III). This was an interactive session and birds were identified by local Nepali names and by comparing field notes with the help of resource persons. 13 species of birds were recorded (Annexure III).

Technical Session II

How to be an effective nature guide?

Mr. Sanjeeb Pradhan from Rimbick Guide Association gave a talk on Guiding Skills. He started his talk by defining a Guide and then moved on to what skills are required to become a good Nature Guide. He talked about what are the roles and responsibilities of a guide. He emphasized that a guide should be able to take any role in case of emergencies during a birding trip or an organized trek. He talked about how a guide needs to communicate well with his clients and be patient during difficult times. He then shared his experiences of working as a Nature Guide since 2008, and how this profession has changed his outlook towards life. He ended his talk stating that "earning money isn't everything, and a guide should always strive to gain as much knowledge as possible." This was followed by an interactive session where the participants asked for suggestions regarding how one can develop an attractive tour package, and how a guide can earn from it. This was addressed in detail by Mr. Sanjeeb Pradhan.

b) Day 2 (26-03-2023)

Field Session II

The day started with a field session. At around 6am in the morning, the participants along with the resource persons started towards *Gairi Gaon* following a 2km long trail that led us back to Rimbick. On the way, the participants observed birds and made notes on each of their observations. During this session, the participants used the Merlin Bird Id App of their phones to identify birds using reference photos and bird calls. With the help of the resource persons the participants learned English names of a few bird groups, which helped them to navigate the



Bird Identification app on their phones. The session lasted 3 hrs.

Data Collation and debriefing

The session ended with participants preparing a checklist of all the birds encountered during the field session. Participants of each group were asked to add to the list prepared in the earlier session. The checklist had 39 species of birds at the end of this session (Annexure III).

Technical Session III

Important flora of Singalila landscape

Dr. Saibal Sengupta, started this session by talking about the history of Singalila National Park, and what the name "Singalila" actually refers to. He then talked about the native vegetation of the National Park, and how it is unique from the rest of the forests in Darjeeling. He talked about endemic plants, briefly described and listed some important native flowering plants found there. He then followed this by talking about Rhododendrons, for which Singalila is famous for. He showed pictures, described each one of them, and also pointed out locations where each of the 18 species of these flowers can be found. This was followed by another diverse yet understudied group of flowers belonging to the genus *Arisaema*, also called the "Wild Cobra Lilies". He again showed pictures, describing each species and talking about its rarity. The session ended with him talking about some important herbs, shrubs and trees of Singalila National Park.

Introduction to butterflies, their importance and some common species of Darjeeling

Mr. Aditya Pradhan started the session by showing pictures of butterflies and talking about the diversity of butterflies in Darjeeling. He then defined a butterfly and talked about how one can differentiate between a butterfly and a moth. He talked about how butterflies behave in the wild, their habits and potential habitats. He then talked about the six different families to which they belong, stating the identifying features of each of these groups. He showed examples of which butterflies one can encounter at different elevation zones. He ended his session by discussing about the potential threats to butterflies in the Himalaya.

Citizen Science in Biodiversity Documentation focusing on iNaturalist

Mr. Aditya Pradhan, ATREE led this session. He first introduced the participants to the concept of Citizen Science (CS) where a local community member has the power to contribute to science by sharing his/her observations on a common online platform like iNaturalist. He then talked about how the participation of local community members in biodiversity documentation has proved to be crucial for the success of larger biodiversity documentation projects. He also gave tips on how to photograph insects using camera phones. He then showed a video of how one can register and upload observations on iNaturalist. The session ended with the participants downloading the app and registering as a contributing citizen scientist.

Field Session III

After the third technical session, the final field session began. The participants were divided into four groups and each of the groups were asked to observe birds independently and prepare a checklist of birds. The session was guided by resource people. The field site for this session



was Tufun road. Data Collation

Data collation for the field sessions II and III were again done using a blackboard, where each participant was free to add their observations (Annexure III). This was followed by the preparation of a final checklist of birds encountered during all the three field sessions (that totaled 7 hrs in two days) was carried out. 39 species of birds were recorded during the training including Greater Yellownape *Chrysophlegma flavinucha* and Bay Woodpecker *Blythipicus pyrrhotis*, while the checklist ended up having 48 species (Annexure IV).

