

Pages from the diary of Tejas – Orange County, Coorg, June 2010

Tejas visits our resorts in Coorg and Kabini and shares with you some of his uplifting experiences. Join him as he immerses himself in the activities at our two resorts, and enjoy them with him, virtually!

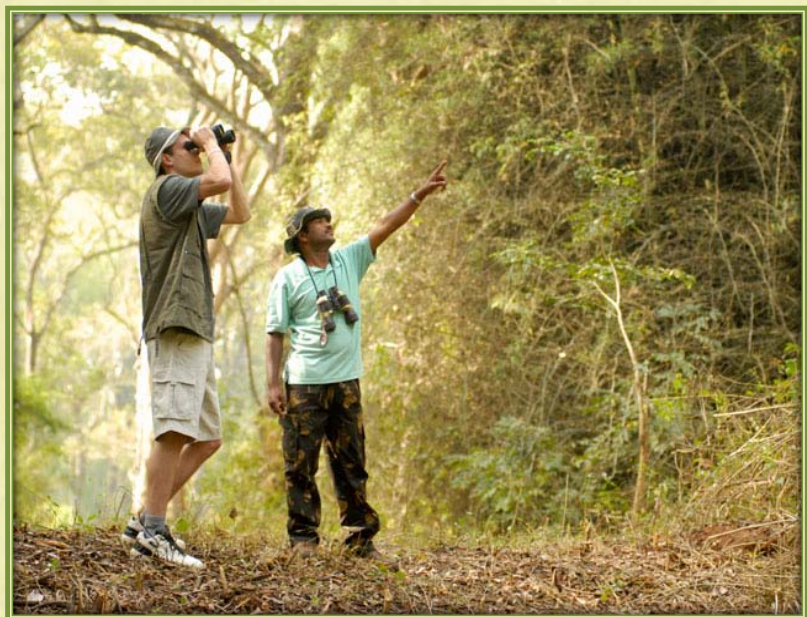


Tejas Joseph resides in Auroville near Pondicherry and is part of a consulting group engaged in creating viable models of decentralised lighting (using solar energy) for off-grid Indian villages. Tejas travels a lot in the course of his work and feels a deep connection with the history and ethos of the places he visits. He is a keen observer of the winds of change that are now blowing across the physical, cultural and social landscapes of India and seeks to capture its effects in his articles, ever believing that the journey is as important as the destination, the travel as rewarding as the arrival! Feel free to write to him at pjtejas@gmail.com if your interests or work coincide with his.

Activity Name	Guided Bird Watching
Duration	1 ½ Hours
Timing	6.30 AM to 8.00 AM
Guided	Yes (Part of common group) (If required exclusive guide can be arranged at nominal charge of Rs.1200/ Prior booking required)
Cost	Included in the package
Transfers	Not required
Prior Booking Required	Yes

Wing spotting on a dewy fresh morning

For wildlife enthusiasts, nature lovers and early risers, starting off with a bird sighting walk at 6:30 am on the vast grounds of the resort can be a spirited curtain raiser to a great day. If your guide on this walk happens to be a certain Ganesh, then you are very likely to be awakened, or greeted (if already awake) by a bird call, albeit a simulated (but very convincing) one. The morning air of the resort resounds with the chorus of hundreds of birds. The Coorg region of the Western Ghats is home to numerous avian species both common and rare. The forested character of the resort and the surrounding coffee plantations (with its large numbers of fruit trees and flowering plants) attract



these feathered guests in large numbers.

The Just about any path that you may wander upon in or out of the resort is rife with bird song and presence. On this beautiful morning, we chose the little path that ran beside the Dubare wildlife reserve next door.

We walked straight into an avian babble. Ganesh's trained ears began sifting through bird calls and matching them with his big inventory of bird sounds. The first to swoop by our line of vision was the Indian Robin (*Saxicoloides fulicatus*), soon followed by the Red-whiskered Bulbul (*Pycnonotus jocosus*). A few hundred yards on, we first heard (before spotting) the loud tap-tap-tap of the Rufous Woodpecker (*Micropternus brachyurus*). A couple of Hill Mynas (*Gracula indica*) were chirping their heads off seemingly over a breakfast argument. While getting them onto camera, Ganesh urgently called our attention to a new note he had detected



in the symphony around us. It was the Indian Grey Hornbill (*Ocyrceros birostris*). Learned birder that he is, he told us that it was not a very common visitor to these parts, making his sighting a rather eventful one. We spotted the Hornbill for a moment high above a towering Rosewood tree before he was swallowed up in its thick leaves.

Somewhere in the din, we could hear the signature call of the Brainfever Bird (*Hierococcyx varius*) and the raucous medley of the seven sisters (*Turdoides striata*), also known as Jungle Babblers owing to their noisy natures. We also gawked at the big trees (some no less than a hundred years old) and were entranced by fancy looking wild mushrooms, colorful butterflies and insects we don't commonly see in our city homes.

We were beginning to get a little tired (and hungry). Without quite noticing it, we had actually walked about 3 km,



being lured into the forest by the pan pipes of bird calls and other forest sounds. We started back. Just as we were getting off the bird track into the resort, we suddenly caught sight (not of a bird as you might suppose) but the famous (and rare) Indian or Malabar Giant Squirrel (*Ratufa indica*). We stood transfixed for about twenty minutes watching him dart from branch to branch, his bushy tail twitching to the machine gun-like sound and intensity of his chatter. He was not in the least bit timid or shy and afforded us full views of himself, also rare Ganesh told us. We felt the first drops of a drizzle (we forgot we were in monsoon country) and decided to move on to a hot cup of refreshing coffee, a warm

bath and a sumptuous breakfast – all accompanied by constant (if not always noticed) bird song. It was the keynote and backdrop to all life at the resort. It graced your day and lightened your heart, making you give thanks for being alive.