

## Tour Report

### India – Nagarhole's Tiger, Leopard & Wild Dogs

13 – 20 March 2023

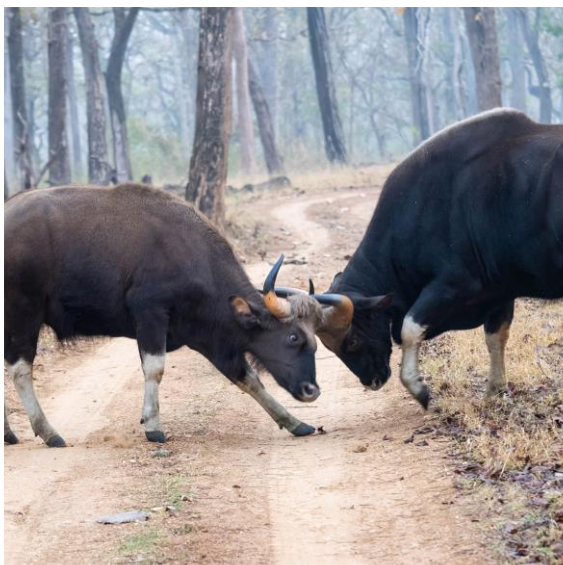
Grey langur



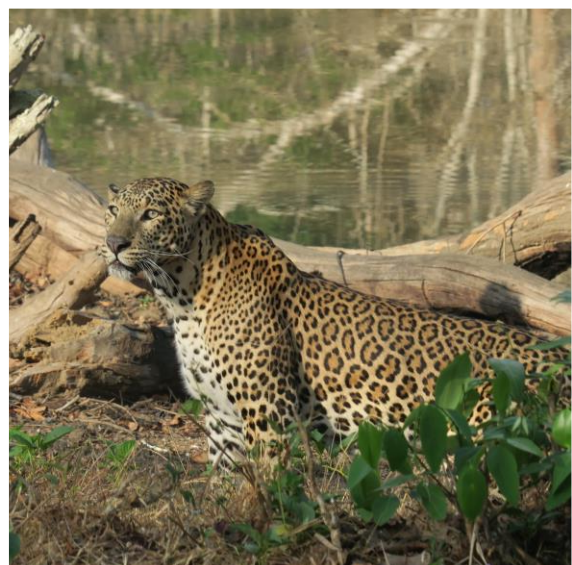
Tiger



Gaur



Leopard



Compiled by Ashwin HP

Images by Geof & Margaret Adams, Rob German & Dianne Fenwick

### **Day 1: Monday 13 March 2023**

As I was staying at Kabini Lodge between trips, I had bade farewell to the previous group and waited for the new group to arrive. However the flight coming into Bengaluru was delayed, so the group's arrival at the lodge was also delayed. Once they had arrived, we got them to check in to their rooms quickly, then met for lunch, where I briefed them about the lodge, meal timings, and - most importantly - safari timings. Once all was done, we met up and headed out for our first drive.

We started with spotted deer, langurs, gaur and elephants. Halfway through the drive we spotted wild dogs (dhole), which were quite a sight to see! We also saw some birds.

### **Day 2: Tuesday 14 March 2023**

We were up and about early this morning, which was nice and fresh. As we entered the national park we saw a herd of gaur sitting still, the deer's were also still sitting or just about - waking up and stretching. A nice big herd of elephants was just heading into the bushes as we passed, male langurs were starting to make their whooping call, then the bird calls started - and so it went on for the first two hours of the drive. All in all it was a fun-filled morning listening to calls and getting to know the forest slowly. We headed back to the lodge when it was time for breakfast.

This evening we decided to visit all the waterholes in the park, as it was still very hot and humid and there was a chance we might come across predators coming to the water to drink. By an hour or so into the drive we had seen elephants, gaur and other animals, plus lots of peacock -, some of which were even dancing. By the time we arrived at the Temple Tank a couple of jeeps were already lined up, as they had heard some alarm calls coming from the left-hand patch of forest, so we too decided to wait. Just a few minutes later we heard loud alarm calls, which confirmed the presence of a predator. Some 15 minutes later a tigress with three cubs emerged - this was the temple female and her fully-grown family. It was a very good sighting in the evening light which was fading fast. Soon enough they moved across to the other side, so we headed back to the lodge.

