

# Realm of the Black Panther

Naturetrek Tour Report

15th – 24th March 2026

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Osprey



Leopard



Tiger



Indian Peafowls

Tour report by Jesan T. Das

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Tour participants: Jesan T. Das (leader) with six Naturetrek clients

## Summary

This was an exhilarating wildlife journey through the forests of Bhadra and Nagarhole Tiger Reserves in Karnataka. From start to finish, the tour was filled with remarkable wildlife encounters, memorable landscapes, and wonderful camaraderie among the group. The most notable highlights included sightings of two female Tigers, repeated encounters with Elephant herds displaying fascinating behaviour, a Leopard sighting, Smooth-coated Otters and a rich diversity of birdlife. The magical light of dawn and dusk reflecting across the forests and the vast Bhadra reservoir added a special charm to every safari. Daily checklist sessions, comfortable stays, hearty meals and smooth logistics ensured that the clients enjoyed a rewarding and enriching wildlife experience throughout the tour.

### Day 1

**Sunday 15th March**

#### Overnight flight

The journey began with an overnight flight from Heathrow to Bangalore.

### Day 2

**Monday 16th March**

#### Arrival – transfer to Bhadra Tiger Reserve

The clients arrived at Bangalore International Airport at 4.15am. The group was transferred to the Taj Yeshwantpur hotel for breakfast and refreshments. After breakfast, the group departed at 8.15am for Bhadra Tiger Reserve, making a short stop en route. Upon arrival, the group checked into River Tern Lodge. The afternoon jeep safari produced sightings of Bengal Sacred Langur and Chital. Birdlife included Black Drongo, Jungle Babbler and Grey Junglefowl. The day concluded with a checklist session, followed by dinner.

### Day 3

**Tuesday 17th March**

#### Bhadra

An early morning boat safari began in cool and pleasant conditions. The water body is well-known as a River Tern breeding site, and large flocks were seen flying around noisily, likely searching for suitable nesting islands as water levels receded. Great, Indian and Little Cormorants were seen perched on tree trunks and actively fishing. Raptors including Osprey, Grey-headed Fish Eagle and Brahminy Kite were observed soaring and perching along the banks. A pair of Great Thick-knees was also seen, with well-camouflaged chicks. Mammal activity was minimal, with only a few scattered herds of Chital.

During the afternoon boat safari, wildlife movement was initially low due to the heat, but improved after 5.00pm. The major highlight was a herd of approximately twenty Asian Elephants, including a large tusker. The herd approached the water, but retreated after noticing the boat. No big cats were sighted.

## Day 4

Wednesday 18th March

### Bhadra

The morning jeep safari began in cool and pleasant conditions. Grey Junglefowl were calling from the bushes. A pair of Southern Hill Mynas came down unusually low from the canopy, offering excellent views. A Rufous Babbler, a species endemic to the Western Ghats, was also sighted. Other sightings included White-rumped Shama and a troop of Bengal Sacred Langurs feeding on leaves in beautiful backlit conditions. After breakfast, the group went for a birding walk near the lodge and spotted Brown Shrike, Green-billed Malkoha, Chestnut-tailed Starling and Common Iora.



Hill Mynas



Rufous Babbler



Indian Giant Squirrel



Eurasian Wild Pig (Boar)

The afternoon safari was hot and quiet initially, but later an Indian Giant Squirrel was seen feeding high in a tree. The group waited near an area where a female Leopard and cub had been active, but they did not appear. A herd of Gaur was later seen grazing. Heavy rain with thunder and lightning ended the safari dramatically as the group drove back to the gate.

## Day 5

Thursday 19th March

### Boat ride & transfer to Nagarhole Tiger Reserve

A morning boat ride focused on areas where Black Panther sightings had previously occurred along the lake banks. Wildlife movement was minimal, but alarm calls from langurs raised expectations. While we waited, two Smooth-coated Otters were seen actively fishing, providing an engaging sighting. Despite continued alarm calls, no predator

appeared, and the group returned for breakfast and checked out. The group then drove to Nagarhole Tiger Reserve, and checked into Kabini River Lodge in the evening.

