

India - Tiger Marathon

Naturetrek Tour Report

29 March - 9 April 2013

Report compiled by Bharat Mandhyan (Bunty)



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Day 1

Friday 29th March

Nagpur to Pench

Open, bright and sunny day, moderately cold morning

The group arrived from the UK by Jet Airways flight that landed on time at Nagpur International airport. We drove through Nagpur city and it took us two hours to reach Pench. The group members rested in the comfortable rooms of the hotel for the long flight. Some did not take much time to reassemble back in the lawns of the hotel. The garden was full of butterflies and dragonflies and there were Red-wattled Lapwings, Red-vented Bulbuls and Brown Rock Chats to view around the hotel.

Day 2

Saturday 30th March

Pench National Park

Open, bright and sunny day mostly, moderately cold morning

We headed into Pench and what an amazing start - we saw our first Tiger on the first drive into the park, though it was in the bush we just managed to see it moving deeper into the thicket. During the afternoon game drive we saw the same Tigress, this time she was lying down around the water hole and later she crossed the road right in front of the jeep! As we turned our jeep to be out of the park we saw another Tiger which was one of the cubs, wow - what a way to start our tour! Other mammals seen were Gaur, Rhesus Macaque, Common Langur, Golden Jackal, Sambar, Chital and Nilgai.

Day 3

Sunday 31st March

Pench to Kanha National Park

Bright sunny morning, warm afternoon, moderately cold weather

We rose before dawn for tea, coffee and biscuits to start our early morning drive, but we were not so lucky today with the tiger sightings, and the drive remained very quiet. After lunch we traversed the scenic Vindhya Hills as we transferred by road to Kanha, which we reached in about four hours. We were looking forward to being in the different habitat of the moist deciduous Sal and Bamboo dominated forest of Kanha. On arrival we checked in at the Tuli Tiger Resort

Day 4**Monday 1st April**

Kanha

Windy, bright and sunny

After having our tea, coffee and biscuits before dawn we started for the early morning drive at 5.30 am to be in first lot of jeeps going into the park, and entered through Kisli gate on at 6.15 am. During the morning drive we didn't see any tiger but we heard it growling before disappearing into the tall undergrowth. This was followed by a picnic breakfast which was served in the park at the Kanha canteen.

During the afternoon game drive we saw a Leopard in the distance going for a drink – some forest guards said it had made a kill in the vicinity, and we were hopeful to see it again in the days to come.

Day 5**Tuesday 2nd April**

Kanha

Open, sunny and warm day

After having our tea, coffee and biscuits before dawn we started for the early morning drive at 530 am and entered through Kisli gate at 615am. We did the elephant ride in the morning, which was an amazing experience for everybody, riding on the back rocking and rolling, into the undergrowth going up and down and away from the sound of the jeeps in utmost silence - the icing on the cake was a Tiger and Leopard sighting.

Day 6**Wednesday 3rd April**

Kanha to Bandhavgarh

Windy, bright and sunny

Today the morning game drive was not fruitful with any tiger sighting but we did see a Leopard dragging its kill on the hill top and a Jungle Cat.

After lunch we left the hotel at 1400 hrs to drive towards Bandhavgarh, and in between we stopped for a comfort break and a stretch and carried on for the rest of the journey At 1800 hrs we checked in at Bandhavgarh Jungle Lodge. We had an early dinner then everybody went to bed to get up early next morning.

Day 7**Thursday 4th April**

Bandhavgarh

Pleasant morning, warm afternoon, cool at night

After having our tea, coffee and biscuits before dawn we started the drive from the hotel, entered the park at 6.15 am, and experienced some lovely sighting of a Tigress in the morning game drive. During the afternoon game drive we did the Zone 2 area of the park, and nearly missed a tiger sighting, though some from another vehicle did manage to see one. Other mammals seen were Sambar, Chital, Wild Boar and Jackal.

Day 8**Friday 5th April**

Bandhavgarh

Pleasant morning, warm afternoon, cool at night

After having our tea, coffee and biscuits before dawn we started the drive from the hotel at 5.45 am to queue up at the park entrance. We had a lovely sighting of a male Tiger at Rampur area, and later saw a female Tiger for about half an hour sitting by the side of the road. Other mammals seen were Sambar, Chital, Wild Boar and Jackal. Breakfast, lunch and dinner were served at the hotel.

