

India - Tiger Direct!

Naturetrek Tour Report

17 - 25 March 2014



Tiger by Sarah Richards



Indian Skimmers by Sarah Richards



Chital by Bill Spurrell



Leopard by Sarah Richards

Report compiled by Indrajit Latey
Images courtesy of Sarah Richards & Bill Spurrell



Naturetrek Cheriton Mill Cheriton Alresford Hampshire SO24 0NG England

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

F: +44 (0)1962 736426

E: info@naturetrek.co.uk

W: www.naturetrek.co.uk

Tour Leader: Indrajit Latey Naturalist & guide also Satpura E
 Dilip Saini Naturalist & guide also Tadoba E

Participants: Rosemary Hall
 # Peter Caine
 # Marje Caine
 # Sue Cook
 # John Roberts
 # Peter Fraser
 # Sheila Fraser
 # Paul Pardington
 # Rosemarie Pardington
 + Robin Richards
 + Sarah Richards
 + Bill Spurrell

Tadoba extension
+ Satpura extension

Main Tour

Day 1

Monday 17th March

Pench

With one lady to pick up for the main tour (the others had booked extensions), we left for Pench from the airport. Today was a holiday called HOLI, the festival of colours. People with painted faces and coloured clothes were seen everywhere. On arriving in Pench we met up with the rest of the group members. After some briefings about the next days plan we had dinner and went to bed.

Day 2

Tuesday 18th March

The weather was cool, with conditions ideal for some great sightings. A male tiger patrolling his territory was seen. Tracking him proved difficult since there were no alarm calls as he passed through the forest. We also saw a pack of Wild Dogs successfully hunting a male Spotted Deer. After breakfast we had some wonderful sightings of Grey-headed Fish Eagles in full throttle in the air. After lunch we hoped to catch another glimpse of the male tiger but we were not successful. Nilgai, Wild Boar, Sambar deer and Chital were seen foraging in the forest. On arriving back after the drive we did a quick species check-list, and had dinner.

Day 3

Wednesday 19th March

Pench to Kanha

Early morning in Pench was warm. The Common Hawk Cuckoo kept calling through the night. The drongos and babblers were engaged in a small fight over hunting grounds. We drove towards the backwaters of the dam

and saw Osprey, Grey Headed Fish Eagle and some River Terns. On exiting the park we had lunch and then left for Kanha. En route we passed many villages where we had lots of photo opportunities. We also saw some weekly village markets.

On arriving at the Kanha Jungle Lodge we were welcomed by Tarun and his team. We saw a wonderful display of a Flying Squirrel which glided overhead. After the checklist we had dinner and looked forward to the drives in Kanha in the morning...

Day 4

Thursday 20th March

We left for the first drive before day break. Queuing up for the drive we entered the park at 6 am. We saw the unique Barasingha, some good views of the male Sambar and the mighty Gaur. We heard some alarm calls and drove straight there hoping to see the striped cat. But we were not in luck. After lunch we headed to a waterhole where we thought the tiger would be cooling in the summer heat. En route we saw many pugmarks leading to the waterhole and we were all excited. The tiger had just had a drink and was walking on the road in front of us! The tiger got off the road and went under a bush where he stayed for the entire time. Rolling over from side to side, he fell in a deep sleep. The tiger looked well fed and by his size he looked in fine condition. We saw him for 40 minutes before we had to leave for the exit gate. The Flying Squirrel was seen gliding in the lodge premises. After doing the checklist we had dinner and went off to bed.

Day 5

Friday 21st March

The alarm calls were sounded by the Common Hawk Cuckoo at 5 am. A quick cup of tea and we set off for the game drive. Soon the air was filled with alarm calls of Spotted Deer and Langur. Excitement filled the air when we heard that a Leopard was around. Tracking a Leopard is very difficult and adding further to our frustration some one had also heard a Tiger growling. We got lucky when one of our jeeps saw a male Leopard walking along the fireline and then disappearing in the undergrowth. Lots of alarm calls filled the forest, but they were not that fruitful. Some of our guests enjoyed an hour-long elephant ride inside the forest. With temperatures closing towards the 40's we all headed out of the park.

After lunch we parked near the lake hoping to catch the striped cat. Alas we were not in luck. We had great views of the Grey Headed Canary Flycatcher before returning to the lodge after a good day.

Day 6

Saturday 22nd March

It was a great morning. We knew we would have some great sightings. Sure enough we heard alarm calls close to a lake. One of the cars saw a flash of stripes. We waited over an hour and finally a male sub adult Tiger crossed the road just 10 metres away from the jeep!

Another one jumped over the road in one spring. The elephants were also tracking them and seeing the elephants, the sub-adults turned back towards the road and crossed again. We had some great photo opportunities. After lunch we headed towards to the lake. Lots of alarm calls by Langur and Sambar were heard but no sightings. Elated with the days activities we headed out of the park.

