



**Birding
at
Georgia
Sunshine
Village**

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Published by: Simi Paknikar

First Published in 2019

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Many thanks to Georgia and Len of Georgia
Sunshine Village, Malavalli, Karnataka

Preface

Georgia Sunshine Village, a homestay resort in Malavalli, near Shivana Samudram, on the outskirts of Bangalore, is well known for the hospitality offered, the food, and the pet dogs. Moreover, the property is at a stone's throw away from Bangalore – less than a couple of hours drive from the city on the scenic Kanakpura road. What may not be well known is that it is a great spot for birding, especially for new birdwatchers. The serene property is an open expanse with flowering plants, bushes, medium-sized berry trees as well as larger trees. These, set in a surrounding of fields, a tree cover, and water bodies attract a variety of birds to the property. The best part is the fact that a large number of birds can be spotted within the property or within a very short distance – which adds the safety factor to an unforgettable birding experience.

Here are some of the birds that we have spotted within and near the property of Georgia Sunshine Village over several of our weekend getaways to the resort. Also included apart from the pictures, are notes that can help you identify these birds whenever you visit the property.

Dr. Simi Paknikar

Birding at Georgia Sunshine Village

Bangalore, India

The small birds: sunbird, munia and minivet



Sunbirds are small colourful birds that are often spotted flitting between flowers. The hibiscus shrubs at Georgia seemed to be a favourite for these birds. Sunbirds have thin and long downward curved beaks, which help to identify them. We spotted two varieties of sunbirds on the property – the purple sunbird and the purple-rumped sunbird. The males assume metallic colours during breeding season, while the females are a dull olive green above and yellow below.



Scaly-breasted munias are small birds similar to sparrows. We spotted them on the short trees (that lined the pathway from the gate of the property to the dining area) carrying strands of grass for their nests in their thick and short beaks. Identifying these birds is easy: The head and back are chestnut to coffee brown in colour. The belly is white with feathers with black tips arranged in such a way that look like scales on the chest.



The **small minivet** is a small bird with a grey head, back and tail. It has an orange-and-yellow throat and patches on its wings. The orange colour makes it stand out among green foliage, almost looking like a flower or a fruit from a distance. We spotted one on our morning walk in the village. On one of our visits, there were several small minivets within the property, in the open space behind the cottages on one of the trees.

The medium-sized birds: Red-whiskered bulbul, white-cheeked barbet and yellow-billed babbler



Red-whiskered bulbuls are slightly larger than sunbirds and munias. They are common and easy to identify. The red-whiskered bulbul is black and white with a black crest on the head, a black collar around the neck, a dark greyish brown back and a red patch under the tail. It is named after the red patches on each cheek. Its call consists of three to five syllables, often sounding like 'po-ta-to- or ch-weet po-ta-to'. We saw them all over the property. Of course, these can be easily seen in most towns and cities as well.



The **white-cheeked barbet** is a green bird which wasn't easy to spot among the green leaves. Fortunately, its call, similar to the croak of a frog and sounded like "Kuk .. krrrrr", gave it away. It has a sturdy beak, and a white ring around the eye with a black mark passing across it. Its head, throat and upper belly are white and streaked, while the lower belly is light green.



Yellow-billed babblers are plump brown birds with round white eyes with a central black dot. They have pale yellow beaks, their heads are a paler brown than the rest of the body, and their tails are tipped black. On one of our visits, we found a group of babblers hopping and pecking on the ground and among low bushes in the open area to the right of the camp fire location.

The Robins: Oriental magpie robin and Indian robin



The **Oriental magpie robin** is black and white over well-defined parts- the head, throat and back are black while they lower belly is white. The female is grey and white. The magpie robin is often found singing from low branches. This bird can be easily seen all over the property and its call often sounds like “Shu... weeeet”.



The **Indian robin** is a small black bird with a long white patch on each wing. It frequently twerks its tail up, revealing a red patch below on the rump. Not very polite behaviour from a human perspective, but perhaps an accepted social practice among our feathered friends. While this photo shows the robin perched on a rock, we have often spotted these birds moving about on the open ground within the property. The female is a duller grey brown.