Technical Session IV

The Kangchendzonga landscape

Dr. Saibal Sengupta started the session by describing the cultural importance of Mt. Kangchendzonga to the people residing in this landscape, and what the name 'Kangchendzonga' refers to. He then showed important peaks and passes in the Kangchendzonga range described each one of them, in the process talking about the identifying characteristics of each peak.

Concluding Session

Post-test

After the completion of all the technical and field sessions participants were shown pictures of the same 11 common birds found in the region (as shown during the pre-test), and they were asked to identify them by their English common names. The results of the post-test showed that 11 out of 20 participants could identify more than 5 species, 4 participants identify more than 6 species, while the highest one could identify was 8 species by their English common names.

Feedback and debriefing

At around 6pm in the evening, de-briefing was done by Mr. Aditya Pradhan, which was followed by feedback from all participants about the training. Everyone suggested that they were lucky to get a chance to learn about the scope of bird watching and bird tourism in Rimbick. They also stated that the training has helped them realize the benefits of bird conservation, and all of them would go back to their respective villages and make their friends and family realize the same. A WhatsApp group 'Singalila Nature Guides' was then created to facilitate sharing of resource materials and observations even after the training ended.

4. TRAINING OUTCOMES

- I. 20 trainee guides from the local community were rigorously trained in bird identification in Rimbick, Darjeeling, and were made aware of the different components of biodiversity in Darjeeling, including mammals, birds, butterflies, flowers and trees.
- II. 20 trainee guides acquired valuable understanding on how to become a good nature guide.
- III. A preliminary checklist of 48 bird species in Rimbick was prepared.
- IV. 20 trainee guides from the local community registered and have started contributing to iNaturalist.



V. A common platform (on WhatsApp) was created to share information and knowledge on birds of the region, including new sighting records and checklists. This is expected to keep alive the interest in birding among the local communities.

Annexure I: Programme

Promoting	Bird Tourism in Rimbick:	Birding Guide Training									
Venue:	Smriti Bhavan,	Rimbick, Darjeeling									
29th - 30th A											
DAY 0 (28 th April 2023)											
TIME	ACTIVITIES	LEAD									
0500PM	Arrival of Resource persons at Rimbick on Day 1 (Aditya and Saibal)										
DAY 1 (29th.											
0830-	Registration of Participants	Aditya Pradhan, ATREE									
0930AM	Granden of a management										
0930-	Introductions and Welcome	Aditya Pradhan, ATREE and									
0945AM		Rimbick Nature Guide Association									
0945-	Objective of the training	Aditya Pradhan, ATREE									
1000AM											
1000-	Pre-test of participants about knowledge on bird	Aditya Pradhan, ATREE									
1030AM	identification										
1030-	How to do birding and bird identification?	Dr. Saibal Sengupta, SRS Nature									
1200AM		Club									
1200-	Important flora of Singalila landscape	Dr. Saibal Sengupta, SRS Nature									
0100PM		Club									
0100-	Lunch										
0200PM											
0200-	How to be an effective bird guide?	Sanjeeb Pradhan, Rimbick Nature									
0230PM	_	Guide Association									
0230-	Interactive Session	Sanjeeb Pradhan, Rimbick Nature									
0300PM		Guide Association									
0300-	Tea Break										
0315PM											
0315-	Field Visit Preparation: Dos and Donts-ethics in	Aditya Pradhan, ATREE									
0330PM	the forest										
0330-	Field Visit-Birding	Resource persons assisted by									
0600PM		Rimbick Nature Guide Association									
0520 0600	Data Calledon and Dahafriafina	D									
0530-0600	Data Collation and Debefriefing	Resource persons									
PM	\										
DAY 2 (30 th A											
0530-	Field Visit for guides	Resource persons assisted by									
0830AM		Rimbick Nature Guide Association									
0830-	Breakfast										
0900AM		2.11.6									
0900-0930	Citizen Science in Biodiversity Documentation	Kohit George, ATREE									
AM	focusing on INaturalist	2.11.6									
0930-1000	Registering on INat etc and how to use?	Rohit George, ATREE									
AM											
1000-0100	Free time for guides										
	Session with school students (optional for										
	guides)										
1000-1015	Introduction of resource persons and objective of	Aditya Pradhan, ATREE									
AM	session										

