

India – Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve (BM)

Naturetrek Tour Report

12 - 21 March 2010

Report compiled by Himanshu Rathore



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Participants: Martin Baggot
Kate Baggot
Helen Prandy
Tracey Hart
Barbara Wild

Summary

It was an amazingly successful tour - tigers were literally appearing from behind every bush, and we saw two male tigers fight which is a sight that makes the heart shiver with growling noises they make. Other than the tigers we had great views from the fort and seeing the vultures hover at eye level was exciting. It was overall a great safari experience.

Day 0

Friday 12th March

Travel from the UK

Day 1

Saturday 13th March

Having met at the airport, we checked into the ever-so-stylish Ashok Country Hotel where there was time to wash and change and have a hearty meal. We then set out for the station to catch the train.

Day 2

Sunday 14th March

Our train rolled into the Katni junction at 4.50am. We were met by our driver at the station and set out on a beautiful journey to Bandhavgarh National Park, travelling through beautiful forests and great sceneries. On arrival at the camp we got a much-deserved cup of tea and some hot breakfast to go with it. After breakfast we took a short walk around the camp just to get our orientation. As we all were tired from the long journey we decided to rest a bit and after lunch we set out for the jungle, Martin, Kate, Helen and me in one jeep and Tracey and Barbara in the other.

It was a good introduction to the park seeing the usual mammals; Chital, Sambar and some birds. We enjoyed the views of Bandhavgarh hill and came back to the lodge content with what we saw but we were not even close to lucky compared to Tracey and Barbara as they saw 4 different individual tigers!! In their first safari! We listened to them wondering how lucky these two people were but then we thought maybe tomorrow is our day...

Day 3

Monday 15th March

The day began early as we set out for the park gate at five forty in the morning. This time I decided to change my jeep and joined Tracey and Barbara.

We were in the Vanvai area when I suddenly heard a Spotted Deer alarm call from around fifty metres to our left so I told the driver to reverse so that we could check the stream to our left and as we reversed we saw the dominant male tiger famously called B2 standing right in the middle of the stream looking straight up at us - wow!! What a sight. We came out and waited on the bridge and five minutes later he did cross right in front of our jeep, we were all so excited! However, as he crossed I noticed that this tiger looked curious about something else and as it came into a stalking position I looked through my binoculars and could not believe my eyes! There was another male tiger standing face to face with this tiger! They both growled at each other and then charged and hit each other face to face. While all this was on I realized that the other male tiger was the Mirchaini sub-adult who is B2's son who was probably trying to expand his territory by taking some of his father's - which obviously was not acceptable, so the fight lasted for around five minutes and then the son surrendered in front of his angry father. Well I must admit that this was one of my best tiger sightings ever! Territorial interaction between two male tigers and those being father and son! Wow.

The day wasn't over for us yet for as we went ahead we saw three young tiger cubs hiding in the hills. Up until breakfast our count was five but there was more to come as we were heading back to the gate we came across a female tiger sitting very close to the road just by chance. Martin, Helen and Kathy also got to see their first tigers this morning. The evening wasn't as interesting as the morning but we did get glimpses of the tiger cubs in the south of the park and saw a female tiger sitting in the grass just before we exited the park.

Day 4

Tuesday 16th March

Today the morning was beautiful with lots of birds chirping and peacocks dancing, and we got wonderful views of Alexandrine Parakeets flying in and out of their nests in a tree hollow. We reached the mid-point where news came that the dominant male was seen briefly, so we went to this area as it was on our way back but were not successful in finding it. After lunch we set out again in search of the dominant male tiger. Kathy, Martin, and Helen were with me and we stayed in the area and did some birding but soon got back near the caves where we thought the tiger was sleeping. We saw a lot of jeeps lined up near the caves and then we were told that yes the tiger was inside as someone saw a tail and paw while it was rolling. So we sat waiting for quite some time but our patience indeed paid off very well and soon we saw the B2 walk out of the cave, and we followed him for almost a kilometre and both Helen and Martin got some wonderful shots. We decided to leave B2 and head for the gate but there was more for us and we saw the Sidh baba female and her two cubs playing in the grass. Dinner's discussion today was the wonderful sighting of B2.

