

# Nepal: Pandamonium

## Getting there

Our good friends and frequent travel companions, Jenny and Terry Cloudman, suggested a VENT trip to Nepal to see Red Pandas. We were pleased and surprised that son Charles and granddaughter Kiera agreed to come along.

We had a long but comfortable flight to Kathmandu with a seven-hour layover in Doha. We spent the first three days at [Gokarna Forest Resort](#), a five-star hotel, where we saw a number of good birds, including the Blue-throated Barbet.

We found our first lifer, Himalayan Bulbul, right around the hotel, as well as some Rhesus monkeys last seen in India in 2003.



*Himalayan Bulbul*



*Rhesus Macaques Grooming*

Our stay at the hotel coincided with a celebration of the New Year in Nepal. The [Nepali calendar, aka Bikram Sambat Nepali calendar](#), is unique: A lunisolar calendar, with the current year 58 years ahead of the one we use, according to Jim, a confirmed calendar fanatic. The place was jammed with people celebrating the New Year — and tasting the many offerings from local restaurants.

We took a day trip to Mount Phulchowki before heading out for [The Habre's Nest, our next location](#).

Some of the birds at Mount Phulchowki, both *virtual lifers*.



*Long-tailed Broadbill*



*Alexandrine Parakeet*

## The Road

The road to the [Habre's Nest](#), easily made it onto our list of the worst roads in the world. Bumpy doesn't really cover it. We learned that there was a reason. "If the road was nice and smooth, it would be slick with ice in the winter."

We stopped along the way for some birds in the fields. Jim particularly liked these two birds, Black-headed Ibis and Asian Openbill Stork, foraging in the marsh.



*Black-headed Ibis and Asian Openbill Stork*

## The Habre's Nest

After a longish day, we arrived at [The Habre's Nest](#), a small rustic lodge where we stayed six days, walking the trails and hills. *Habre* is a local name for Red Pandas.



## The Blind



*Yellow-throated Martens*



*Black-faced Laughingthrush*

One of the nice features of the lodge was a nearby blind, where we got some excellent photos. Jim's favorite, indeed, maybe his favorite photo of the year, is this one of a pair of Yellow-throated Martens.

Additionally, we enjoyed repeated close-up views of three shy laughingthrushes, Yellow-billed Blue Magpies, plus others.

## Panda #1

After several days birding along the road, we got the word that a Panda had been spotted. After an arduous trek thru the forest, then down a steep, bamboo-covered hill, finally sliding down the last bit on our butts.

Of course, there is no way to slide uphill on your butt. Jim needed an hour to get back to the road, where the youngsters waited. Linda arrived quite a bit later, in time to hear the good news. Another panda had been spotted, "right on the road."



*Red Panda*

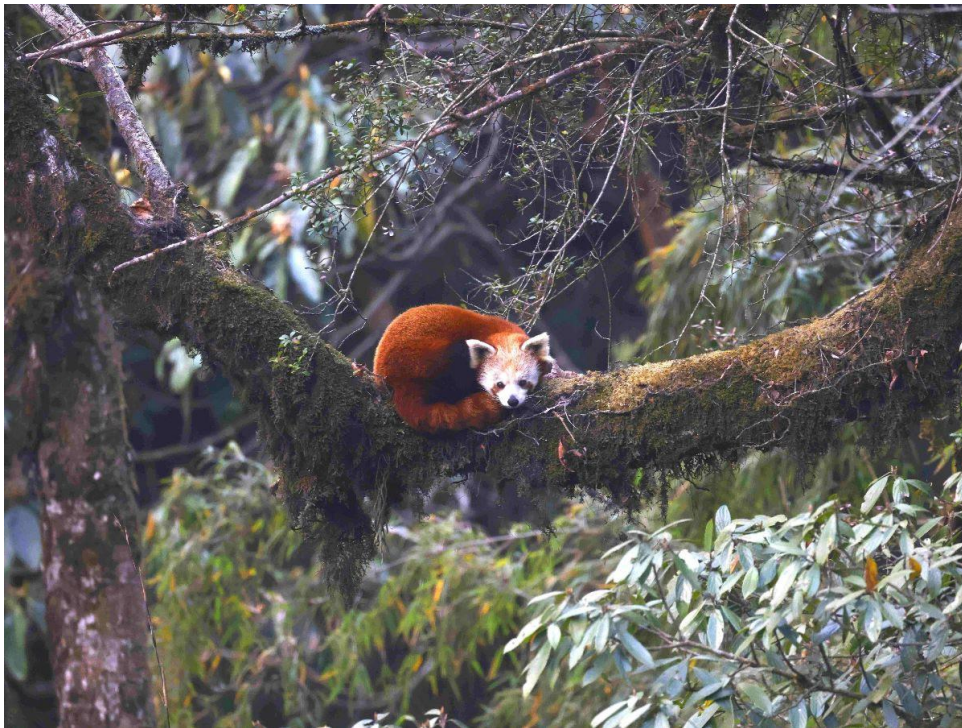
## Panda #2

Another long trek. The animal was not by any road, but rather by a trail along the ridgeline. This involved climbing over some rocks and walking quite a bit farther than the “one kilometer” we were promised.

Linda and Jim arrived to learn Charles and Kiera had been watching for an hour while waiting for us to turn up. We spotted the panda in the open, right before it climbed down and disappeared

## Panda #3

In the afternoon, it grew cold, and fog descended on the area. So, when our guide, Andy Whittaker, told us that a third panda had been spotted, just over the border in India, only Charles and Kiera had enough energy left to go have a look. Andy’s photo is below. Notice the lack of fog.



*Red Panda © Andrew Whittaker*



## [Sandakphu](#)

One day, we drove up the road to [Sandakphu](#), the highest spot around. There we saw some spectacular species, such as these:



*Golden Bush-robin*



*Fire-tailed Sunbird*

## [Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve](#)

After a week at Habre's Nest, we journeyed to a nice lodge, in the lowlands, located on the Koshi river near the [Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve](#).

The area was full of interesting insects, such as this "Leopard Dragonfly." The actual name is Common Picture Wing, but we liked the native name better. An interesting mammal was this Nilgai or Blue Cow. Birding in lowlands was easier, and productive.

The full album of [photos from Nepal](#) is online.



*"Leopard Dragonfly" aka Common*



*Nilgai, a kind of antelope*