

India - Tiger Direct!

Naturetrek Tour Report

22 - 30 December 2019

Report by Indrajit Latey



Naturetrek

Mingledown Barn

Wolf's Lane

Chawton

Alton

Hampshire

GU34 3HJ

UK

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

E: info@naturetrek.co.uk

W: www.naturetrek.co.uk

Tour participants: Indrajit Latey (leader) with three Naturetrek clients

Day 1

Sunday 22nd December

The group were in flight to Nagpur.

Day 2

Monday 23rd December

The guests arrived on time by Qatar flight at about 2.10am. After short snooze at the Radisson and a late breakfast, we all departed for Pench. En route we saw Indian Rollers patrolling the wires. They were looking for insects which were being flushed out by the fire, set in the fields by the local farmers. A Black-winged Kite also was hovering, looking for gerbils or field mice.

On arriving at the Tuli Tiger Corridor, we were escorted to our rooms. A quick lunch followed, and we set off for our first game drive. There was excitement in the air when we heard alarm calls of Spotted Deer within minutes of entering the park. Both Kathy and Anna had been to Pench on their previous Tiger Direct trip – about six years back. The guests knew what those alarm calls meant – a predator! We waited patiently, but finally gave up as we had to head out of the park.

After discussing the next day's plan, we all had dinner. The film 'Tiger – Spy in the Jungle' was screened by the resort. The guests all enjoyed it and finally called it a night.

Day 3

Tuesday 24th December

We had an early morning start, with a hot cup of tea and biscuits. On entering the park there were alarm calls everywhere. Some cars were going in the opposite direction with lots of gesturing. We too turned around, hoping that it would let us see something we wanted to see. On reaching the 'spot' we only heard alarm calls of Sambar deer. In the forest, the Tiger always has more patience than all of us. It was the same case today also. Red-wattled Lapwings called incessantly, as did the junglefowls. Unfortunately, we had to exit the park.

With a quick lunch, we returned to the same spot for the afternoon drive. There, in the middle of the road, a female sub-adult Tiger crossed over. We spent nearly an hour with her. We also had a good look at her brother some distance away, and finally we also saw the mother. In one evening, we had seen three tigers! What a lovely safari it turned out to be!

Returning to the resort, we all had dinner and went off to bed.

Day 4

Wednesday 25th December

The resort was all decorated with Christmas lights. In the morning we drove to a new part of Pench called Khursapar. It is about 20 minutes away and is just as stunning as the previous day. A male Sambar greeted us with continuous alarm calls. The Spotted Deer also followed. Some Racket-tailed Drongos were mimicking a peacock alarm!

We had to leave the park since we were driving to Kanha for the second half of the trip. We had lunch at Tuli Resort and set off for Kanha. En route we passed lots of villages, which had their markets bustling with lots of activity.

On arriving in Kanha, we were welcomed by Tarun and his team. A checklist was followed by a lovely quiet dinner and we all went off to bed, looking forward to the next day's activities.

Day 5

Thursday 26th December

The day started with excitement. It was the Annular Solar Eclipse and one of the best places to see it was in India! We hoped we could be a part of this natural phenomenon. Unfortunately, it was a totally overcast sky, and it stayed that way all day long. It even rained a little. Since the weather turned overcast, the animal and bird life also decreased. Hardly any mammals were seen. Birds like Racket-tailed Drongos, Rufous Treepies and Jungle Babblers were active, but only just.

After lunch the situation remained the same. We all hoped that the next day would change our fortunes with respect to the big cat! We finished a short checklist and followed it up with a lovely dinner by the fire.

Day 6

Friday 27th December

A cold wave in the northern part of India meant that it would be even colder in Kanha. The temperature hovered at about 5°C. Barasingha males were bellowing their intent, cajoling females for mating. Some distance away, we also heard a Sambar alarm. Some cars mentioned seeing a Leopard a while ago. With hopes of it making itself visible, we all stayed quite for over 30 minutes, but it was all in vain. Some Black Storks and Pond Herons were busy fishing in the pools of water created by the last rains.