1015-1100	Biodiversity of Singalila National Park and	Dr. Saibal Sengupta, SRS Nature							
AM	landscape	Club							
1100-1145	Bird diversity of Darjeeling and its importance	Aditya Pradhan ATREE							
AM									
1145 AM-	Introduction to butterflies, their importance and	Rohit George, ATREE							
1230 PM	some common species of Darjeeling								
1230-0100	Interactive Session	Resource persons							
PM									
0100-	Lunch								
0200PM									
0200-	Certificate distribution for school children	ATREE							
0300PM									
	Session with guides								
0300-	Field Visit for birding	Resource persons assisted by							
0400PM		Rimbick Nature Guide Association							
0400-	Data Collation and Post-Training Test	Resource persons							
0430PM		_							
0430-	Remarks from Participants and Resource	ATREE							
0500PM	Persons								
0500-	Certificate Distribution	Aditya Pradhan, ATREE							
0515PM									
0515-	Vote of Thanks	Aditya Pradhan, ATREE							
0530PM									
0530-0600	Tea and biscuits								
PM									
Day 3 (26th M	Iarch 2022)								
0800AM	Departure of resource persons								

Annexure II: Sign-up sheet

MANAMA LUCKY SHERFA F RNGA SANGRY YANDUM SHERFA F RNGA BINDIYA RAI F PHURGA SHERFA M BIDHAN RAI M NIRMAL GURUNG M NIRMAL GURUNG M NORDEN SHERFA M PEM DAWA SHERFA M NORDEN SHERFA M PEM DAWA SHERFA M SANJEEP RAI M SANJEEP RAI M RHARTA RAI M RHARTA RAI M REJOICE RAI M RESOICE R	Gender Institution F RNGA . SRIEHOLA F RNGA . SRIEHOLA F RNGA . SRIEHOLA F RNGA . SRIEHOLA GRIEHOLA M . SRIEHOLA M . SRIEHOLA M . DARJEELINGSEGONG M . RAMMAM M . RAMMAM M . SRIEHOLA DARAGOAN GHANJYANG DARAGOAN GHANJYANG	Gender Institution Address F RNGA SRIFHO F RNGA SRIFHO M SRIFHO M GRIFHO M GRIFHO
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Promoting Bird Tourism in Rimbick, Darjeeling: Bird Guide Training Rimbick, Darjeeling 29th and 30th April 2023

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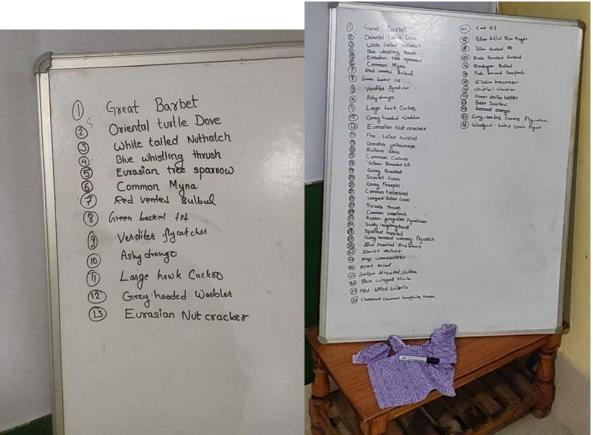


Promoting Bird Tourism in Rimbick, Darjeeling: Bird Guide Training
Rimbick, Darjeeling
29th and 30th April 2023

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Annexure III: Checklist of birds observed and identified by the participant



Checklist of birds observed in Day 1 (left) and Day 2 (right). Prepared by the participants during the data collation sessions.

Annexure IV: Checklist of birds observed and identified by the participants with scientific and local names.