## Day 6

**Friday 20th March**

### Nagarhole

The morning jeep safari produced sightings of Black Stork, Common Kingfisher, Asian Woolly-necked Stork and Wood Sandpiper at a waterhole. Soon after, news of a Tiger sighting led the group to the location, where they encountered a female Tiger known as the Maggay Female. She walked out of the forest, scent-marked a tree, and crossed the road directly in front of the jeep: it was an unforgettable sighting.

The afternoon safari produced sightings of Crested Serpent Eagle and a single-tusked male Elephant enjoying a prolonged bath in a waterhole. Later, another Tiger was sighted (the T.T. Female) walking along the roadside, before disappearing into the forest. The safari also included sightings of a large tusker, Spotted Owlets and Blue-bearded Bee-eater. It had been an exceptional day, with not one but two Tiger sightings.

## Day 7

**Saturday 21st March**

### Nagarhole

The morning safari included sightings of Red Spurfowl, Green Imperial Pigeon and Large-billed Crows feeding on a fresh kill, likely a fawn, possibly killed by a Tiger, as pugmarks were seen nearby. Later, the group encountered a pack of Dhohes, including three adults and four pups, which came very close to the jeep: an extraordinary sighting. A White-bellied Woodpecker was also seen.

The afternoon boat safari produced sightings of Grey Heron, an Osprey with a fish, Marsh Crocodile and Elephants along the banks.

## Day 8

**Sunday 22nd March**

### Nagarhole

The morning safari began with a langur sitting on a termite mound in beautiful backlight. The Dhole pack was seen again, feeding on a Chital kill. Later, alarm calls led to a Leopard resting on a tree branch, where it remained for a long time, while langurs and macaques continued alarm calling.

The afternoon safari included sightings of Bengal Monitor, a herd of Elephants bathing, Stripe-necked Mongooses and a juvenile Changeable Hawk-Eagle unsuccessfully hunting a junglefowl.

## Day 9

Monday 23rd March

Nagarhole – Bangalore

The final morning safari included sightings of an Indian Peafowl basking in the morning sun, Gaur browsing in the forest, the same single-tusked Elephant seen earlier in the trip, Chital, Sambar, Indian Giant Squirrel and Wild Pigs. After checkout, the group visited a nearby tribal village of the Jenu Kurumba community, whose primary occupation is honey collection. Clients interacted with the villagers and learned about their lifestyle and culture. The group then returned to Bangalore and checked in to the Taj Yeshwantpur for the night.

## Day 10

Tuesday 24th March

Departure

The group checked out at 3.15am and transferred to Bangalore International Airport for their return flight. The tour concluded with wonderful memories of Karnataka’s wildlife, landscapes and rich biodiversity.