Day 5

Wednesday 17th March

Today we divided into two groups; the fort visitors and the safari people. Amongst the fort visitors were Martin, Kathy, Tracey and Barbara, whereas Helen and I went for the park safari. Well the fort visitors got lucky very early as we started we all got to see the tigress with 2 cubs. We continued our drive, birding all the way, and saw some Rosefinches and Munias, and as we approached climber point near Rajbehra I could see some jeeps parked so we rushed to the sight and saw a magnificent young female sitting on a rock very close to the road. After seeing this tiger for quite some time we moved ahead towards the mid-point but within ten minutes of leaving this sighting we came across B2 again (the dominant male tiger) who was crossing the road and heading south crossing the Bathan Meadows. After relishing this great sighting we headed for the mid-point homewards birding all the way. We saw some beautiful leaf birds and some magnificent butterflies - jezebels and roses just to name a

few. We heard from the fort group that their trip was successful and they got some wonderful views of a Vulture hovering at eye level, and below them, they also saw some beautiful Malabar Pied Hornbills. After lunch we set out again for the park and this time I was with Tracey and Barbara. We straight away headed towards where I had seen the female tiger in the morning and as luck was in our favour we saw her very close to where she was this morning and after watching her for some time we left for the north where there was a chance of seeing a mother and cubs. As we arrived in the area we saw two cubs hiding in the ferns, sometimes we saw some movement and then suddenly a face appearing from behind the fern - to see young cubs is always a delight, and this evening we got to see three different tigers.

Day 6

Thursday 18th March

Today's morning started as a raptor morning we saw Long-billed Vulture, Honey Buzzard, White-eyed Buzzard and Shikra! The day did begin as a raptor morning but there was much more to come, as we moved ahead we saw a beautiful male tiger walking straight down the road and posing for us in perfect golden light. We reached the mid-point where we heard the elephants had also found a tiger in the north so we headed north but by the time we reached the site the tiger had started to move on, and we got a good view of it moving but sadly for us the tiger went and sat in a marshy area where the elephants could not reach. While returning we stopped to look at a hill where a cub was seen some time back and we did get glimpses of it but we thought we might leave the cub alone and carry on. We had just moved around ten metres when Premlal our guide stopped us and then he pointed at a rock under which we could clearly see the young cub's face staring straight at our camera lens - Helen got some amazing photos...This evening was our last drive in Bandhavgarh though we had already had a great time in the jungle with tiger sightings happening left right and center. We went into the park with a motive to enjoy the jungle one last time before leaving. We saw some lovely birds - a Drongo chasing a Woodpecker was our birding highlight for the evening. We headed back home a little low at not seeing a tiger on the last game drive but we already had a great time so could not ask for more. Tracey, Barbara, Helen and I left for Delhi, bidding goodbye to the Bandhavgarh's jungle, and the others stayed back to go on an extension to the Panchmari and Satpura Forests – we wished them a wonderful time.

Day 7

Friday 19th March

Today we reached New Delhi and I dropped Tracey, Barbara and Helen at the hotel with a heavy heart. It was a wonderful experience to be with such a fun loving and adventurous people.

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Species Lists

Birds

	Common name	Scientific name	March					
			13	14	15	16	17	18
1	Indian Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax fuscicollis</i>		✓	✓			✓
2	Indian Pond-heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>			✓			
3	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓
4	Lesser Adjutant	<i>Leptoptilos javanicus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5	Red-naped Ibis	<i>Pseudibis papillosa</i>						✓
6	Oriental Honey-Buzzard	<i>Pernis ptilorhynchus</i>					✓	✓
7	Black-shouldered Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>		✓			✓	
8	Egyptian Vulture	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>			✓	✓	✓	
9	Long-billed Vulture	<i>Gyps indicus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
10	Crested Serpent-eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>			✓	✓	✓	
11	Shikra	<i>Accipiter badius</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓
12	White-eyed Buzzard	<i>Butastur teesa</i>			✓		✓	✓
13	Changeable Hawk-eagle	<i>Spizaetus cirrhatus</i>				✓		
14	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>			✓	✓	✓	
15	Jungle Bush-quail	<i>Perdica asiatica</i>			✓	✓		
16	Painted Spurfowl	<i>Galloperdix spadicea</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓
17	Indian Peafowl	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
18	Stone-curlew	<i>Burhinus oediconemus</i>					✓	
19	Yellow-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus malabaricus</i>				✓	✓	✓
20	Red-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
21	Oriental Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia orientalis</i>			✓	✓		✓
22	Spotted Dove	<i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	
23	Laughing Dove	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>			✓			
24	Yellow-footed Pigeon	<i>Treron phoenicoptera</i>				✓	✓	✓
25	Alexandrine Parakeet	<i>Psittacula eupatria</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓
26	Rose-ringed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>				✓		✓
27	Plum-headed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula cyanocephala</i>				✓	✓	✓
28	Greater Coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>					✓	
29	Brown Fish-owl	<i>Ketupa zeylonensis</i>				✓		
30	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>						✓
31	White-throated Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
32	Green Bee-eater	<i>Merops orientalis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
33	Indian Roller	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
34	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>				✓		✓
35	Indian Grey Hornbill	<i>Ocyrceros birostris</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓
36	Malabar Pied-hornbill	<i>Anthracoceros coronatus</i>			✓		✓	✓
37	Yellow-crowned Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos mahrattensis</i>						✓
38	Black-rumped Flameback	<i>Dinopium benghalense</i>		✓		✓		✓
39	Wire-tailed Swallow	<i>Hirundo smithii</i>		✓		✓		✓
40	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>		✓				
41	Large Cuckoo-shrike	<i>Coracina macei</i>				✓	✓	
42	Small Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus cinnamomeus</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓
43	Red-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
44	Golden-fronted Leafbird	<i>Chloropsis aurifrons</i>					✓	
45	Orange headed thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>						✓
46	Jungle Prinia	<i>Prinia sylvatica</i>				✓		
47	Common Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>					✓	

