

India - Tiger Direct!

Naturetrek Tour Report

9 - 20 January 2020

Report compiled 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 six Naturetrek clients.

Day 1

Thursday 9th January

The group departed on their overnight flight from Heathrow to Nagpur, via Doha, arriving in the very early hours of the following morning

Day 2

Friday 10th January

Nagpur – Tadoba

The flight from Doha arrived earlier than the designated time, and after clearing immigration everyone checked into the Le Meridien Hotel for a much-needed sleep.

Post-breakfast we all departed for Tadoba. Enroute we saw lots of cotton being harvested. Pied kingfishers hovered above some waterbodies and Red-wattled Lapwings kept them company. Indian rollers guarded the electrical wires all along the way! Once we arrived at Svasara, we had a quick lunch then headed into the park. Sambar deer, Chital and Langurs welcomed us, while lots of Plum-headed Parakeets kept the jungle music going. A Gaur family with a two-week-old calf crossed in front of us. The temperature dropped as the sun was setting. Tired after a lot of travelling, we all came back to the lodge, did a quick check list and went off to bed after dinner.

Day 3

Saturday 11th January

Tadoba

The morning temperature hovered at about 10 degrees C, although the wind chill made it feel like 5 degrees C. With all of us well wrapped up for the winter we all went to the park with some gusto. One of our jeeps saw a pair of Wild Dogs on a morning patrol, but the Tigress that was seen by some cars the previous evening eluded us. Red-naped Ibis called out from perches in the treetops, while Plum-headed Parakeets and Yellow-crowned Woodpeckers vocalized all morning long.

On returning to the forest after lunch one of the cars was lucky enough to spot a male Tiger. Known to be the dominant male of the range, he was calling out for a mate. It was a memorable sighting for the clients as they had never seen a Tiger in the wild. We returned to the lodge and after completing the checklist had a lovely dinner by the campfire.

Day 4

Sunday 12th January

Tadoba

Another cool morning awaited us in Kolara, with mist adding to the whole ambience. We went to a lake called Panderpauni where we saw a lot of waterfowl. Grey Heron, Black-headed Ibis, Little Ringed Plovers and Lapwings were all over the periphery, looking for snails and other crustaceans. A Sambar alarmed in the far distance and one of the cars saw some Wild Dogs.

In the afternoon we decided to go to the southern part of the park. While driving there we saw something black and hairy! Immediately our guide shouted – SLOTH BEAR! There were two bears furiously digging a termite mound. No sooner did we see them they scampered into the undergrowth! In a matter of minutes they disappeared into the forest. We all returned to the lodge and were happy with what Tadoba had offered us. After doing the checklist we all had dinner and called it a night.

Day 5

Monday 13th January

Tadoba – Pench

A lie-in lazy morning was followed by a table breakfast in Svasara. Post breakfast we drove towards Pench – our next destination. Enroute we saw a lot of cotton fields nearly ready for harvesting. Black shouldered kites were on a lot of electrical posts looking for lizards and other prey. On arriving at the Tuli Corridor we had lunch and set off on a safari. No sooner did we reach a large waterbody our guide shouted – TIGER! We saw this Tigress, walking the forest, marking her territory. She was a nine-year-old tigress who had four sub-adult cubs nearby. Seeing her magically disappear and then reappear in the forest foliage was incredible. We spent nearly an hour watching this magnificent cat in its natural habitat.

On returning to the lodge we all did the checklist and post dinner watched the film – Tiger, Spy in the Jungle.

Day 6

Tuesday 14th January

Pench

We woke up full of enthusiasm at 5:30 in the morning and enjoyed a hot cup of tea before leaving for our morning safari. We expected it to be very cold, but the temperatures hovered at about 12 degrees C, so not unpleasant at all. The sun was out and so were the animals. Langur monkeys were basking on treetops, Peacocks were drying their feathers in the sun and some Jackals were finding the right spots in the sun for basking. A huge male Sambar blocked our way, his big antlers easily weighing more than 5 kgs. They were his pride and joy and we knew that he was going to father a lot of fawns this season.

Northern Pintail furiously dug into the lake bed looking for that perfect snack. One of our jeeps saw two sub-adult Tigers and followed it up with another sighting of a 22-month old male Tiger. Post lunch we went straight to the spot where a Tiger was seen in during the morning safari. Patience was not our greatest virtue, and again the Tigers won. They did not come out, at least until we had left! We left the park with some comfort knowing that our last safari the next day would be a great one. Post the checklist we all had dinner and went to bed.