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## Species lists

### Birds

E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic	Common name	Scientific name	March 2026							
			16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
	Lesser Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>	15							
	Cotton Pygmy Goose	<i>Nettapus coromandelianus</i>	6		5					
	Indian Spot-billed Duck	<i>Anas poecilorhyncha</i>	3	5		2		6		
	Indian Peafowl	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>	1	6	5	2	2	3	4	5
	Red Spurfowl - E	<i>Galloperdix spadicea</i>						2	2	
	Grey Junglefowl - E	<i>Gallus sonneratii</i>	5	5	5	2	2	5	5	2
	Greater Coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>			1			1		1
	Green-billed Malkoha	<i>Phaenicophaeus tristis</i>			1					
	Asian Koel	<i>Eudynamys scolopaceus</i>			1			1	2	
	Common Hawk-Cuckoo	<i>Hierococyx varius</i>					1	1	1	1
	Spotted Dove	<i>Spilopelia chinensis</i>	2		3		4	4		1
	Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>								1
	Yellow-footed Green Pigeon	<i>Treron phoenicopterus</i>								3
	Green Imperial Pigeon	<i>Ducula aenea</i>						4		
	White-breasted Waterhen	<i>Amauornis phoenicurus</i>	2						2	
	Great Stone-curlew	<i>Esacus recurvirostris</i>		6		3		2		
	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>						2		
	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Thinornis dubius</i>		4		2				
	Red-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>	2	2	6	3	3	4	4	2
	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>			1		1	2	2	1
	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>					2			
	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>						5		
	Small Pratincole	<i>Glareola lactea</i>		50		5				
	River Tern	<i>Sterna aurantia</i>	2	✓	3	40		60	60	
	Asian Openbill	<i>Anastomus oscitans</i>		5		1		89		
	Lesser Adjutant	<i>Leptoptilos javanicus</i>		5		1		1		
	Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>					1			
	Asian Woolly-necked Stork	<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>				5	2	6		
	Oriental Darter	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>		6	2	4		7		
	Little Cormorant	<i>Microcarbo niger</i>	2	7	2	3	4	10	3	1
	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>		50		6		50		
	Indian Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax fuscicollis</i>		5	2	4		40		
	Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>		5						
	Black-headed Ibis	<i>Threskiornis melanocephalus</i>	5			7		50		
	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>		5	1	2		5	2	1
	Little Heron	<i>Butorides atricapilla</i>		1						
	Indian Pond Heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>	2		1		4	20	2	1
	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	1	3		2		12		
	Medium Egret	<i>Ardea intermedia</i>		1	1					
	Eastern Cattle Egret	<i>Ardea coromanda</i>	6			50	5			
	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	1							
	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		2	1	2		1		
	Jerdon's Nightjar - N	<i>Caprimulgus atripennis</i>		H						
	Crested Treeswift	<i>Hemiprocne coronata</i>						2		
	Asian Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus balasiensis</i>	2		2	2				
	Spotted Owlet	<i>Athene brama</i>					2			
	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>		2		2		4		
	Crested Honey Buzzard	<i>Pernis ptilorhynchus</i>			1				1	
	Red-headed Vulture	<i>Sarcogyps calvus</i>						1	1	
	White-rumped Vulture	<i>Gyps bengalensis</i>						1		
	Crested Serpent Eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>	1		2		3	1		

E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic		March 2026							
Common name	Scientific name	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
Changeable Hawk-Eagle	<i>Nisaetus cirrhatus</i>							2	
Greater Spotted Eagle	<i>Clanga clanga</i>						1		
Brahminy Kite	<i>Haliastur indus</i>		2		4	3	3		
Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	17							
Grey-headed Fish Eagle	<i>Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus</i>		2						
White-eyed Buzzard	<i>Butastur teesa</i>			1					
Common Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>					2	2	2	1
Indian Grey Hornbill	<i>Ocyceros birostris</i>			1				1	2
Malabar Grey Hornbill - E	<i>Ocyceros griseus</i>	1							
Malabar Pied Hornbill	<i>Anthracoceros coronatus</i>	5							
Indian Roller	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>						2	2	
Blue-bearded Bee-eater	<i>Nyctyornis athertoni</i>					2	1		
Chestnut-headed Bee-eater	<i>Merops leschenaulti</i>		2						
Asian Green Bee-eater	<i>Merops orientalis</i>			5	5				
Blue-tailed Bee-eater	<i>Merops philippinus</i>					5	3	3	
Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>					1			
White-throated Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>	2	4	5	3		2	2	
Coppersmith Barbet	<i>Psilopogon haemacephalus</i>			1		2			
White-cheeked Barbet - E	<i>Psilopogon viridis</i>				2			1	
Black-rumped Flameback	<i>Dinopium benghalense</i>	2		2		2		2	1
Streak-throated Woodpecker	<i>Picus xanthopygaeus</i>							1	
White-bellied Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus javensis</i>	2		2				2	2
Scarlet Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus flammeus</i>					2	2		
Ashy Woodswallow	<i>Artamus fuscus</i>		20		4				
Common Iora	<i>Aegithina tiphia</i>			2					
Black-hooded Oriole	<i>Oriolus xanthornus</i>						2		
Indian Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus kundoo</i>	1		1				2	
Black-naped Oriole	<i>Oriolus chinensis</i>		1						
Greater Racket-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus paradiseus</i>	2		3		2	2	2	
Black Drongo	<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>			2		2			
Indian Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone paradisi</i>			2				1	
Long-tailed Shrike	<i>Lanius schach</i>			1					
Brown Shrike	<i>Lanius cristatus</i>			1		1			
Rufous Treepie	<i>Dendrocitta vagabunda</i>			2				1	2
Large-billed Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>	5				2	2	1	
Indian Bush Lark	<i>Plocealauda erythroptera</i>			1					
Common Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>			2					
Blyth's Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus dumetorum</i>			1					
Dusky Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne concolor</i>		3	2					
Wire-tailed Swallow	<i>Hirundo smithii</i>	2		3					
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	2		4					
Hume's Leaf Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus humei</i>			1					
White-browed Bulbul - N	<i>Pycnonotus luteolus</i>			4					
Red-whiskered Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus jocosus</i>	2	2	5					1
Red-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>	2		3					1
Rufous Babbler - E	<i>Argya subrufa</i>			1					
Jungle Babbler	<i>Argya striata</i>			20		50	30	40	35
Southern Hill Myna - N	<i>Gracula indica</i>			7					
Brahminy Starling	<i>Sturnia pagodarum</i>					7	18	30	
Chestnut-tailed Starling	<i>Sturnia malabarica</i>			7					2
Chestnut-tailed (Blyth's) Starling	<i>Sturnia malabarica</i>				5			2	
Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>				3	5	10	15	
Jungle Myna	<i>Acridotheres fuscus</i>					8	15	20	
Orange-headed Thrush	<i>Geokichla citrina</i>	1							
Tickell's Thrush	<i>Turdus unicolor</i>						4	5	

