

India - Tiger Direct!

Including Tadoba pre-extension

Naturetrek Tour Report

18 - 26 December 2016



Tigress with cub (Tadoba)



Tigress (Pench)



Tiger (Kanha)



Smooth-coated Otter

Report and images compiled by Yusuf Rizvi



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Tour participants: Yusuf Rizvi (leader) together with three Naturetrek clients

Summary

Pre Extension Day 1

Wednesday 14th December

For two group members, the Tadoba pre-tour extension commenced with overnight flights from the UK to India.

Pre Extension Day 2

Thursday 15th December

Mary and George arrived at Nagpur airport around 2.45pm and were met by Sudeep, who took them to the Radisson Blue Hotel. Yusuf's train had been delayed, but he arrived in time to meet Mary and George for dinner.

Pre Extension Day 3

Friday 16th December

We met at 10.30am and set off on our two-and-a-half hour journey to Tadoba Tiger Reserve. On the way we stopped at an orange orchard to have a closer look at the birds. We reached Savsara Lodge at 1pm and were welcomed by courteous and hospitable lodge staff.

We had a quick lunch and then left for our first game drive in Tadoba. It was a warm afternoon and we saw Spotted Deer, Sambar, Common Langur, Ruddy Mongoose and quite a few birds.

In the evening we met to do the checklist, which was followed by dinner. After a briefing for the next day we retired for the night.

Pre Extension Day 4

Saturday 17th December

Today we started quite early with a 5am wake-up call. We met for tea/coffee and cookies before leaving for our game drive. It was a cold morning. Soon after we entered the park we heard Spotted Deer distress calls not too far from the track. We waited at the spot for about 10 minutes but the calls went further away, so we moved on. During the drive we saw Sambar, Spotted Deer, Muntjac and quite a few birds.

In the afternoon we went for another game drive. We saw Tiger tracks and followed them for quite some time. We also heard a few distress calls so stayed at that spot for a while, but had no luck with a sighting. On the way to the exit gate we spotted a Sloth Bear mother with one cub.

Back in the lodge we did the checklist, followed by dinner.

Pre Extension Day 5/Main Tour Day 1

Sunday 18th December

The morning was quite cold as we gathered for tea/coffee at 5.30am. We went on another game drive and saw a few Tiger tracks, and tracks made by a Rusty-spotted Cat. It was interesting to compare the tracks of the biggest and the smallest wild cats. As we drove further ahead we received news that a Tigress had crossed the road and

had gone into the thicket. Anticipating movement, we went near number 97 waterhole and found the Tigress sitting under a tree in tall grass next to the waterhole. She was partially visible when she raised her head. We spent the rest of our time next to that waterhole waiting for her to come out for a drink, but she decided not to show herself.

On our afternoon drive we went straight to the waterhole where we had seen the Tigress. We waited for a long time and she finally decided to show herself. We saw her across the waterhole and watched her come out at the edge of the waterhole. Mary and George got some good photographs and were excited at seeing their first Tiger in the wild! During the drive we also saw quite a few birds.

Later we met to do our checklist which was followed by dinner.

Meanwhile the main tour commenced for Caroline with overnight flights from the UK to India.

Day 2

Monday 19th December

It was another beautiful and slightly misty morning in Tadoba. We started our day with hot, steaming cups of tea and coffee. On our morning game drive we heard a lot of distress calls of Spotted Deer and Sambar. We hoped to find a Tigress with very young cubs. We checked out some areas without success before driving a loop. Our decision turned out to be fruitful as we encountered a male Sloth Bear close to the tracks, and it moved slowly in the thickets. We continued back to our starting spot and as we reached the area, the Tigress we had been looking for earlier came out of the thicket onto the track, and the cubs were peeping out of the bamboo. There were already a few vehicles lined up and the cubs were hesitant to cross the road. It was amazing to see the mother trying to get the cubs to cross the road, and also the interaction between the mother and the cubs. We all got some good photographs as she crossed the road with the cubs and went into the grassland. With fond memories, we drove out of the park.

Back in the lodge we had enough time to pack and change before lunch. After lunch we drove to Pench Tiger Reserve, arriving about 5pm.

Caroline's flight had landed safely in India and she was also driven to Pench. In the evening we all met up for dinner. The main tour group was now complete.

