

Trip Report

Thattekad Bird Sanctuary, India

I just returned from a trip to South India and wanted to report my experiences at Thattekad with KV Eldhose as a guide.

I stayed at Eldhose's "Hornbill Camp" for 4 nights in mid December. The camp is a rustic, but very comfortable place to stay. It consists of a large tent cabin on a concrete floor with two beds. There is a sink and toilet attached. Shower facilities are a short distance away. The setting is fantastic; right on a peaceful stretch of the Periyar River. Really quite a pretty location. Birding right from camp was very good (Indian Pittas in the compound and Rufous Babblers visible from the tent). Meals are very good (prepared by Eldhose's wife) and delivered to camp by scooter from Eldhose's home. There is no electricity, but there are battery operated lights that Eldhose keeps recharged. My wife, who is not a birder, stayed one night and enjoyed the experience.

The birding was fantastic in Thettekad and Eldhose is an excellent bird guide. He knows where to look for the hard birds and he is amazing with calls. We found several good birds because Eldhose heard the bird while we were driving!

We visited the Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary twice (this is across the Periyar River by ferry from camp). Highlight there was great looks at Ceylon Frogmouth. Most birding was on the camp side of the Periyar River, sometimes driving about 5-15 km to locations Eldhose knew well. Saw Wynnaad Laughingthrush, Gray-headed Bulbul, Red Spurfowl, River Tern, Malabar Parakeet, Brown Fish-Owl, Mottled Wood-Owl, Malabar Trogon, 8 species of Woodpecker, and lots of other good birds.

I was so pleased with Eldhose's guiding that I hired him to go with me to Munnar and to join me for a few days in early January in the Mudumalai/Masinagudi area. He was fantastic in all these areas. I saw all the S. Indian endemics except Nilgiri Wood-Pigeon. We were lucky to see a few (Broad-tailed Grassbird above Munnar, in particular), but unlucky on the Wood-Pigeon (our best location was fogged-in the day we visited). In short, I felt Eldhose did a fabulous job of finding the birds. Without him, I would have missed many and spent days looking for others. I can't imagine a better guide to S. India.

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