

## Trip Report

### Thattekad Bird Sanctuary, India

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After a chance meeting with two local Indian birdwatchers near Thattekad Bird sanctuary in early December 1999 I decided to spend a couple of nights looking for a handful of hard-to-find species which I had not seen on the usual southern Indian circuit. I was taken on a thirty-six hour tour by the two men, named Eldhose and Jifo, which included one night inside the sanctuary and one outside. The area has many southern Indian specialties and seemed far superior to any of the other sites I had visited a week or two previously.

**I would suggest birdwatchers include this site on a tour, if only for the owls.**

The most notable species were:

Mottled Wood Owl (*Strix ocellata*), a pair photographed and seen easily during the day. I was told there were three pairs in the same area and that it was a fairly common species outside the sanctuary.

Spot-bellied Eagle Owl (*Bubo nipalensis*); one bird seen several times, calling throughout the night inside the sanctuary. According to Eldhose and Jifo, although this owl is often heard it is more difficult to see. I saw one or possibly two individuals in six or seven hours.

Malayan Night Heron (*Gorsachius melanoleucos*), unfortunately only an immature in the sanctuary rehabilitation 'Zoo'. This bird had been found in a nest in a felled tree, proving the species breeds within the sanctuary.

Sri Lanka Frogmouth (*Batrachostomus moniliger*), very common both inside and outside the sanctuary; 10+ were heard in three hours one evening. On two occasions I just chanced on birds perched by paths and on another occasion I was able to observe; one male and two females from the same spot.

Rusty-tailed Flycatcher (*Muscicapa ruficauda*); three birds seen in a day. This was the only site where I observed this species in the south.

Grey-headed Bulbul *Pycnonotus priocephalus*; common both in and outside the sanctuary.

Nilgiri Wood Pigeon (*Columba elphinstonii*); only a single bird recorded but I was informed that the species is relatively common in the sanctuary.

Eldhose and Jifo are keen for birdwatchers to visit the site and they make both friendly and informative guides.