

India Trip

For the first two weeks of December I joined with 3 other Americans on a visit to a semi-arid part of India. Two leaders in India arranged for us to meet people from minority groups, both in cities and in rural locations. We also visited the Taj Mahal in the city of Agra, which was reported separately. In addition to our cultural sharing I was able to see and photograph birds new to me, which I reported as usual to Cornell University for scientific studies.

Most of the countryside was flat with scattered vegetation apart from agricultural fields. There were also long lines of mountains and some lakes in the region.



In this time of the Winter Monsoon the weather was mostly clear and pleasantly warm, so we were comfortable in short-sleeved shirts. Our rural visits included homes in farmland and in the hills. Most crops were already harvested or newly sprouted. These are representative scenes.



The last scene shows a yellow-green field of a Canadian mustard variety used for Canola Oil.



In these random street scenes various animals are in the streets along with road-side vendors. Camels were occasionally seen while elephants were rare. The last scene shows piles of dried animal dung to be burned as heating fuel. Driving is mostly on the left side of the road. Rarely did we see a vehicle coming in the opposite direction on a divided highway. Lane dividing lines on the road were mostly ignored, though signs said that it makes for safer driving to remain in the lanes. In heavy traffic vehicles were very close to others in front and to the sides. Lane changes were sudden, usually only signaled by horns. Yet accidents were almost never seen.



During our first week most of our meetings were in a rented building near our hotel. Different groups came each day for our cultural talks and lunch (served outside under a temporary canopy). A local leader translated our English into Hindi (or audience participation in reverse). The women had a variety of clothing styles.

We also had meetings in homes in both the cities and rural areas, usually with minority people groups.



At a city home neighbors listened from the adjacent roofs and street.



A farming community gathered under a canopy at a home's front yard.



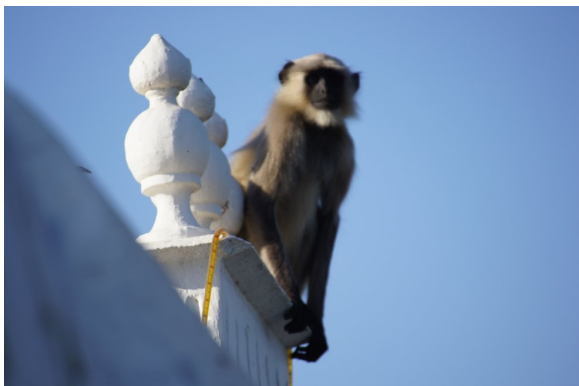
Cattle were beside this home in the hills.



We walked about a kilometer to get there.



We had special rides and had a special Indian dinner served on plates of dried leaves.



Sometimes we saw wild monkeys.





There were many brick factories in the area.



We were often greeted with necklaces of these marigold flowers, as below.



An evening meeting at a rural home.



The special hat was given to us only at our first meeting place.



This Ashy Prinia wagged its tail to flush out insects.



Brahminy Starling



Black Redstart, also in China.



Red-wattled Lapwing



Rose-ringed Parakeet



Little Egret



Black-winged Stilt