### **Day 3: Wednesday 15 March 2023**

The morning was slow once again, and misty too, but even in those conditions we managed to see elephants, gaur, sambar, mongoose and langur along with a variety of forest birds.

This evening as it was hot and dry again we decided to use our favorite tactic of visiting waterholes, which usually gives a good chance of seeing a predator. On the way to one of the waterholes, our driver Sadiq jumped and screamed "Leopard!". On our right, walking away from a fire break was a leopard trying to cross the road. We watched it trying to hide from us, then run across the road and walk away. By this time we had already got news of a tiger that had been seen near a waterhole, so we headed there next. It took us a good 20 minutes to reach the spot, but the tiger was still in the water while we arrived. We spent a good half hour with the tiger, then it was time to head back for the evening.

### **Day 4: Thursday 16 March 2023**

This morning it was once again quite misty and we could barely see 10 metres ahead of us. As we entered the park we saw a nice big herd of elephants in the mist. Visibility was improving as the light started getting better, but still wasn't great. We were on a straight road when barely three metres away we saw a tiger walking towards us. We could only just see it due to the mist, but it was magical due to the setting - it was the resident male of the area on his territory marking rounds. As other jeeps started to arrive he went into the bushes, so we just parked on the side and waited. As soon as the others left - not even a minute later - the tiger reappeared from exactly the same spot. We reversed and let him walk parallel to us, keeping our

distance, and watched as he walked for some time then vanished into the misty forest. This was a truly magical moment for us all.

By this time we were pretty excited and decided to do a few more circuits to see if we could find anything else in the misty conditions. On arrival near the rest house in the middle of the park we heard one alarm call and rushed to see what had caused it. To our surprise we saw a male leopard walking out of a patch of forest on his routine scent marking round. We followed him for quite a while, watching him entering and exiting the patch of woodland where he was marking, but other jeeps started to join us and after a while we didn't want to harass him any more as the line of jeeps just kept increasing. So, once everyone had had their fill we left him and made our way back for breakfast.

It was still very hot and dry when we entered the park later, so we decided to visit the waterholes again. On our way we got news of a pack of wild dogs moving, so we headed straight to see them and waited near the waterhole where they had been seen - but there was no sign of the dogs. We were just about to make a move when one dog suddenly rushed out of the woods, followed by a few more. One was carrying what looked like the remains of a spotted deer and sat down to have a nibble at it. They were all very relaxed and looked well-fed. Then they were off on the move again; we tried to stay with them but decided to leave them to it. On the way back I saw something black moving through the wood at a distance, and realised it was sloth bear foraging. It was little early, but it was good clear sighting, and the light was not too bad. We saw it time and again as it emerged from behind a termite mound or a tree; once it came into a clearing and was trying to dig for something. It was yet another truly amazing sighting!

#### **Day 5: Friday 17 March 2023**

Today we were up early as always looking forward to what the drive would hold for us. Driving on the old MM (Mysore to Madanthavadi road) we soon came across a black shape moving through the bushes – another sloth bear heading back from foraging. The moment it realised we were there watching it zipped into the bushes, but we did manage to see it clearly. Further ahead we got word of a tiger which had crossed from Zone A and was apparently heading in our direction. We knew all the possible tiger pathways so quickly took up position and waited. 15-20 minutes later, there was a line of jeeps ahead of and behind us, when a tigress appeared through the woods and came walking towards the road we were on. As she got closer she was in full view, walking, scent marking, sniffing etc. She came pretty close to us, but changed her mind and walked ahead of the bus in front of us, crossed the road and went on with her daily routine. We then drove around for some time watching birds, looking at trees and eventually headed back to the lodge.

The evening was still hot and humid, so we chose to hop from one waterhole to another looking for animals – our favourite evening activity. We saw elephants come to drink water, sambar, spotted deer, and when, we reached our favorite waterhole, we were told that a tigress, had just gone in after a having a drink, so we waited to see if she would come back. 10-15 minutes later we heard some alarm calls coming from where she had gone in and she appeared in full view, walked around the waterhole and crossed the road ahead of us. It was one of those moments when you least expect to see anything. We spent the rest of the evening watching birds, elephants and gaur, then headed back to the lodge after dark.