Day 7

Sunday 23rd March

On the last day of the main trip, we were expecting something special. After waking up early we all said our good byes and set off on the morning safari. A car stopped in front of us gesturing us to be where we were and stay quiet. Excitement was in the air. Out of thin air out walked this massive male Tiger, straight towards us. For a moment we all froze not knowing what to do. The Tiger was hardly 40 feet from us! We back-tracked our vehicle for some distance before the Tiger went under a bridge, and came out the other side. We followed him for over 2 kilometres, where we saw him marking his territory, scatting and also grimacing. Just as he had appeared, he disappeared. What a fitting end to our Kanha trip!

After lunch we left for a long drive to our next destination – Satpura. On arriving at the lodge we had a quick brief and dinner before going off to bed.

Post tour extension to Satpura

Day 8

Monday 24th March

Our morning started at 5am. Crossing the Denwa River was a great experience. Terns, Pratincoles and Cormorants guided us to the other bank, keeping our boat company. The safari started with a pair of Eurasian Eagle Owls on the rocky cliffs calling. Seeing the big birds was great. Preening in the morning sun they gave us a good opportunity for photographing them. Driving along the banks we also saw waders like Stilts, Stints and Greenshanks. The temperatures hovered around 36 degrees C and it was just 9 am. Exiting the park we got back to the lodge and into the coolness of the rooms. After lunch we went for another drive in the park. We had good views of the Nilgai and Gaur. During dinner we heard lots of alarm calls of Chital, which we were told were calling after seeing the resident male Leopard!

Day 9

Tuesday 25th March

Today we went on the canoes to look for the skimmers and other nesting waders. Terns, Pratincoles, Plovers and River Lapwings were seen in plenty. But of course the highlight was the eight Indian Skimmers that were enjoyed by all of our guests. Breakfast was overlooking a colony of River Terns squabbling over nesting spaces. After lunch we drove in the park to try to find Leopard and Sloth Bear. We saw them both! The Sloth Bear was with its sub-adult cub. Foraging in the undergrowth it was looking for tubers and termites. A little ahead our driver shouted – LEOPARD. Sitting in the middle of the lantana plants was an 18-month-old Leopard female. On being spotted she stood up and crossed the road. It was a great sight! During dinner there was a lot of commotion as we had heard from our fellow guests that there was a male Leopard close by. It was a great way to end the day.

Day 10

Wednesday 26th March

We left for a jeep safari in the core zone. Since this was the last game drive we hoped to end it on a high. Looking hard in the forest for any predators we spotted a Sloth Bear with her 4-month-old cubs clinging on to her back. We were all very excited at seeing this. The Eurasian Eagle Owl also called from a dense growth in the trees.

In the afternoon we went to see the Black Bucks prancing in the wheat fields - we saw a dominant male with six females. All enjoyed the drive in the buffer zone of Satpura. We started off by seeing the highly venomous Saw Scaled Viper crossing the road. A Sambar deer briefly made an appearance. Driving through the dense undergrowth was very exciting. Some alarm calls of the Barking Deer broke the silence. We did not see any other animals but the experience itself was exhilarating, after which we returned to the lodge for a well-deserved farewell dinner.

Day 11

Thursday 27th March

It was agreed by all to see the Indian Skimmers once more. So we skipped the elephant ride in the park and went canoeing. It is the best way one can get up close and personal with the birds. 8 Skimmers were in an aerial fight with River Terns. It was a truly spectacular display. Having breakfast along with the elephants was great. The calf was at his mischievous best!

Returning to the lodge we had a good brunch and then left for the Bhimbetka caves. The caves, which are over 30,000 years old, were discovered only in the late 1900s. Some rock paintings are still intact and it is a must visit. On arriving in Bhopal we had an early supper before the guests left for Mumbai.

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Species List

Birds (✓ = recorded but not counted)

	Common name	Scientific name	March										
			17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
1	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓			✓		
2	Indian Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax fuscicollis</i>		✓							✓		✓
3	Little Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax niger</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	Oriental Darter	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>		✓	✓					✓		✓	✓
5	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>								✓			✓
6	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7	Intermediate Egret	<i>Egretta intermedia</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9	Indian Pond-heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
10	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
11	Painted Stork	<i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>									✓	✓	✓
12	Asian Openbill	<i>Anastomus oscitans</i>		✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓
13	Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓				
14	Woolly-necked Stork	<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
15	Lesser Adjutant	<i>Leptoptilos javanicus</i>				✓		✓	✓				
16	Black-headed Ibis	<i>Threskiornis melanocephalus</i>			✓					✓			
17	Red-naped Ibis	<i>Pseudibis papillosa</i>		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
18	Lesser Whistling-duck	<i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
19	Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>		✓	✓						✓		
20	Comb Duck	<i>Sarkidiornis melanotos</i>									✓		✓
21	Cotton Pygmy-goose	<i>Nettapus coromandelianus</i>				✓		✓	✓				
22	Spot-billed Duck	<i>Anas poecilorhyncha</i>			✓						✓		
23	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>			✓						✓		✓
24	Oriental Honey-buzzard	<i>Pernis ptilorhynchus</i>		✓	✓				✓	✓			
25	Black-shouldered Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>			✓				✓		✓		
26	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>			✓								
27	Grey-headed Fish-eagle	<i>Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus</i>		✓	✓								
28	White-rumped Vulture	<i>Gyps bengalensis</i>		✓	✓								
29	Red-headed Vulture	<i>Sarcogyps calvus</i>						✓					