Day 3

Tuesday 20th December

After refreshing cups of tea and coffee, we started our first game drive in Pench. The morning was cold and we could feel it was couple of degrees cooler than Tadoba. Soon after entering the park we checked the Junewani waterhole. Nearby we saw the tracks of a Tiger, so we followed them. The tracks seemed never-ending as we followed them for approximately two kilometres before losing them. Further ahead we saw tracks again, possibly made by the same Tiger. We again followed them for nearly a kilometre till the tracks went into the thicket. We parked our jeep to listen but no distress calls were heard. We were turning around and as we started to reverse, a Spotted Deer distress call was heard not too far away, and then we heard a Tiger growling. We waited but nothing happened, so we drove further on and parked up. Our anticipation worked and the Tiger came out. It was a dominant male of that area, nicknamed Raiyyakassa. We saw him cross the road and go away from us. We

drove further on and stopped again. This time we intercepted him crossing the road close to our vehicle. We then saw him a third time before he went into the tall grasses and disappeared from view. We waited patiently for him to come out. After a while we heard calls coming from where he had crossed the road. We checked and saw a tiger coming out of the grass, and realized it was a Tigress. She crossed quite close to the vehicle and we followed, spotting her twice more before she vanished in the thicket. What a wonderful morning! We then had breakfast at Alikatta, enjoying the sun. During the morning we had seen quite a few birds and mammals.

Our afternoon drive was also exciting when we saw a pack of three Wild Dogs. In the evening we met in the common area for drinks and to do the checklist, before dinner.

Day 4

Wednesday 21st December

The day started with early wake-up calls before we met for morning tea and coffee, and then left for our game drive. Today we had our third and last drive in Pench. We saw quite a few interesting birds and explored the Bodha Nala and Baas Nala areas. We saw fresh Tiger tracks which we followed for quite a distance, but had no luck with a sighting.

After lunch we left Pench and drove to our next destination, the mesmerizing Kanha National Park, arriving before sunset. In the evening we completed our checklist before dinner.

Day 5

Thursday 22nd December

This morning it was quite cold with the temperature around two degrees. We got up at 5.15am and after refreshing cups of tea, went for our first game drive at Kanha. It was quite misty and there was a ground frost. The drive was interesting, and we saw quite a few birds and mammals including the endemic Barasingha (Swamp Deer) and Golden Jackal. We had breakfast at Sondar and then, on the way to the exit, we were very lucky to spot three Smooth-coated Otters in Samrahi Nala. Otters have been reported in Kanha, but sightings are extremely rare. To see and capture one in the camera was a delight.

Once back at the lodge, we had tea and then went for a nature walk. We saw a few birds, wild flowers, dragonflies and butterflies.

On our afternoon game drive we heard some alarm calls but had no luck with a tiger sighting. In the evening we did the checklist followed by dinner.

Day 6

Friday 23rd December

The morning was very cold, but promising. After hot cups of tea and coffee, we went for the game drive. The mist over the grassland was hypnotic. After driving for quite a few kilometres, we stopped at a fire break line. Sambar alarm calls were heard in the far distance so we headed in that direction. We drove about a kilometre to reach the other end of the fire break line and saw two vehicles already watching a Tiger. We positioned our vehicle to get a better view. The Tiger was heading in the direction from where we had first heard the Sambar calls. We reversed our jeep and drove quickly to the area where we anticipated he would come out. After a while we heard Spotted Deer alarm calls: it was moving in the direction of the Minkur area. We went to the Minkur

area and positioned our vehicle. Soon we saw the Tiger emerging from the thicket. We all were excited to see the Tiger, nicknamed Link 7. The Tiger crossed the bridge, went towards the thicket and then vanished from view. We then positioned our vehicle at a junction where we hoped he might come out. After waiting for about 15 minutes, he came out and lay down on the track, rolling from side to side for five minutes before returning into the thicket. It had been a wonderful morning, seeing a dominant Tiger patrolling his territory.

The afternoon drive was also exciting. We saw quite a few birds and Tiger tracks, and heard a few distress calls. Back at the lodge we did the checklist followed by dinner.

Day 7

Saturday 24th December

Today our morning game drive was in the Kanha zone. It was quite a drive and on the way we heard a few distress calls coming from an area which was not on our route, so we kept going. In Kanha zone we heard a few distress calls of Barking Deer in the distance. After breakfast we saw a Rufous-bellied Hawk-Eagle soaring in the sky.

Our afternoon drive was quite exciting. We heard a Tigress growling and saw fresh tracks, but she was in the thickets. We spent most of our time waiting for her to come out, but she decided not to show herself.

In the evening we did the checklist, followed by a farewell dinner as it was our last dinner together.