SN	Common Name	Scientific Name	Local Name (Nepali)
1	Ashy Drongo	Dicrurus leucophaeus	Chibey
2	Barn Swallow	Hirundo rustica	Gauthali
3	Bay Woodpecker	Blythipicus pyrrhotis	Lachey
4	Black Bulbul	Hypsipetes leucocephalus	Kyaki
5	Black-throated Sunbird	Aethopyga saturata	Balchey
6	Blue Whistling Thrush	Myophonus caeruleus	Kalchura
7	Blue-fronted Redstart	Phoenicurus frontalis	Tik-tikey
8	Blue-winged Minla	Actinodura cyanouroptera	
9	Bronzed Drongo	Dicrurus aeneus	Chibey
10	Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush	Trochalopteron erythrocephalum	Kali Vyakura
11	Coal Tit	Periparus ater	
12	Common Cuckoo	Cuculus canorus	Cuckoo
13	Common Myna	Acridotheres tristis	Ruppee
14	Common Rosefinch	Carpodacus erythrinus	
15	Common Tailorbird	Orthotomus sutorius	Damai Chara
16	Eurasian Nutcracker	Nucifraga caryocatactes	Lekh Bhaley
17	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	Passer montanus	Bhangera
18	Fire-tailed Myzornis	Myzornis pyrrhoura	Chinchirey
19	Great Barbet	Psilopogon virens	Nyaul
20	Greater Yellownape	Chrysophlegma flavinucha	Lachey
21	Green Shrike Babbler	Pteruthius xanthochlorus	
22	Green-backed Tit	Parus monticolus	Chi-chin-kotay
23	Grey Bushchat	Saxicola ferreus	Duirey
24	Grey Treepie	Dendrocitta formosae	Kokolay
25	Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher	Phylloscopus xanthoschistos	
26	Grey-hooded Warbler	Pycnonotus leucogenys	Fista
27	Himalayan Bulbul	Pycnonotus leucogenys	Phusre Jureli
28	Large Hawk Cuckoo	Hierococcyx sparverioides	Biu char
29	Large-billed Crow	Corvus macrorhynchos	Kaag
30	Oriental Turtle Dove	Streptopelia orientalis	Tavey Dhukur
31	Pink-browed Rosefinch	Carpodacus rodochroa	
32	Red-billed Leiothrix	Leiothrix lutea	Jhyar-jhyarey
33	Red-vented Bulbul	Pycnonotus cafer	Kali Jureli
34	Rufous Sibia	Heterophasia capistrata	Char-charey
35	Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher	Ficedula strophiata	
36	Scaly Laughingthrush	Trochalopteron subunicolor	Vyakura
37	Scarlet Finch	Carpodacus sipahi	
38	Scarlet Minivet	Pericrocotus speciosus	Rani Chara
39	Sikkim Treecreeper	Certhia discolor	Sulsuley
40	Spotted Forktail	Enicurus maculatus	Dhobini
41	Stripe-throated Yuhina	Yuhina gularis	Naltey
42	Tickell's Thrush	Turdus unicolor	
43	Verditer Flycatcher	Eumyias thalassinus	Harini
44	Wedge-tailed Green Pigeon	Treron sphenurus	Haleso
45	Whistler's Warbler	Phylloscopus whistleri	
46	White-tailed Nuthatch	Sitta himalayensis	Sulsuley
47	Yellow-billed Blue Magpie	Urocissa flavirostris	Lampucharey
48	Yellow-browed Tit	Sylviparus modestus	Jurey fista
49	Yellow-cheeked Tit	Machlolophus spilonotus	

Annexure V: Photographs



Mr. Sagar Pradhan, Secretary of Rimbick Nature Guide Association, delivering the welcome address.



Dr. Saibal Sengupta, SRS Nature Club presenting a talk on Bird Watching, Bird Identification and Conservation during the Technical Session I.



Participants observing birds during Field Session I.



Participants taking cover after heavy rain during Field session I.



Participants preparing a checklist of birds observed during Field Session I.



Aditya Pradhan delivering a presentation on the avian diversity of Darjeeling with emphasis to endemic species of the Eastern Himalaya during Technical Session II.



Group photo of the participants and resource people after the Technical Session II.



Participants observing birds during Field Session II.



Participants observing birds during Field Session II.



Participants identify birds in the field using Merlin Bird Id App during Field Session II.



Participants preparing a checklist of birds observed during Field Session II.



Mr. Sanjeev Pradhan, Rimbick Nature Guide Association delivering a talk on Guiding Skills during the Technical Session IV.



Participants observing birds during Field Session III.



Participants with their certificates after successfully completing the training.