	Common name	Scientific name	March											
			17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	
30	Crested Serpent-eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		
31	Shikra	<i>Accipiter badius</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
32	White-eyed Buzzard	<i>Butastur teesa</i>			✓				✓	✓				
33	Changeable Hawk-eagle	<i>Spizaetus cirrhatus</i>									✓			
34	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>			✓				✓					
35	Red Spurfowl	<i>Galloperdix spadicea</i>				✓	✓	✓				✓		
36	Red Jungle Fowl	<i>Gallus gallus</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
37	Grey Jungle Fowl	<i>Gallus sonneratii</i>									✓	✓		
38	Indian Peafowl	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
39	Small Buttonquail	<i>Turnix sylvatica</i>												✓
40	White-breasted Waterhen	<i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i>		✓										
41	Greater Painted-snipe	<i>Rostratula benghalensis</i>							✓		✓			
42	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>			✓						✓	✓	✓	
43	Small Pratincole	<i>Glareola lactea</i>									✓	✓		
44	River Lapwing	<i>Vanellus duvaucellii</i>									✓	✓	✓	✓
45	Yellow-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus malabaricus</i>		✓					✓	✓				
46	Red-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
47	Little -ringed plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>									✓	✓		✓
48	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>										✓		✓
49	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>										✓	✓	✓
50	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>									✓	✓		
51	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>									✓	✓		✓
52	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>									✓	✓		
53	Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>									✓	✓		✓
54	River Tern	<i>Sterna aurantia</i>			✓						✓	✓	✓	✓
55	Little Tern	<i>Sterna albifrons</i>										✓		✓
56	Black-bellied Tern	<i>Sterna acuticauda</i>									✓	✓		✓
57	Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>										✓		
58	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>									✓			
59	Spotted Dove	<i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
60	Laughing Dove	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>		✓							✓	✓	✓	
61	Yellow-footed Pigeon	<i>Treron phoenicoptera</i>				✓		✓				✓	✓	

	Common name	Scientific name	March										
			17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
62	Alexandrine Parakeet	<i>Psittacula eupatria</i>		✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	
63	Rose-ringed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
64	Plum-headed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula cyanocephala</i>		✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	
65	Common Hawk-cuckoo	<i>Cuculus varius</i>					✓			✓		✓	
66	Asian Koel	<i>Eudynamys scolopacea</i>					✓						
67	Sirkeer Malkoha	<i>Phaenicophaeus leschenaultii</i>					✓	✓	✓				
68	Greater Coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>			✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		
69	Eurasian Eagle Owl	<i>Bubo bubo</i>								✓			
70	Indian Scops-owl	<i>Otus bakkamoena</i>		✓			✓						
71	Brown Fish-owl	<i>Ketupa zeylonensis</i>						✓					
72	Mottled Wood-owl	<i>Strix ocellata</i>		✓						✓			
73	Jungle Owlet	<i>Glaucidium radiatum</i>					✓		✓				
74	Savannah Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus affinis</i>								✓	✓	✓	✓
75	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>						✓		✓	✓	✓	
76	Stork-billed Kingfisher	<i>Pelargopsis capensis</i>										✓	✓
77	White-throated Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
78	Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>			✓					✓	✓		✓
79	Blue-bearded Bee-eater	<i>Nyctornis athertoni</i>											
80	Green Bee-eater	<i>Merops orientalis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
81	Indian Roller	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
82	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>				✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
83	Indian Grey Hornbill	<i>Ocyrceros birostris</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		
84	Malabar Pied-hornbill	<i>Anthracoceros coronatus</i>								✓			
85	Brown-headed Barbet	<i>Megalaima zeylanica</i>		✓									
86	Coppersmith Barbet	<i>Megalaima haemacephala</i>		✓									
87	Brown-capped Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos moluccensis nanus</i>		✓				✓					
88	Yellow-crowned Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos mahrattensis</i>			✓								
89	Black-rumped Flameback	<i>Dinopium benghalense</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
90	White-naped Woodpecker	<i>Chrysocolaptes festivus</i>				✓	✓						
91	Ashy-crowned Sparrow-lark	<i>Eremopterix grisea</i>		✓									
92	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>											✓
93	Dusky Crag-martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne concolor</i>										✓	✓