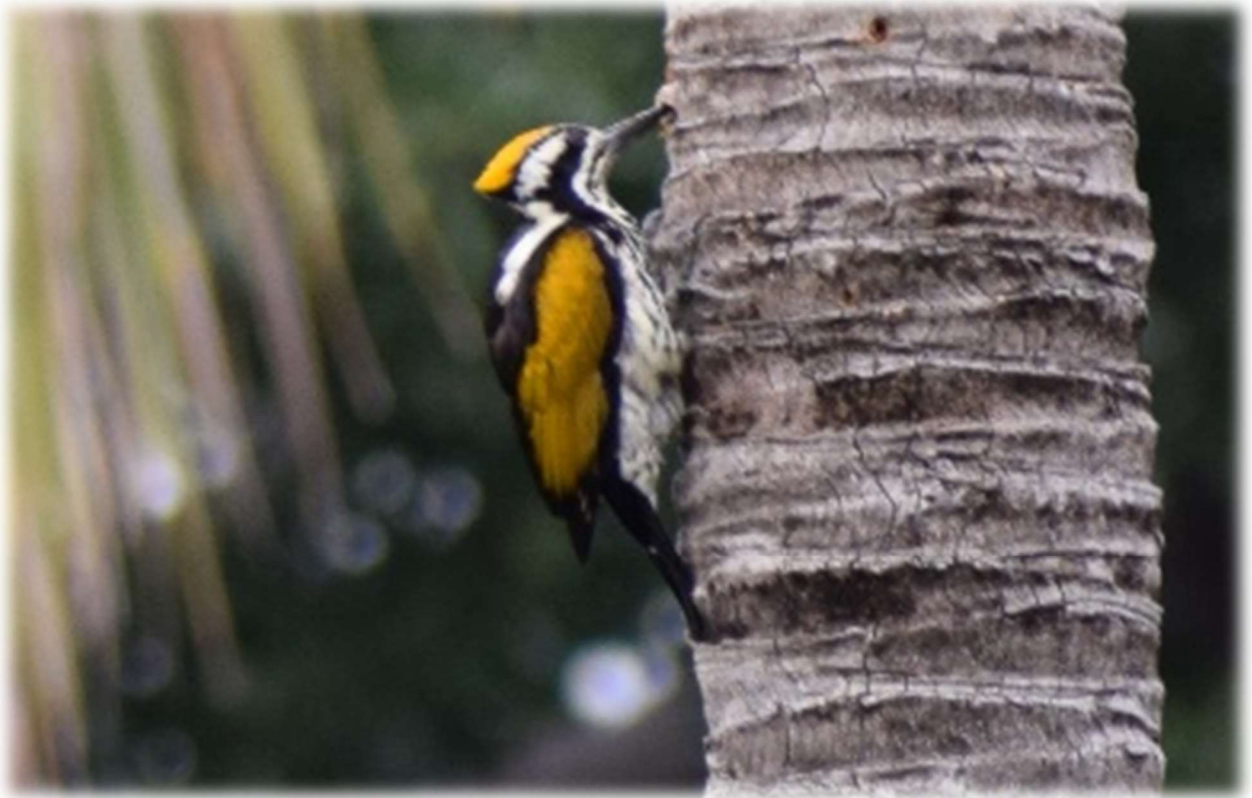
The yellow birds: Common iora, Oriental white eye, white-naped woodpecker



The **common iora** is a yellowish-green bird with black, white and yellow patterned wings, and a black tail. The male gets a black cap and nape during the breeding season. The common iora was difficult to spot, especially when hidden among foliage, but once spotted, was an unforgettable sight! We did not see this bird on all our trips – so you can consider yourself lucky if you do.



The **Oriental white eye** is a tiny bird that is greenish yellow above and white below. The striking feature of the bird is its black eye with a white ring around it. It moves quickly and is often difficult to capture with the camera. However, on one of our visits, we noticed a large group on one of the trees near the cottages. Restless, darting from one branch to another, hanging upside down – these little birds with the big black and white eye were a treat at close quarters!



The **white-naped woodpecker** is a woodpecker with a white throat and belly streaked with black. The white on the back of the neck is separated from the golden wings by a prominent black V. We spotted a female with a yellow crown, while the male has a red crown. The woodpeckers were common in the coconut grove among the parakeets.