Day 7

Wednesday 15th January

Pench – Kanha

On the last drive in Pench Tiger Reserve, we went to the Maharashtra side of the park. After driving thru some prime countryside, we entered the park by the Khursapar gate. The vegetation there was very thick making it an ideal habitat for wildlife. We heard some Chital Deer give alarm calls, but they were infrequent. Some Rufous Treepies were creating a racket in the undergrowth, obviously unhappy about something. Suddenly out of

nowhere we saw four wild dogs trotting towards us with their bellies full. In fact one of them even had a small piece of meat in her mouth.

It was clear that this pack had made a kill and had eaten more than they needed, in order to take it to their den for some hungry pups. Once they reach there, they would regurgitate it for their young ones. What an interesting behaviour display. We exited the park and post lunch left for our next destination – Kanha. The journey to Kanha took four hours through some wonderful villages. Seeing hordes of cattle returning to their respective homes and creating traffic jams was very intriguing. On arriving at the Kanha Jungle Lodge, we settled in and after doing a check list had dinner.

Day 8

Thursday 16th January

Kanha

A knock on the door at 5.30am with a hot cup of tea got us up and we were off for the first safari in Kanha. The rutting of the Barasingha was echoing all over the meadows. The males were showing off their antlers to the females with grass entangled in them as an extra enticement. A group of Wild Boar were furiously digging into the earth, looking for tubers and roots. On the banks, Black Storks were fishing. A huge feeding frenzy ensued between a flock of cormorants and egrets.

In the afternoon we went to the meadows looking for some grassland birds. A Chital alarm call caused us to change our plans though, and one of our jeeps saw a Tigress walk out into the meadow. She was going towards her cubs which were hidden somewhere in the edge of the forest. Also sighted was a male Tiger, patrolling his territory. Scent marking while walking on the road, he disappeared into the forest just as quickly as he had appeared. Returning to the lodge we all did the checklist and had dinner. Tigerland, a documentary was seen by all the guests and was well appreciated.

Day 9

Friday 17th January

Kanha

There was excitement in the air from first light this morning. It was very misty, with high humidity. With temperatures reaching double digits, we all went into the park. Jungle Babblers, Racket-tailed Drongos and Flameback Woodpeckers were busy flushing out insects as a mixed hunting party. Our guide informed that a Tigress that had made a kill of a Sambar Deer was seen last evening with cubs. We all went to that location and sure enough we saw three cubs hidden in the tall grass. The 10-month-old cubs were so well camouflaged that it was hard to spot them without binoculars. Then one bold cub stepped out and finally the other two also followed. It was a wonderful sight.

Jungle news brought more information that another Tigress with her two cubs had been spotted, so we all went to the small lake and on the bank, we saw them sitting in the open. We had already seen six tigers! Post lunch we all went again to the same location and hoped to see them again, but they stayed hidden. It was just a matter of patience, and as always, the Tiger won. It was almost time to head for the exit when we had a glimpse of one of the cubs. Sadly, it was time to exit the park. A quick checklist was followed by dinner and we all went off to bed, very content.

Day 10

Saturday 18th January

Kanha

Today we set out to explore a different zone of the park – Kanha zone. While waiting to enter the park, there was a downpour which only lasted for 10 minutes, but drenched us all thoroughly. Nevertheless, we went into the park and were welcomed by a Tigress who was patrolling her territory. Just as magically as she appeared, she disappeared into the thick mist. In the main Kanha meadow, we saw Blackbucks and also the Barasingha enclosure. Twelve Jackals made an appearance together which was very unusual.

After lunch we all drove to the park hoping to see a male Tiger which had been seen in the morning. We heard him roar and finally he emerged from the bush, majestically crossing the road in front of us on three occasions. We thought this was going to be the best sighting and nothing could top it, but we were in for a surprise when our only jeep saw a Tigress walking towards us, calling for her cubs. What a way to end the Tiger Direct holiday for all of us! Exiting the park, we all had a farewell dinner at the Kanha Jungle Lodge.

Day 11

Sunday 19th January

Kanha – Nagpur

A late wake up was followed by breakfast in the lodge. Two of our guests left for Satpuda while the others went for a nature walk, and after brunch we all left for Nagpur. On checking in at the Le Meridian, we all had dinner and the group left for the airport to catch the flight home in the early hours of the following morning.