Day 9**Saturday 6th April**

Bandhavgarh to Panna National Park

Windy and cloudy morning, hazy conditions, sunny afternoon and cool evening

We rose before dawn for tea, coffee and biscuits and after taking our early morning drive, we crossed the scenic Vindhya Hills as we transferred by road to Panna which we reached in about five hours. In between we stopped for a comfort break and carried on for the rest of the journey, looking forward yet another variety of habitat - the dry deciduous Teak dominated forest of Panna. On arrival we checked in Ken River Lodge, which is spread over a great expanse of wooded land with spacious and comfortable rooms. As we entered the hotel campus we could hear the grunting eerie call of the Brown Fish Owl which put the hairs standing on end on a dark night! We had an early dinner then everybody went to bed to get up early next morning.

Day 10**Sunday 7th April**

Panna

Windy and cloudy morning, hazy conditions, sunny afternoon and cool evening

After having our tea, coffee and biscuits before dawn we did the morning game drive. During the afternoon game drive we were informed by the park officials about a regular sighting of leopard at this boating point in the park, but we did not get to see it this time.

Day 11**Monday 8th April**

Panna to Khajuraho to Delhi

Cool sunny morning, sunny afternoon, cool evening

We did the boat ride on the River Ken in the morning which is the lifeline of the Panna Tiger Reserve, and highlights were the Eurasian Eagle Owls which have a nesting site on these river islands, and Black Ibises basking and a Marsh Mugger Crocodile swam close to the boat! After breakfast at the hotel we drove by surface to Khajuraho which took us around one hour, and visited the famous Chandela dynasty temples (the western group of temples- Lakshmana Temple, Kandariya Mahadev Temple, Jagdambe Temple) starting at 1030am until about 12.30am. We then transferred to the airport to board the flight to Delhi departing at 1455 hrs. On arrival at Delhi at 1805 hrs we checked in at the Westin Gurgaon hotel.

End of Main Tour, beginning of Ranthambore Extension

Day 12

Tuesday 9th April

Some had begun the journey back to the UK, while three of us had an extension to Ranthambore so we left the hotel at 6:30am to reach Nizammudin Station at 7:20 am. The porters carried our cases to the coach and loaded them neatly under our seats. The train left at 8 am (and for the next 5 hours we had a quiet time, some reading while others decided to sleep. We arrived at Sawai Madhopur at 14:00hrs. On arrival at the station we found our car waiting to take us to the Pugmark Resort. We had a very pleasant welcome at the hotel by the manager and staff. We would be staying for the next three nights. We had a quick lunch and relaxed until later in the evening when we met for the checklist and dinner.

Day 13

Wednesday 10th April

We were up and ready at 6am to go to the park for an early morning safari. After entering the park, in Zone 6 we reached the spot where a Tiger had made a kill recently, we could smell the carcass but no sign of tiger yet instead we saw some Wild Boar there scavenging. Suddenly the guide pointed out a Tiger, and after eating the left over kill it started to walk on the road and walked for some time in front of us before disappearing in the woods.

We were back at the resort by 10am, and had breakfast. We had lunch at the resort and proceeded for the afternoon game drive. We went to Zone 3, which is the most scenic route of the park with the lake and the fort at the backdrop, and the icing on the cake was the sighting of a Tigress just lying down by the side of the lake which later walked and we could see her from the main road. We got back to the resort by 6:30pm and did the checklist at 7:30pm followed by a lovely meal at the resort and early to bed.

Day 14

Thursday 11th April

We did Zone 6 in the morning game drive which remained very quiet today. The afternoon game drive was Zone 4 - a nice road winding through the hill sides and giving us a feel of how different and rugged this national park is. As we reached the rockiest area we saw some Nilgai and a couple of Chinkara but no sign of any predators. Birding was excellent on this zone. We were back at the camp by 7pm, did the checklist at 7:45pm and then had dinner.

Day 15

Friday 12th April

It was our last drive into the park today and we had Zone 3 again, one of my favourites, it was a good way to finish our park safari and the only thing we missed today was a tiger sighting but that's how wildlife goes... We had breakfast and carried a packed lunch from the hotel before we left for our uneventful five hour train journey back to Delhi. We get back to Delhi a little after 7pm and bid our final goodbyes to each other before beginning the rest of the journey back to the UK.