#### **Day 6: Saturday 18 March 2023**

Today on both our morning and evening drives we saw mostly mongoose, elephants, gaur, sambar, wild boar, langurs, woodpeckers and eagles, but apart from this there wasn't much movement. However it was still a very enjoyable day.

#### **Day 7: Sunday 19 March 2023**

The morning was misty but not too much; visibility was good, and the light was getting better by the minute. Going around in the forest we spotted a tiger just ahead on the road crossing from our right to our left; it

didn't give us much time but we could see the animal clearly, as it didn't stop but kept moving. Although it was brief sighting we proceeded to look for more. Further on we saw some sambar at a waterhole. On leaving these we were heading towards another waterhole when just before we got there we came across a jeep waiting on a bend in the road. The occupants told us that they had been hearing the alarm calls of spotted deer, so we waited with them. After some time the resident female tiger emerged ahead of the other jeep from the patch of forest on our left, moving towards our right on her routine patrol of her territory. Now that was quite exciting!

We decided to take it slow and spend some time near a waterhole or watching elephants, but en route we chanced upon a male leopard sitting beside the road. On seeing our jeep he got up and walked towards the bushes. That was quite an unexpected sighting! When we reached the waterhole we saw a pack of wild dogs marking their territory, but just as they were about to reach the waterhole two of the dogs became curious about something at the base of a strangler fig. I watched them through the binoculars and became aware that their attention had been attracted by a young brown fish owl sitting at the base of the tree. It opened both its wings to make it look bigger and scare the dogs - which actually worked. and provoked a few "Aaaahhs" in the jeep. This was an unbelievable bit of interaction - I had never seen nor heard of anything like this before. Scanning the top of the tree I saw a nest with what seemed like more chicks - or possibly adults - in it. By then the young chick was trying to get back up to the nest beating its wings and climbing up the bark of the tree. This scene left us feeling even more thrilled with the morning, which turned out to be spectacular. We headed back to lodge feeling victorious!

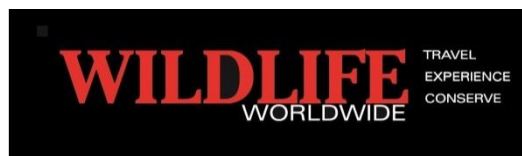
At this time of the year the evenings are hot, dry and humid. Being in a beautiful park like Nagarhole, we decided to take it slow, so we did our round of all the waterholes and saw elephants, gaur, wild boar, spotted deer and langur, plus a lot of birds - some nesting and others coming for a drink or a dip in the water. Roaming in the panther old area is one of my favorite things to do as you never know when he might just show himself and anyway it's a beautiful part of the forest. We were halfway towards the territory when we saw a sub-adult tiger about to cross the road. By the time we stopped he had crossed the road and was entering the bushes and making its way towards the core area of the park. After seeing it we continued on our drive without much luck, then eventually headed back to the lodge.

#### **Day 8: Monday 20 March 2023**

As this morning was our last drive we tried our best to roam in the panther's old domain, but sadly he wasn't there and we didn't see his successor either, though we did see a lot of birds, elephant and sambar. Although it was slow morning it was very pleasant and relaxing. We headed back to the lodge for some breakfast, and soon it was time to check out and head back to Bengaluru for the night.



# Checklist



	Common Name
	<b>MAMMALS</b>
1	Tiger
2	Leopard
3	Wild dog
4	Sloth bear
5	Spotted deer
6	Sambar deer
7	Barking deer
8	Elephant
9	Gaur
10	Malabar giant squirell
11	Three striped palm squirell
12	Wild boar
13	Black footed langur
14	Ruddy mongoose
15	Striped necked mangoose
	<b>BIRDS</b>
1	Grey partridge
2	Grey jungle fowl
3	Red spurfowl
4	Indian peafowl
5	Lesser whistling duck
6	Cotton pygmy goose