Day 8

Sunday 25th December

Today we had a later start. After breakfast we said goodbye to Caroline who was starting a private extension to Satpuda, and George and Mary headed to Nagpur airport with Yusuf. Once at the airport, Yusuf was thanked before George and Mary boarded a flight to start their return journey to the UK.

Day 9

Monday 26th December

The flight landed back in the UK and another Naturetrek adventure came to an end. It had been a successful tour with sightings of five adult Tigers and two cubs, three Smooth-coated Otters, over a hundred species of birds and lots of fond memories!

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Species Lists

Mammals (✓=recorded but not counted)

	Common name	Scientific name	Ext		Main Tour						
			December								
			16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
1	Royal Bengal Tiger	<i>Panthera tigris tigris</i>			✓	✓	✓			✓	
2	Rhesus Macaque	<i>Macaca mulatta</i>				✓	✓	✓			
3	Common Langur	<i>Presbytis entellus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	Ruddy Mongoose	<i>Herpestes smithii</i>	✓	✓		✓					
5	Golden Jackal	<i>Canis aureus</i>					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	Dhole (Asiatic Wild Dog)	<i>Cuon alpinus dukhunensis</i>			✓		✓		✓		
7	Sloth Bear	<i>Merursus ursinus</i>		✓		✓					
8	Smooth-coated Otter	<i>Lutra perspicillata</i>							✓		
9	Three-striped Palm Squirrel	<i>Funambulus pennarum</i>		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
10	Sambar	<i>Cervus unicolor</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
11	Barasingha (Swamp Deer)	<i>Cervus duvauceli branderi</i>							✓	✓	✓
12	Chital (Spotted Deer)	<i>Cervus axis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
13	Indian Muntjac (Barking Deer)	<i>Muntiacus muntjak</i>	✓	✓	✓					✓	
14	Nilgai (Blue Bull)	<i>Boselaphus tragocamelus</i>		✓			✓				
15	Indian Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
16	Gaur	<i>Bos gaurus</i>		✓		✓	✓		✓		✓

Birds

1	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>		✓					✓	✓	✓
2	Indian Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax fuscicollis</i>						✓			
3	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>						✓			
4	Little Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax niger</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5	Oriental Darter	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>		✓	✓	✓					
6	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>				✓		✓			
7	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8	Intermediate Egret	<i>Egretta intermedia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

	Common name	Scientific name	Ext		Main Tour						
			December							23	24
			16	17	18	19	20	21	22		
10	Indian Pond Heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
11	Eastern Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus coromandus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
12	Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>								✓	
13	Painted Stork	<i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>						✓			
14	Asian Openbill	<i>Anastomus oscitans</i>		✓	✓	✓				✓	✓
15	Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>					✓				✓
16	Lesser Adjutant	<i>Leptoptilos javanicus</i>		✓							
17	Black-headed Ibis	<i>Threskiornis melanocephalus</i>	✓	✓	✓						
18	Red-naped Ibis	<i>Pseudibis papillosa</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
19	Lesser Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓					
20	Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>					✓	✓			
21	Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>					✓		✓	✓	✓
22	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>								✓	✓
23	Spot-billed Duck	<i>Anas poecilorhyncha</i>						✓			
24	Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>						✓	✓	✓	✓
25	Black-shouldered Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
26	Grey-headed Fish Eagle	<i>Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus</i>		✓					✓		
27	Red-headed Vulture	<i>Sarcogyps calvus</i>							✓		
28	Crested Serpent Eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>	✓		✓				✓		✓
29	Eurasian Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>								✓	
30	Shikra	<i>Accipiter badius</i>		✓							
31	White-eyed Buzzard	<i>Butastur teesa</i>						✓			
32	Rufous-bellied Hawk-Eagle	<i>Lophotriorchis kienerii</i>									✓
33	Changeable (Crested) Hawk-Eagle	<i>Nisaetus cirrhatus</i>							✓		
34	Red Spurfowl	<i>Galloperdix spadicea</i>									✓
35	Painted Spurfowl	<i>Galloperdix lunulata</i>								✓	✓
36	Red Junglefowl	<i>Gallus gallus</i>					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
37	Grey Junglefowl	<i>Gallus sonnerati</i>		✓	✓	✓					
38	Indian Peafowl	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
39	White-breasted Waterhen	<i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i>		✓							
40	Bronze-winged Jacana	<i>Metopidius indicus</i>		✓	✓	✓					