Species List

Birds

Nomenclature and taxonomy generally follows Grimmett and Inskipp's *The Birds of Northern India* (2003) which follows the treatments in *The Birds of the Indian Subcontinent* (1999) by the same authors. Figures refer to the number of days the species was recorded out of the 7 days of the main tour

Bird species	Scientific Name	No. of Sightings	Remarks
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	1	
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	4	
Little Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax niger</i>	8	
Oriental Darter	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>	6	
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	6	
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	2	
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	8	
Intermediate Egret	<i>Egretta intermedia</i>	4	
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	8	
Indian Pond Heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>	5	
Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	8	
Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>	2	
Black-crowned night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	1	
Painted Stork	<i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>	5	
Asian Openbill	<i>Anastomus oscitans</i>	4	
Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>	3	
Woolly-necked Stork	<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>	4	
Lesser Adjutant	<i>Leptoptilos javanicus</i>	5	
Black-headed Ibis	<i>Threskiornes melanocephalus</i>	3	
Red-naped Ibis	<i>Pseudibis papillosa</i>	7	
Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	1	
Lesser Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>	6	
Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>	3	
Comb Duck	<i>Sarkidiornis melanotos</i>	1	
Cotton Pygmy goose	<i>Nettapus coromandelianus</i>	1	
Spot-billed Duck	<i>Anas poecilorhyncha</i>	3	
Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	2	
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	1	
Oriental Honey Buzzard	<i>Pernis ptilorhynchus</i>	7	
Black-shouldered Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>	4	
Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	3	Often abundant in urban settings, especially common in Delhi, but much scarcer or even absent in more rural areas
Egyptian Vulture	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	2	

Bird species	Scientific Name	No. of Sightings	Remarks
White-rumped Vulture	<i>Gyps benghalenses</i>	3	
Long-billed Vulture	<i>Gyps indicus</i>	5	
Eurasian Griffon	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	1	
Red-headed Vulture	<i>Sacrogyaps calvus</i>	3	
Himalayan Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps himalayensis</i>	1	
Crested Serpent Eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela cheela</i>	5	
Shikra	<i>Accipiter badius</i>	6	Quite common and widespread
White-Eyed Buzzard	<i>Butastur teesa</i>	5	
Changeable Hawk Eagle	<i>Spizaetus cirrhatous</i>	2	
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	3	
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrines</i>	1	
Grey Francolin	<i>Francolinus pondiceranus</i>	3	
Jungle Bush Quail	<i>Perdicula asiatica</i>	1	
Red Spurfowl	<i>Galloperdix spadicea</i>	3	
Painted Spurfowl	<i>galloperdix</i>	3	
Indian Peafowl	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>	9	
Barred Button Quail	<i>Turnix suscitator</i>	1	
White-breasted Waterhen	<i>Amauronis phoenicurus</i>	4	
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinule chloropus</i>	2	
Pheasant-tailed Jacana	<i>Hydrophasianus chirurgus</i>	1	
Bronzed Winged Jacana	<i>Metopidius indicus</i>	2	
Greater Painted Snipe	<i>Rostratula benghalensis</i>	2	
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	4	
Stone Curlew	<i>Burhinus oedicephalus</i>	3	
Great Thick-knee	<i>Burhinus recurvirostris</i>	3	
Yellow wattled Lapwing	<i>Vannellus malabarica</i>	4	
Red-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus indicus</i>	6	Very common, widespread and noisy
Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	2	
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	1	
Black-tailed godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	2	
Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stragnatalis</i>	3	
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	3	
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	4	
Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	4	
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	2	
River Tern	<i>Sterna aurantia</i>	1	
Painted sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles indicus</i>	2	
Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia neglecta</i>	3	
Oriental Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	2	
Eurasian Collard Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaoto</i>	3	
Spotted Dove	<i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>	5	Fairly common
Laughing Dove	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>	2	Common and very widespread