Day 12

Monday 20th January

Journey back to UK

Our flight to Heathrow via Doha departed in the early hours, and after collecting our luggage we made our way home, with many memories of our time in India.

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	January									
			10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
1	Royal Bengal Tiger	<i>Panthera tigris tigris</i>		✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
2	Leopard	<i>Panthera pardus</i>			✓							
3	Jungle Cat	<i>Felis chaus kelaarita or kutas</i>	✓		✓	✓						
4	Rhesus Macaque	<i>Macaca mulatta</i>				✓	✓	✓				
5	S. Plains (Common) Grey Langur	<i>Semnopithecus dussumieri</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	Three-striped Palm Squirrel	<i>Funambulus pennarum</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
13	Sambar	<i>Cervus unicolor</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
14	Barasingha (Swamp Deer)	<i>Cervus duvauceli branderi</i>								✓	✓	✓
15	Chital (Spotted Deer)	<i>Cervus axis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
16	Indian Muntjac (Barking Deer)	<i>Muntiacus muntjak</i>		✓						✓	✓	✓
17	Black Buck	<i>Antilope cervicapra</i>										✓
18	Nilgai (Blue Bull)	<i>Boselaphus tragocamelus</i>				✓		✓				
19	Indian Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
20	Gaur	<i>Bos gauras</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			

Birds

1	Lesser Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓
2	Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓					
3	Cotton Pygmy Goose	<i>Nettapus coromandelianus</i>								✓	✓	✓
4	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>									✓	
5	Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>					✓					
6	Indian Spot-billed Duck	<i>Anas poecilorhyncha</i>				✓	✓				✓	✓
7	Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>					✓					
8	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>				✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
9	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>					✓					
10	Jungle Bush Quail	<i>Perdica asiatica</i>				✓		✓				
11	Red Junglefowl	<i>Gallus gallus</i>								✓	✓	✓
12	Grey Junglefowl	<i>Gallus sonnerati</i>	✓	✓	✓							
13	Indian Peafowl	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
14	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>							✓	✓	✓	✓
15	Asian Openbill	<i>Anastomus oscitans</i>	✓	✓	✓							
16	Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>								✓	✓	✓
17	Lesser Adjutant	<i>Leptoptilos javanicus</i>								✓	✓	✓
18	Black-headed Ibis	<i>Threskiornis melanocephalus</i>	✓	✓	✓							
19	Red-naped Ibis	<i>Pseudibis papillosa</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
20	Indian Pond Heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
21	Eastern Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus coromandus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
22	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		✓	✓							
23	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>			✓					✓	✓	
24	Intermediate Egret	<i>Egretta intermedia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓
25	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	✓	✓	✓						✓	✓

	Common name	Scientific name	January								
			10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
26	Indian Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax fuscicollis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
27	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>								✓	✓
28	Little Cormorant	<i>Microcarbo niger</i>		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
29	Oriental Darter	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>	✓	✓	✓						
30	Black-winged Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>				✓	✓	✓			
31	Crested (Oriental) Honey Buzzard	<i>Pernis ptilorhynchus</i>			✓						
32	Indian Vulture	<i>Gyps indicus</i>									✓
33	Red-headed Vulture	<i>Sarcogyps calvus</i>							✓		
34	Crested Serpent Eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓
35	Changeable Hawk-Eagle	<i>Nisaetus cirrhatas</i>		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
36	Shikra	<i>Accipiter badius</i>		✓			✓				
37	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>				✓					
38	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>				✓		✓			
39	Grey-headed Fish Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus ichthyaetus</i>			✓				✓		✓
40	White-eyed Buzzard	<i>Butastur teesa</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
41	White-breasted Waterhen	<i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i>		✓	✓	✓					
42	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>		✓	✓						
43	Yellow-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus malabaricus</i>						✓			
44	Red-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
45	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>			✓						
46	Bronze-winged Jacana	<i>Metopidius indicus</i>	✓	✓	✓						
47	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>			✓			✓	✓		✓
48	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>		✓	✓						✓
49	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>							✓		
50	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>			✓				✓	✓	
51	River Tern	<i>Sterna aurantia</i>					✓				
52	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>		✓	✓						
53	Spotted Dove	<i>Spilopelia chinensis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
54	Laughing Dove	<i>Spilopelia senegalensis</i>	✓					✓			
55	Yellow-footed Green Pigeon	<i>Treron phoenicopterus</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓
56	Southern (Greater) Coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis parroti</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓			
57	Common Hawk-Cuckoo	<i>Hierococcyx varius</i>		✓							
58	Indian Scops Owl	<i>Otus bakkamoena</i>		✓		✓					✓
59	Jungle Owlet	<i>Glaucidium radiatum</i>				✓					
60	Spotted Owlet	<i>Athene brama</i>					✓			✓	
61	Brown Hawk-Owl	<i>Ninox scutulata</i>							✓	✓	
62	Asian Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus balasiensis</i>							✓		
63	Indian Roller	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
64	White-throated Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrensis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
65	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	✓							✓	✓
66	Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>	✓		✓						
67	Green Bee-eater	<i>Merops orientalis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
68	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>				✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
69	Indian Grey Hornbill	<i>Ocyrceros birostris</i>					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
70	Brown-headed Barbet	<i>Psilopogon zeylanicus</i>									✓
71	Coppersmith Barbet	<i>Psilopogon haemacephalus</i>		✓					✓		
72	Yellow-crowned Woodpecker	<i>Leiopicus mahrattensis</i>		✓							
73	Streak-throated Woodpecker	<i>Picus xanthopygaeus</i>								✓	
74	Black-rumped Flameback	<i>Dinopium benghalense</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
75	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>									✓
76	Plum-headed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula cyanocephala</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