After lunch we entered the park and headed straight towards the place where some people had seen the Leopard. To our surprise, we saw a male Tiger emerge and walk right between some of the jeeps. It left all of us stunned! Just as magically as he appeared, he disappeared! We returned to the resort and discussed the day's activities along with the checklist.

Day 7

Saturday 28th December

We woke up with temperatures hovering around 1°C. Heading towards the central zone – Kanha, we saw the Barasingha enclosure wherein the management give protection to this endangered species and have revived it from the brink of extinction. We spent a good amount of time observing the behaviour of these deer, before heading out of the park for lunch.

In the evening safari, we were fortunate to see a tigress hunting! She actually made an attempt on a herd of Chital deer, narrowly missing it. It was just the perfect end to the Tiger Direct trip!

A lovely BBQ dinner followed, and we called it a night.

Day 8

Sunday 29th December

On the last morning, we all went for a nature walk to the river. Seeing the smaller aspects of nature whilst walking, we learnt a lot from the naturalist Tarun. A lovely sit-down breakfast followed, and we all departed for Nagpur. On arriving at the Radisson, I bid goodbye to the guests wishing them a safe onward flight.

Day 9

Monday 30th December

Arrival back in the UK

Receive our e-newsletter

Join the Naturetrek e-mailing list and be the first to hear about new tours, additional departures and new dates, tour reports and special offers. Visit www.naturetrek.co.uk to sign up.

Social Media

We're social! Follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and be the first to hear about the launch of new tours, offers and exciting sightings and photos from our recently returned holidays.



www.facebook.com/naturetrekwildlifeholidays



www.twitter.com/naturetrektours



www.instagram.com/naturetrek_wildlife_holidays

Species Lists

Mammals (✓=recorded but not counted)

	Common name	Scientific name	December							
			22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
1	Royal Bengal Tiger	<i>Panthera tigris tigris</i>			3			1	1	
2	Rhesus Macaque	<i>Macaca mulatta</i>				✓				
3	S. Plains (Common) Grey Langur	<i>Semnopithecus dussumieri</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
4	Golden Jackal	<i>Canis aureus</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
5	Dhole (Asiatic Wild Dog)	<i>Cuon alpinus dukhunensis</i>						✓		
6	Sloth Bear	<i>Merursus ursinus</i>						✓		
7	Indian Flying Fox	<i>Pteropus giganteus</i>			✓					
8	Three-striped Palm Squirrel	<i>Funambulus pennarum</i>			✓	✓				✓
9	Sambar	<i>Cervus unicolor</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
10	Barasingha (Swamp Deer)	<i>Cervus duvauceli branderi</i>					✓	✓	✓	
11	Chital (Spotted Deer)	<i>Cervus axis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
12	Indian Muntjac (Barking Deer)	<i>Muntiacus muntjak</i>					✓		✓	
13	Black Buck	<i>Antilope cervicapra</i>							✓	
14	Nilgai (Blue Bull)	<i>Boselaphus tragocamelus</i>		✓	✓					
15	Indian Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
16	Gaur	<i>Bos gauras</i>			✓	✓				

Birds

1	Lesser Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>		✓						
2	Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>		✓	✓	✓				
3	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>		✓						
4	Indian Spot-billed Duck	<i>Anas poecilorhyncha</i>		✓	✓		✓			
5	Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>		✓	✓					
6	Red Junglefowl	<i>Gallus gallus</i>					✓	✓	✓	
7	Indian Peafowl	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8	Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>						✓	✓	
9	Red-naped Ibis	<i>Pseudibis papillosa</i>					✓	✓		
10	Indian Pond Heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
11	Eastern Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus coromandus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
12	Intermediate Egret	<i>Egretta intermedia</i>					✓	✓	✓	
13	Indian Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax fuscicollis</i>					✓	✓	✓	
14	Little Cormorant	<i>Microcarbo niger</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓		
15	Black-winged Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>			✓					
16	Crested (Oriental) Honey Buzzard	<i>Pernis ptilorhynchus</i>			✓					
17	White-rumped Vulture	<i>Gyps bengalensis</i>			✓					
18	Indian Vulture	<i>Gyps indicus</i>							✓	
19	Red-headed Vulture	<i>Sarcogyps calvus</i>					✓			
20	Crested Serpent Eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>					✓			
21	Short-toed Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>				✓				
22	Changeable Hawk-Eagle	<i>Nisaetus cirrhatus</i>					✓			
23	Grey-headed Fish Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus ichthyaetus</i>						✓		
24	White-eyed Buzzard	<i>Butastur teesa</i>		✓						
25	Red-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
26	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>		✓	✓		✓			
27	River Tern	<i>Sterna aurantia</i>		✓						
28	Rock Dove (Common Pigeon)	<i>Columba livia</i>		✓						
29	Red Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia tranquebarica</i>						✓		
30	Spotted Dove	<i>Spilopelia chinensis</i>						✓	✓	