Dull in colour but stunning to the eye: Grey francolin, Indian grey hornbill, spotted owlet, red vented bulbul and white bellied drongo



The **grey francolin** is a small brown hen-like bird that is extremely shy. More than spotting it, you are likely to notice ‘something like a hen disappearing in the bushes!’ Luckily, we managed to capture a couple with our lens.



The **Indian grey hornbill** is a grey bird with a white belly. It has a large and prominently curved grey and yellowing beak with an additional casque over it. The tail is long with a black band near its lower end and white tips. On one of our trips, we saw this hornbill just while entering the property, on the right side on one of the trees just before the parking lot. We also spotted a few of these hornbills on a morning walk near the property, perched on some coconut palms.



The **spotted owlet** is a small owl. Some owlets had made a home just under the roof of one of the cottages, however we were not lucky enough to catch a glimpse of the little owls going into or coming out from there. We saw the owlet on a tree near that cottage. The spotted owlet's face is flat with black and yellow eyes and white brows. It is highly spotted on its back with bars on its belly and a white band on the neck.



The **red-vented bulbul** is slightly smaller than its red-cheeked counterpart. It has a black head that appears square-shaped when the crest is raised. The feathers on the chest and upper back appear like scales. The red patch below its white-tipped tail adds colour to the black-and-white bird. We spotted quite a few just around the property. This photograph is from the area just past the entrance gate.



The **white-bellied drongo** is a black bird with a short and straight black beak, greyish throat, a white belly and short legs. It is slightly smaller than a crow. Its characteristic feature is its long and deeply forked tail. We've spotted these birds, as well as the more common **black drongos**, during our walks near the property.

Naughty and noisy: The mischievous rose-ringed parakeets



A large group of **rose-ringed parakeets** literally infests a coconut grove close to Georgia Sunshine Village. The rose-ringed parakeet has a typical hooked red beak, feathers with green and blue shades and a long bluish tail. Adult males have a distinct black and pink band around the neck, which appears after three years of age. A black band extends below the chin to the ring around the neck. As you approach the coconut grove, it is impossible to miss the cacophony of the parakeets screeching aloud and flying around from one tree to another.

The blue birds - Tickell's blue flycatcher and the Indian roller



Tickell's blue flycatcher is a small bird that is bright blue on its head, back and tail. This combined with a bright orange on its throat, makes it easy to identify as it perches on low branches of trees. It is white on its lower belly. We have spotted this bird at various places in and around the property.



The **Indian roller** is a blue and brown bird. It has a blue crown on its head. The breast and back are brown with a heavily streaked throat. The wings, underbelly and tail are in shades of blue, which looks stunning while the bird is in flight. One good thing about this bird is that it doesn't fly off too fast. It remains perched for enough time for you to have a good look at it, admire it, and capture it – on your camera of course.

The spotted birds: The spotted dove and the white-spotted fantail



The **spotted dove** is a common pigeon-like grey brown bird. It has a distinct spotted collar on the back and the sides of the neck. Its wings have light spots. It can often be seen pecking on the ground and in this case, we captured it perched on a wire near the property.



The **white-spotted fantail** can be particularly recognized when it spreads out its tail feathers to look like a hand-held fan. The white spotted fantail is a grey and white bird with a white brow, a white throat and white spots on its chest and wings. It is another bird that we saw during one of our walks in the property.

The elusive one: Jacobin cuckoo



In our past few years of bird watching, we have spotted the **Jacobin cuckoo** only in this area, and that too on two different occasions! The Jacobin cuckoo a medium-sized bird that is black above with a black crest on the head, and white in the throat and belly. It has white patches on its wings and white tips on its tail. Every time we visit the property, we look around especially for this bird. An elusive one indeed!

Summary

This is not an exhaustive list – for example, we’ve left out some birds that we have seen but may have not captured good snaps. Also, we obviously would not have recorded all the birds in and around Georgia Sunshine Village. For example, we could hear peacocks but could not spot them. Finally, several of these birds may be seen in towns and cities as well – but the joy of seeing them in an open forest type of setting is a different feeling. And there are invariably the rare ones (like the Jacobin cuckoo) which you are unlikely to see in the city.