	Common name	Scientific name	March					
			13	14	15	16	17	18
48	Greenish Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochiloides</i>				✓		
49	Tickell's Blue-flycatcher	<i>Cyornis tickelliae</i>					✓	✓
50	Oriental Magpie-robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓
51	Indian Robin	<i>Saxicoloides fulicata</i>				✓	✓	✓
52	Jungle Babbler	<i>Turdoides striatus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
53	Purple Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris asiaticus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
54	Thick-billed Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum agile</i>						
55	Oriental White-eye	<i>Zosterops palpebrosus</i>					✓	
56	Black-hooded Oriole	<i>Oriolus xanthornus</i>				✓	✓	
57	Brown Shrike	<i>Lanius cristatus</i>						
58	Bay-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius vittatus</i>						
59	Long-tailed Shrike	<i>Lanius schach</i>						
60	Southern Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>						
61	Common Woodshrike	<i>Tephrodornis pondicerianus</i>				✓	✓	
62	Black Drongo	<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>			✓	✓		✓
63	Ashy Drongo	<i>Dicrurus leucophaeus</i>						
64	White-bellied Drongo	<i>Dicrurus caerulescens</i>				✓	✓	✓
65	Greater Racket-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus paradiseus</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓
66	Rufous Treepie	<i>Dendrocitta vagabunda</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
67	House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>						✓
68	Large-billed Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
69	Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>			✓	✓		
70	Brahminy Starling	<i>Temenuchus pagodarum</i>		✓		✓		
71	Chestnut-shouldered Petronia	<i>Petronia xanthocollis</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓
72	Red-headed Vulture	<i>Sarcogyps calvus</i>					✓	✓
73	Orange-headed Thrush	<i>Zoothera citrina</i>						✓
74	Woolly-necked Stork	<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>					✓	
75	Savanna Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus affinis</i>					✓	
76	Indian Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus asiaticus</i>					✓	
77	Common Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus erythrinus</i>					✓	
78	Red Jungle Fowl	<i>Gallus gallus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	

Mammals

1	Royal Bengal Tiger	<i>Panthera tigris tigris</i>		4	7	6	4	3
2	Jungle Cat	<i>Felis chaus kelaarita or kutas</i>				✓		
3	Rhesus Macaque	<i>Macaca mulatta</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓
4	Common Langur Monkey	<i>Presbytis entellus</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓
5	Ruddy Mongoose	<i>Herpestes smithii</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓
6	Golden Jackal	<i>Canis aureus</i>			✓	✓		
7	Indian or Black-naped Hare	<i>Lepus nigricollis</i>					✓	
8	Five-striped Palm Squirrel	<i>Funambulus pennanti</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓
9	Sambar Deer	<i>Cervus unicolor</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
10	Chital (Spotted Deer)	<i>Cervus axis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
11	Indian Muntjac (Barking Deer)	<i>Muntiacus muntjak</i>				✓		✓
12	Indian Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓
13	Pipistrelle Bat	<i>Pipistrellus sp.</i>				✓	✓	✓