

Trip Report - Kodai & Thekkady

By Clement Francis

Had been been Thekkady and Kodai for 4 days with Vijaykumar Thondaman last week.

Important sightings at Thekkady (Periyar Tiger Reserve).

We found in the lake a pair of dabchicks, may be they were there due to the severe drought conditions prevailing in the surrounding areas. Also the sighting of Nilgiri Flycatcher pair at the reserve.

The Nilgiri fly cater was not at all shy, and allowed us to approach it as close us 7-8 feet and photograph. We made some fantastic close-ups of both the male and female. These are seldom seen in this particular area and I cannot comment how they occurred here. Our first sighting of this bird here among the many trips were have made to this great place. All big guns of Kerala birders should comment regarding their sighting of this particular species, which will be helpful for us.

Many trees were fruiting and there was lot of insect life also which attracted the following mixed hunting group, which consisted of. Whitebellied treepie, Rufous Treepie, Gr.Racket Tailed Drongo, Bronzed drongo, Whitebellied drongo, Scarlet minivet, Hill myna, Jungle myna, Common woodshrike, Lesser Golden backed woodpecker, Fairy bluebird, Brown flycatcher, Greyheaded Canary Flycatcher, Black birds, Malabar Trogon (Female), Jungle babblers, Malabar Whistling thrush, Red whiskered bulbul, Yellowbrowed bulbul, Black bulbul, Malabar parakeet, White-eye, Velvetfronted nuthatch, Common Iora and Malabar hornbill. It was a fantastic sight and with a couple of birders from Sweden, we enjoyed the activity for all most 30mins. It was joy to photograph most of the birds at such close range.

Near the boat landing a small ficus tree was in fruit and 3 Rubythroated black headed bulbuls were gorging on the fruits, also close to the Tortoise shaped building, a huge ficus tree was in fruits and we could count more than 100 Pampadour pigeons, many White eyes and Ioras, white cheeked barbets, Crimpson-fronted barbets, Malabar hornbills, few Great hornbills, Yellow legged green pigeons, Hill mynas, Jungle mynas, Chestnut tailed starlings were gorging on the ripe fruits. It was a one of the treat of our life time.

On our way back, visited Kodaikanal to photograph the Jerdon's laughing thrush for our Birds of Western Ghats book, and we did manage to photograph this common bird in Kodai (very common in fact) near the lake.

Also photographed the Plain Prinia which was breeding out there. Near the Queen hotel at Kodai, there were lots of bird activity comprising primarily of Ioras, white-eyes and Greyheaded canary flycatcher. We did manage to take some close ups of the GH-canary flycatcher. Also saw the Black eagle, Honey buzzard, Peregrine falcon and Besra.

Clement Francis M

clement.francis@wipro.com