	Common name	Scientific name	January									
			10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
77	Alexandrine Parakeet	<i>Psittacula eupatria</i>										✓
78	Rose-ringed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
79	Common Woodshrike	<i>Tephrodornis pondicerianus</i>					✓					
80	Large Cuckooshrike	<i>Coracina macei</i>								✓		✓
81	Small Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus cinnamomeus</i>							✓			
82	Scarlet Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus flammeus</i>										✓
83	Long-tailed Shrike	<i>Lanius schach</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓					
84	Indian Golden Oriole (split)	<i>Oriolus kundoo</i>										✓
85	Black-hooded Oriole	<i>Oriolus xanthornus</i>							✓	✓		✓
86	Black Drongo	<i>Dicrurus macrocerus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
87	White-bellied Drongo	<i>Dicrurus caerulescens</i>							✓			
88	Greater Racket-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus paradiseus</i>			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
89	Rufous Treepie	<i>Dendrocitta vagabunda</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
90	House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>	✓	✓								
91	Indian Jungle Crow	<i>Corvus culminatus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
92	Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher	<i>Culicicapa ceylonensis</i>							✓			
93	Rufous-tailed Lark	<i>Ammomanes phoenicura</i>				✓						
94	Red-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓
95	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓
96	Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>	✓		✓					✓	✓	✓
97	Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>										✓
98	Ashy Prinia	<i>Prinia socialis</i>										✓
99	Plain Prinia	<i>Prinia inornata</i>			✓							✓
100	Indian Scimitar Babbler	<i>Pomatorhinus horsfieldii</i>										✓
101	Common Babbler	<i>Turdoides caudatus</i>			✓	✓						
102	Jungle Babbler	<i>Turdoides striatus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
103	Indian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta castanea</i>										✓
104	Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
105	Pied Myna (Asian Pied Starling)	<i>Gracupica contra</i>				✓						
106	Brahminy Starling	<i>Temenuchus pagodarum</i>				✓	✓	✓				
107	Orange-headed Thrush	<i>Geokichla citrina</i>								✓		
108	Oriental Magpie-Robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>		✓					✓			✓
109	White-rumped Shama	<i>Copsychus malabaricus</i>										✓
110	Siberian Stonechat	<i>Saxicola maurus</i>									✓	✓
111	Pied Bush Chat	<i>Saxicola caprata</i>	✓	✓	✓							
112	Purple Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris asiaticus</i>				✓			✓			
113	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓		✓			✓			
114	Indian Silverbill	<i>Euodice malabarica</i>							✓			
115	Western Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>					✓					
116	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>				✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
117	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>				✓						
118	Paddyfield Pipit	<i>Anthus rufulus</i>			✓							✓

Other Fauna

1	Marsh Mugger Crocodile	<i>Crocodylus palustris</i>	✓	✓	✓							
2	Southern Indian Rock Agama	<i>Psammophilus dorsalis</i>					✓					