Bird species	Scientific Name	No. of Sightings	Remarks
Yellow-footed Green Pigeon	<i>Treron phoenicoptera</i>	4	
Alexandrine Parakeet	<i>Psittacula eupatria</i>	7	
Rose-ringed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>	9	Common and widespread, one of very few species seen every day
Plum-headed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula cyanocephala</i>	6	
Common Hawk Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus varius</i>	4	
Greater Coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>	6	Regularly encountered in a range of scrubby and grassland settings
Brown Fish owl	<i>Ketupa zeylonensis</i>	4	
Indian Scops Owl	<i>Otus bakkamoena</i>	3	
Eurasian Eagle Owl	<i>Bubo bubo</i>	1	
Jungle Owlet	<i>Glaucidium</i>	2	
Spotted Owlet	<i>Athene brama indica</i>	2	
Grey Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus indicus</i>	1	
Savannah Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus affinis</i>	2	
Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>	3	
Crested Treeswift	<i>Hemiprocne corona</i>	3	
Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	3	
Stork-billed Kingfisher	<i>Pelargopsis capensis</i>	1	
White-throated Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>	5	Common and very widespread, a frequent sight on roadside wires
Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>	1	
Green Bee-Eater	<i>Merops orientalis</i>	5	
Blue-tailed Bee-eater	<i>Merops philippinis</i>	1	
Indian Roller	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>	5	Frequently seen, often along roadsides
Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	1	
Indian Grey Hornbill	<i>Ocyrceros birostris</i>	3	Small numbers were seen at most wooded or parkland sites
Malabar Pied hornbill	<i>Anthracosceros coronatus</i>	1	
Brown-Headed Barbet	<i>Megalaima zeylanica</i>	2	
Coppersmith Barbet	<i>Megalaima haemacephala</i>	2	Quite common, though much more often heard than seen
Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos canicapillus</i>	1	
Yellow-crowned Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos mahrattensis</i>	2	
Black-rumped Flameback	<i>Dinopium benghalense</i>	4	The commonest and most widespread woodpecker with records coming from all wooded locations
White-Naped Woodpecker	<i>Chrysocolaptes festivus</i>	2	
Ashy-crowned Sparrow-lark	<i>Eremopterix grisea</i>	3	
Rufous-tailed Lark	<i>Ammomanes phoenicurus</i>	2	
Dusky Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne concolor</i>	1	
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundu rustica</i>	2	

Bird species	Scientific Name	No. of Sightings	Remarks
Wire-tailed Swallow	<i>Hirundu smithii</i>	2	
Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>	2	
White Wagtail	<i>Motallica alba</i>	3	
White-browed Wagtail	<i>Motallica madaraspatensis</i>	1	
citrine Wagtail	<i>Motallica citreola</i>	2	
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motallica cinerea</i>	4	
Oriental Pipit	<i>Anthus rufulus</i>	2	
Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	2	
Large Cuckooshrike	<i>Coracina macei macei</i>	4	
Small Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus cinnamomeus</i>	2	
Scarlet Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus flammeus</i>	1	
Red-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>	9	Very common and widespread
Blue-winged Leafbird	<i>Chloropsis cochinchinensis</i>	1	
Golden-Fronted Leafbird	<i>Chloropsis aurifrons</i>	1	
Common Iora	<i>Aegithina tiphia</i>	2	
Orange-headed Thrush	<i>Zoothera citrina</i>	4	
Tickell's Thrush	<i>Turdus unicolor</i>	1	
Grey-breasted Prinia	<i>Prinia hodgsoni</i>	1	
Ashy Prinia	<i>Prinia sociallis</i>	1	
Plain Prinia	<i>Prinia inomata</i>	1	
Striated Grassbird	<i>Megalurus palustris</i>	1	
Red-breasted Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula parva</i>	1	
Tickell's Blue flycatcher	<i>Cyornis tickelli</i>	3	
Common Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>	3	Widespread in small numbers with birds recorded at all sites
Greenish Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochiloides</i>	3	
Oriental Magpie Robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>	4	
Indian Robin	<i>Saxicoloides fulica</i>	3	
Black Redstart	<i>Phoeicurus ochruros</i>	2	
Pied Bushchat	<i>Saxicola caprata</i>	1	
Indian Chat	<i>Cercomela fusca</i>	1	
White-browed Fantail	<i>Rhipidura aureola</i>	1	
Black-naped Monarch	<i>Hypothymis azurea</i>	2	
Common babbler	<i>Turdoides caudatus</i>	3	
Large Grey Babbler	<i>Turdoides malcolmi</i>	5	
Jungle Babbler	<i>Turdoides striatus</i>	6	Generally common and widespread
Brown-cheeked Fulvetta	<i>Alcippe poipoicephala</i>	3	
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	3	
Black-lored Tit	<i>Parus xanthogenys</i>	1	
Purple Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia asiatica</i>	9	Present throughout at low densities
Oriental White-eye	<i>Zosterops palpebrosus</i>	4	
Black-Hooded Oriole	<i>Oriolus xanthornus</i>	4	