	Common name	Scientific name	March											
			17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	
94	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>										✓		
95	Wire-tailed Swallow	<i>Hirundo smithii</i>									✓	✓		
96	Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>					✓					✓	✓	
97	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>		✓										
98	White-browed Wagtail	<i>Motacilla madaraspatensis</i>									✓	✓	✓	✓
99	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓
100	Oriental Pipit	<i>Anthus rufulus</i>		✓										
101	Tawny Pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>							✓					
102	Large Cuckoo-shrike	<i>Coracina macei</i>		✓					✓					
103	Scarlet Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus flammeus</i>				✓	✓	✓						
104	Red-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
105	Common Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>										✓		
106	Sulphur-bellied Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus griseolus</i>						✓						
107	Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>						✓						
108	Red-breasted Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula parva</i>									✓			
109	Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher	<i>Culicicapa ceylonensis</i>						✓						
110	Oriental Magpie-robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
111	Indian Robin	<i>Saxicoloides fulicata</i>		✓								✓		
112	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>			✓									
113	Common Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>		✓										
114	Jungle Babbler	<i>Turdoides striatus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
115	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>			✓									
116	Purple Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris asiaticus</i>			✓					✓	✓	✓		
117	Black-hooded Oriole	<i>Oriolus xanthornus</i>		✓				✓				✓		
118	Long-tailed Shrike	<i>Lanius schach</i>		✓		✓			✓					
119	Common Woodshrike	<i>Tephrodornis pondicerianus</i>			✓									
120	Black Drongo	<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
121	White-bellied Drongo	<i>Dicrurus caerulescens</i>		✓					✓					✓
122	Greater Racket-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus paradiseus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
123	Rufous Treepie	<i>Dendrocitta vagabunda</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
124	House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>						✓						✓
125	Large-billed Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

	Common name	Scientific name	March										
			17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
126	Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
127	Brahminy Starling	<i>Temenuchus pagodarum</i>		✓	✓						✓		
128	Rosy Starling	<i>Pastor roseus</i>									✓		
129	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>			✓	✓					✓	✓	✓
130	Chestnut-shouldered Petronia	<i>Petronia xanthocollis</i>		✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓

Mammals

1	Royal Bengal Tiger	<i>Panthera tigris tigris</i>		1M		1M		2M	1M				
2	Leopard	<i>Panthera pardus</i>					1M					1F	
3	Jungle Cat	<i>Felis chaus kelaarita or kutas</i>					✓	✓	✓				
4	Rhesus Macaque	<i>Macaca mulatta</i>		✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5	Common Langur	<i>Presbytis entellus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	Common Mongoose	<i>Herpestes edwardsi</i>				✓							
7	Ruddy Mongoose	<i>Herpestes smithii</i>					✓						
8	Golden Jackal	<i>Canis aureus</i>		✓	✓	✓		✓					
9	Dhole (Asiatic Wild Dog)	<i>Cuon alpinus dukhunensis</i>		✓									
10	Sloth Bear	<i>Merursus ursinus</i>										✓	
11	Indian Flying Fox	<i>Pteropus giganteus</i>		✓	✓								
12	Indian Tree Shrew	<i>Anathana ellioti</i>				✓							
13	Indian or Black-naped Hare	<i>Lepus nigricollis</i>								✓	✓	✓	
14	Three-striped Palm Squirrel	<i>Funambulus pennarum</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓
15	Indian Giant Flying Squirrel	<i>Petaurista philippensis</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓					
16	Gaur (Indian Bison)	<i>Bos guarus</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
17	Sambar	<i>Cervus unicolor</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
18	Barasingha (Swamp Deer)	<i>Cervus duvauceli branderi</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓				
19	Chital (Spotted Deer)	<i>Cervus axis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
20	Black Buck	<i>Antilope cervicapra</i>										✓	
21	Indian Muntjac (Barking Deer)	<i>Muntiacus muntjak</i>							✓				
22	Chousingha (Four-horned Antelope)	<i>Tetracerus quadricornis</i>						✓					
23	Nilgai (Blue Bull)	<i>Boselaphus tragocamelus</i>		✓	✓					✓	✓		
24	Indian Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
25	Indian Fox	<i>Vulpes bengalensis</i>							✓				

	Common name	Scientific name	March											
			17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	
26	Indian Giant Squirrel	<i>Ratufa indica</i>									✓	✓	✓	

Other fauna

1	Indian Flapshell Turtle	<i>Lissemys punctata</i>		✓										
2	Marsh Mugger Crocodile	<i>Crocodylus palustris</i>									✓			
3	Saw-scaled Viper	<i>Echis carinatus</i>											✓	