	Common name	Scientific name	Ext		Main Tour						
			December							23	24
			16	17	18	19	20	21	22		
41	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓			
42	Eurasian Stone-curlew (Thick-knee)	<i>Burhinus oediacnemus</i>					✓				
43	Red-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
44	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>					✓	✓			
45	Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>							✓		
46	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>				✓					
47	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>			✓						
48	River Tern	<i>Sterna aurantia</i>					✓	✓			
49	Common Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>				✓		✓			✓
50	Oriental Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia orientalis</i>								✓	✓
51	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>		✓	✓	✓					
52	Spotted Dove	<i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
53	Laughing Dove	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>		✓		✓					
54	Yellow-footed Green Pigeon	<i>Treron phoenicoptera</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
55	Alexandrine Parakeet	<i>Psittacula eupatria</i>			✓			✓	✓		✓
56	Rose-ringed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
57	Plum-headed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula cyanocephala</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
58	Common Hawk-Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus varius</i>									✓
59	Southern Coucal	<i>Centropus parroti</i>					✓	✓			
60	Indian Scops Owl	<i>Otus bakkamoena</i>						✓			
61	Jungle Owlet	<i>Glaucidium radiatum</i>						✓	✓		✓
62	Spotted Owlet	<i>Athene brama</i>			✓				✓		
63	Crested Treeswift	<i>Hemiprocne coronata</i>				✓			✓	✓	✓
64	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>							✓	✓	✓
65	White-throated Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
66	Green Bee-eater	<i>Merops orientalis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
67	Indian Roller	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
68	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>			✓				✓	✓	✓
69	Indian Grey Hornbill	<i>Ocyceros birostris</i>						✓		✓	✓
70	Yellow-crowned Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos mahrattensis</i>	✓								✓
71	Lesser Goldenback	<i>Dinopium benghalense</i>			✓		✓			✓	✓

	Common name	Scientific name	Ext		Main Tour						
			December						23	24	
			16	17	18	19	20	21			22
72	White-naped Woodpecker	<i>Chrysocolaptes festivus</i>								✓	
73	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓
74	Wire-tailed Swallow	<i>Hirundo smithii</i>	✓								
75	Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
76	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>						✓			
77	White-browed Wagtail	<i>Motacilla madaraspatensis</i>					✓				
78	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>								✓	✓
79	Paddyfield Pipit	<i>Anthus rufulus</i>						✓			✓
80	Large Cuckooshrike	<i>Coracina macei</i>								✓	
81	Red-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
82	Orange-headed Thrush	<i>Zoothera citrina</i>							✓	✓	
83	Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>				✓					✓
84	Jungle Prinia	<i>Prinia sylvatica</i>				✓					
85	Plain Prinia	<i>Prinia inornata</i>		✓	✓					✓	✓
86	Asian Brown Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa dauurica</i>							✓		
87	Taiga Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula albicilla</i>							✓		
88	Tickell's Blue Flycatcher	<i>Cyornis tickelliae</i>			✓						
89	Oriental Magpie-robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
90	Indian Robin	<i>Saxicoloides fulicata</i>			✓	✓					
91	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>					✓	✓			
92	Siberian Stonechat	<i>Saxicola maurus</i>								✓	
93	Pied Bush Chat	<i>Saxicola caprata</i>									✓
94	Common Babbler	<i>Turdoides caudatus</i>				✓					
95	Jungle Babbler	<i>Turdoides striatus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
96	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>									✓
97	Purple Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris asiaticus</i>		✓							
98	Eurasian Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>							✓	✓	✓
99	Black-hooded Oriole	<i>Oriolus xanthornus</i>	✓			✓					
100	Brown Shrike	<i>Lanius cristatus</i>									✓
101	Long-tailed Shrike	<i>Lanius schach</i>		✓		✓		✓			
102	Black Drongo	<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

	Common name	Scientific name	Ext		Main Tour							
			December									
			16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	
103	Ashy Drongo	<i>Dicrurus leucophaeus</i>		✓							✓	✓
104	White-bellied Drongo	<i>Dicrurus caerulescens</i>								✓	✓	✓
105	Greater Racket-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus paradiseus</i>				✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
106	Rufous Treepie	<i>Dendrocitta vagabunda</i>		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
107	House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>							✓			
108	Indian Jungle Crow	<i>Corvus culminatus</i>		✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
109	Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
110	Rosy Starling	<i>Pastor roseus</i>				✓						
111	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓		✓	✓		✓				
112	Baya Weaver	<i>Ploceus philippinus</i>	✓									
113	Red Avadavat	<i>Amandava amandava</i>		✓								
114	Nutmeg Mannikin	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>		✓								

Reptiles:

1	Marsh Mugger Crocodile	<i>Crocodylus palustris</i>	✓	✓								
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Naturetrek Facebook

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