Bird species	Scientific Name	No. of Sightings	Remarks
Long-tailed Shrike	<i>Lanius schach</i>	4	
Bay-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius vittatus</i>	2	
Common Woodshrike	<i>Tephrodornis pondicerianus</i>	4	
Black Drongo	<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>	5	Very common, a frequent site on roadside wires
White-bellied Drongo	<i>Dicrurus caerulescens</i>	2	
Greater Racket-Tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus paradiseus</i>	2	
Rufous Treepie	<i>Dendrocitta agabunda</i>	5	Widespread at fairly low densities
House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens splendens</i>	3	common around settlements, but less frequently seen in wooded areas
Large-billed Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>	6	Generally found in more wooded settings than the last species, though with some habitat overlap, and never in such large concentrations
Bank Myna	<i>Acridotheres ginginianus</i>	2	Rather localised, sometimes the dominant myna but generally scarce and heavily outnumbered by Common Mynas
Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis tristis</i>	6	Ubiquitous
Asian Pied Starling	<i>Sturnus contra</i>	2	Common in the vicinity of water
Chestnut-tailed starling	<i>Sturnia malabarica</i>	3	
Brahminy Starling	<i>Temenuchus pagodarum</i>	3	
Rosy Starling	<i>Pastor roseus</i>	1	
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	3	Fairly common in most urban settings and in some more rural areas
Chestnut-shouldered Petronia	<i>Petronia xanthocollis</i>	4	
Crested Bunting	<i>Melophus lathamii</i>	1	
Common Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>	2	

Mammals

Royal Bengal Tiger	<i>Panthera tigris</i>	6	
Leopard	<i>Panthera pardus</i>	3	
Jungle Cat	<i>Felis chaus</i>	2	
Rhesus Macaque	<i>Macca mulatta</i>	6	Fairly common and widespread
Common Langur	<i>Presbytis entellus</i>	12	Fairly common and widespread, commoner in heavy woodland than the previous species
Common Mongoose	<i>Herpestes edwardsi</i>	1	
Ruddy Mongoose	<i>Herpestes smithii</i>	6	
Jackal	<i>Canis aureus</i>	7	

Bird species	Scientific Name	No. of Sightings	Remarks
Sloth Bear	<i>Merursus ursinus</i>	1	
Indian Flying Fox	<i>Pteropus giganteus</i>	3	
Indian or Black-naped hare	<i>Lepus nigricollis</i>	1	
Three-striped Palm Squirrel	<i>Funambulus pennarum</i>	3	
Five-Striped Palm Squirrel	<i>Funambulus pennantii</i>	6	
Indian Gaint Flying squirrel	<i>Petaurista philippensis</i>	1	
Gaur(Indian Bison)	<i>Bos guarus</i>	4	
Sambar	<i>Cervus unicolor</i>	5	
Barasingha (Samp deer)	<i>Cervus duvauceli branderi</i>	2	
Indian Muntjac (Barking Deer)	<i>Muntiacus muntjak</i>	2	
Chital (Spotted Deer)	<i>Cervus axis</i>	5	
Khincara (Indian Gazelle)	<i>Gazelle bonnetti</i>	4	
Nilgai	<i>Boselaphus tragocamelus</i>	5	
Indian Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>	7	
Bengal Fox	<i>Vulpes bengalensis</i>	3	

Reptiles

Flap-shelled Turtle	<i>Lissemys punctata</i>	1	
Marsh Mugger	<i>Crocodylus palustris Lesson</i>	4	
Monitor Lizard	<i>Varanus benghalensis</i>	1	

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