E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic		March 2026							
Common name	Scientific name	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
Oriental Magpie-Robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>					6	3	3	2
White-rumped Shama	<i>Copsychus malabaricus</i>			1					
Tickell's Blue Flycatcher	<i>Cyornis tickelliae</i>			1					
Pale-billed Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum erythrorhynchos</i>		1						
Purple-rumped Sunbird	<i>Leptocoma zeylonica</i>		1	5					
Yellow-throated Sparrow	<i>Gymnoris xanthocollis</i>					1		4	
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>					5		3	
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>				2		2		
White-browed Wagtail	<i>Motacilla maderaspatensis</i>			2	2		2	4	

### Mammals

		March 2026							
Common name	Scientific name	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
Asian Elephant	<i>Elephas maximus</i>	5	25	4	2		40	4	1
Bonnet Macaque	<i>Macaca radiata</i>			30			20	20	20
Bengal Sacred Langur	<i>Semnopithecus entellus</i>	8	7	10	50		40	40	25
Indian Palm Squirrel	<i>Funambulus palmarum</i>		1	1				1	
Indian Giant Squirrel	<i>Ratufa indica</i>	5			5		3	4	3
Indian Giant Flying Squirrel	<i>Petaurista philippensis</i>			3					
Indian Flying Fox	<i>Pteropus medius</i>							30	
Smooth-coated Otter	<i>Lutra perspicillata</i>			2					
Sloth Bear	<i>Melursus ursinus</i>							1	
Dhole	<i>Cuon alpinus</i>						7	7	
Leopard	<i>Panthera pardus</i>							1	
Tiger	<i>Panthera tigris</i>					2			
Indian Gray Mongoose	<i>Urva edwardsii</i>			1					
Stripe-necked Mongoose	<i>Urva vitticollis</i>							2	
Gaur	<i>Bos gaurus</i>	9		10			5		5
Chital	<i>Axis axis</i>	8	50	20	50		40	50	25
Sambar	<i>Rusa unicolor</i>	9			2			4	2
Northern Red Muntjac	<i>Muntiacus vaginalis</i>	1			1				
Eurasian Wild Pig	<i>Sus scrofa</i>	6	7	4	7		10	8	3

### Reptiles

		March 2026							
Common name	Scientific name	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
Indian Marsh Crocodile	<i>Crocodylus palustris</i>						2		
Indian Flapshell Turtle	<i>Lissemys punctata</i>					1		8	
Bengal Monitor Lizard	<i>Varanus bengalensis</i>		1					1	
Oriental Garden Lizard	<i>Calotes versicolor</i>			2					
House Gecko	<i>Hemidactylus frenatus</i>		2						