	Common name	Scientific name	December							
			22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
31	Yellow-footed Green Pigeon	<i>Treron phoenicopterus</i>			✓		✓	✓	✓	
32	Southern (Greater) Coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis parroti</i>				✓				
33	Asian Koel	<i>Eudynamys scolopaceus</i>						✓		
34	Eastern Barn Owl (split)	<i>Tyto javanica</i>		✓						
35	Brown Fish Owl	<i>Ketupa zeylonensis</i>						✓		
36	Jungle Owlet	<i>Glaucidium radiatum</i>						✓	✓	✓
37	Crested Treeswift	<i>Hemiprocne coronata</i>					✓			
38	Indian Roller	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
39	White-throated Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>				✓		✓	✓	
40	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>							✓	
41	Green Bee-eater	<i>Merops orientalis</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	
42	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>				✓			✓	
43	Indian Grey Hornbill	<i>Ocyrceros birostris</i>		✓	✓			✓		
44	Coppersmith Barbet	<i>Psilopogon haemacephalus</i>			✓	✓	✓			
45	Streak-throated Woodpecker	<i>Picus xanthopygaeus</i>						✓		
46	Black-rumped Flameback (L.Goldenb.)	<i>Dinopium benghalense</i>		✓	✓					
47	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>							✓	
48	Plum-headed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula cyanocephala</i>		✓	✓	✓				
49	Alexandrine Parakeet	<i>Psittacula eupatria</i>					✓			
50	Rose-ringed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>		✓	✓	✓			✓	
51	Scarlet Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus flammeus</i>						✓	✓	
52	Black Drongo	<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
53	White-bellied Drongo	<i>Dicrurus caeruleus</i>					✓		✓	
54	Greater Racket-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus paradiseus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
55	Rufous Treepie	<i>Dendrocitta vagabunda</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
56	House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>		✓	✓					
57	Indian Jungle Crow	<i>Corvus culminatus</i>		✓	✓					
58	Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher	<i>Culicicapa ceylonensis</i>						✓		✓
59	Red-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>				✓	✓	✓		✓
60	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>		✓	✓	✓				
61	Dusky Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne concolor</i>			✓	✓				
62	Greenish Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochiloides</i>								✓
63	Common Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>								✓
64	Indian Scimitar Babbler	<i>Pomatorhinus horsfieldii</i>							✓	
65	Jungle Babbler	<i>Turdoides striatus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
66	Oriental White-eye	<i>Zosterops palpebrosus</i>						✓		✓
67	Indian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta castanea</i>						✓		✓
68	Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>		✓	✓			✓	✓	
69	Brahminy Starling	<i>Temenuchus pagodarum</i>			✓					
70	Oriental Magpie-Robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>					✓	✓	✓	✓
71	Asian Brown Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa dauurica</i>					✓	✓	✓	
72	Tickell's Blue Flycatcher	<i>Cyornis tickelliae</i>								✓
73	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>				✓				
74	Red Avadavat	<i>Amandava amandava</i>							✓	
75	Forest Wagtail	<i>Dendronanthus indicus</i>					✓			
76	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>						✓		

Other fauna

1	Common Garden Lizard	<i>Calotes versicolor</i>						✓		
2	Common Indian Tree Frog	<i>Polypedates maculatus</i>				✓				