<b>7</b>	Spot billed duck
<b>8</b>	Common teal
<b>9</b>	Little grebe
<b>10</b>	Painted stork
<b>11</b>	Woolly-necked stork
<b>12</b>	Open-billed stork
<b>13</b>	Black stork
<b>14</b>	Black-headed ibis
<b>15</b>	Red-naped ibis
<b>16</b>	Glossy ibis
<b>17</b>	Eurasian spoonbill
<b>18</b>	Indian pond heron
<b>19</b>	Grey heron
<b>20</b>	Purple heron
<b>21</b>	Cattle egret
<b>22</b>	Great egret
<b>23</b>	Intermediate egret
<b>24</b>	Little egret
<b>25</b>	Darter
<b>26</b>	Little cormorant
<b>27</b>	Indian cormorant
<b>28</b>	Great cormorant
<b>29</b>	Black kite
<b>30</b>	Brahminy kite
<b>31</b>	Black-winged kite
<b>32</b>	Osprey
<b>33</b>	Grey-headed fish eagle
<b>34</b>	Oriental honey buzzard

35	Indian vulture
36	White-rumped vulture
37	Crested serpent eagle
38	Shikra
39	White-eyed buzzard
40	Indian spotted eagle
41	Crested hawk eagle
42	White-breasted water hen
43	Purple swamphen
44	Common moorhen
45	Bronze-winged jacana
46	Red-wattled lapwing
47	Yellow-wattled lapwing
48	Little ringed plover
49	Green sandpiper
50	Wood sandpiper
51	Common sandpiper
52	River tern
53	Little tern
54	Whiskered tern
55	Common pigeon
56	Green imperial pigeon
57	Oriental turtle dove
58	Eurasian collared dove
59	Spotted dove
60	Yellow-footed green pigeon
61	Alexandrine parakeet
62	Rose-ringed parakeet

<b>63</b>	Plum-headed parakeet
<b>64</b>	Common hawk cuckoo
<b>65</b>	Indian cuckoo
<b>66</b>	Blue-faced malkoha
<b>67</b>	Greater coucal
<b>68</b>	Jungle owlet
<b>69</b>	Mottled wood owl
<b>70</b>	Crested tree swift
<b>71</b>	Alpine swift
<b>72</b>	Hoopoe
<b>73</b>	Indian roller
<b>74</b>	White-throated kingfisher
<b>75</b>	Common kingfisher
<b>76</b>	Green bee eater
<b>77</b>	Indian grey hornbill
<b>78</b>	Oriental pied hornbill
<b>79</b>	White-cheeked barbet
<b>80</b>	Coppersmith barbet
<b>81</b>	Rufous woodpecker
<b>82</b>	White-bellied wood pecker
<b>83</b>	Streak-throated woodpecker
<b>84</b>	Lesser goldenbacked
<b>85</b>	Greater goldenbacked
<b>86</b>	Malabar woodshrike
<b>87</b>	Ashy woodswallow
<b>88</b>	Large cuckoo shrike
<b>89</b>	Common iora
<b>90</b>	Small minivet



<b>91</b>	Orange minivet
<b>92</b>	Long-tailed shrike
<b>93</b>	Brown shrike
<b>94</b>	Greater racket-tailed drongo
<b>95</b>	Black drongo
<b>96</b>	Bronze drongo
<b>97</b>	Indian golden oriole
<b>98</b>	Asian paradise flycatcher
<b>99</b>	White-browed fantail
<b>100</b>	Black-naped monarch
<b>101</b>	Rufous treepie
<b>102</b>	House crow
<b>103</b>	Indian jungle crow
<b>104</b>	Great tit
<b>105</b>	Dusky crag martin
<b>106</b>	Red-rumped swallow
<b>107</b>	Jerdon's bush lark
<b>108</b>	Oriental skylark
<b>109</b>	Red-whiskered bulbul
<b>110</b>	Red-vented bulbul
<b>111</b>	Jungle babbler
<b>112</b>	Oriental white eye
<b>113</b>	Indian nuthatch
<b>114</b>	Lesser hill myna
<b>115</b>	Common myna
<b>116</b>	Jungle myna
<b>117</b>	Chestnut-tailed starling
<b>118</b>	Blyth's starling

<b>119</b>	Brahminy starling
<b>120</b>	Orange-headed thrush
<b>121</b>	Indian black bird
<b>122</b>	White rumped shama
<b>123</b>	Oriental magpie robin
<b>124</b>	Asian brown flycatcher
<b>125</b>	Tickell's blue flycacher
<b>126</b>	House sparrow
<b>127</b>	White-rumped munia
<b>128</b>	Yellow wagtail
<b>129</b>	Grey wagtail
<b>130</b>	White-browed wagtail