

Tour Report

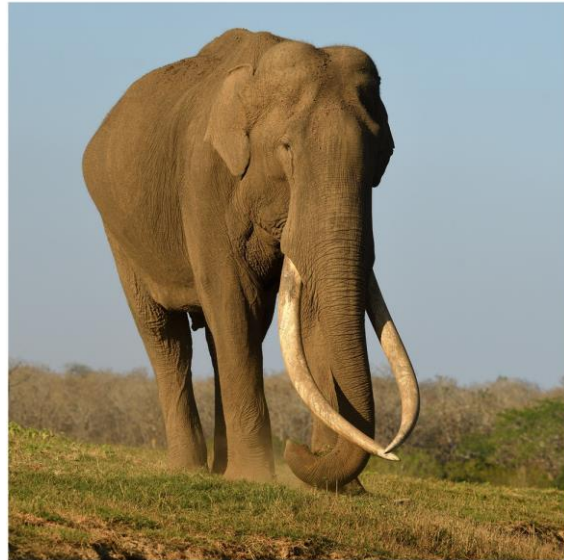
India – Nagarhole's Tiger, Leopard & Wild Dogs

6 – 13 March 2023

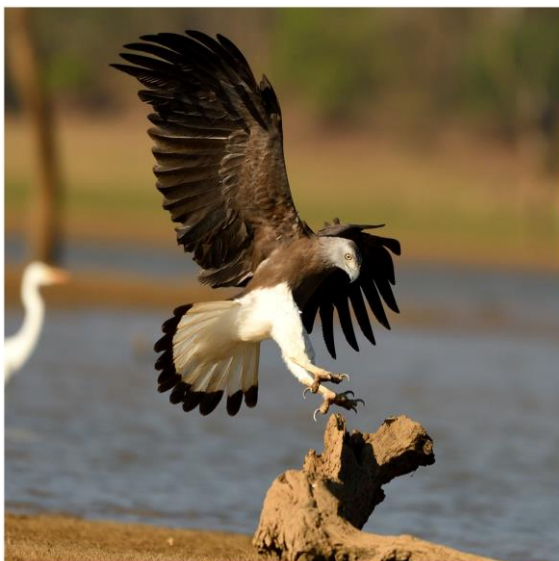
Tiger



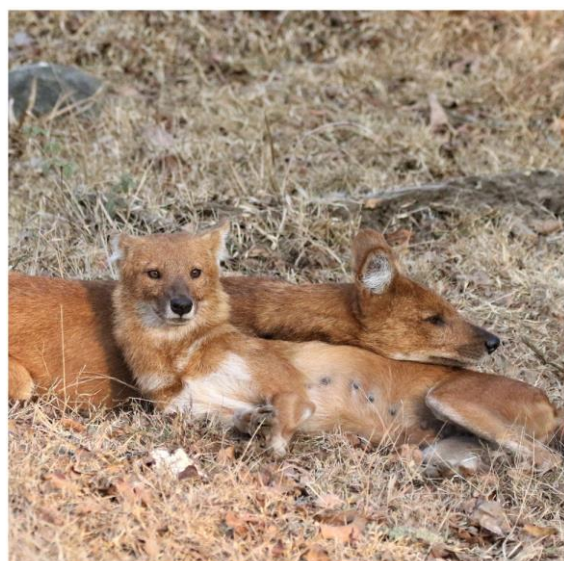
Asian elephant



Grey-headed fish eagle



Asiatic wild dog



Compiled by Ashwin HP
Images by Linda Shaw & Ron Tyler

Day 1: Monday 6 March 2023

The flight arrived late this morning and by the time we had had breakfast and left the airport it was close to 09:00, we had a 5-6-hour drive to Kabini Lodge. By the time we arrived at the lodge, it was shortly after 12:30, so we checked in quickly, had lunch and got ready for our afternoon drive.

For our first drive in the national park we were in Zone A. As it was hot and dry we decided to visit some of the waterholes, where we started by seeing spotted deer, langur and wild boar etc; we also saw some peacocks and Indian rollers. While we were heading to a waterhole we heard the alarm calls of a spotted deer and a few minutes later we saw a tiger making its way from the bushes towards the waterhole for a drink. After spending as much time watching it we started to head back but on the way we got some information about a leopard sitting on a rock, so we diverted to watch that for a while before heading back to the lodge.

Day 2: Tuesday 7 March 2023

This morning we were up and out early. It got warm pretty early on, which we thought would help to attract any predator to the water, but the morning had a will of its own and we spent a lot of time at waterholes watching birds and butterflies. Some people spotted deer, sambar, langur and wild boar.

We were in Zone B this evening and drove straight to the boating point and stopped at the viewpoint. While we were scanning for birds and animals, one of the group, very coolly mentioned that she could see a tiger on the other bank, which was part of the forest of Bandipur National Park. What a spotting it was - just mind blowing! We all got to our feet to focus our binoculars on the other side, and saw - there in the sun - a beautiful, fully grown male tiger sitting next to a large dead tree on the bank of the Kabini River. I made sure everyone could see as it was a very far off - almost a kilometre away. The tiger walked along the bank to the water's edge, drank for while, then did something amazing: he got into the water and started swimming across to our side. When he came to a marshy patch, he picked his way with great care making sure not to get stuck. After an hour or more he was tired and panting heavily - we could see him clearly through our binoculars. By then the information had reached the boats and they came rushing in to see him just in time as he climbed on to the bund and vanished into the high reeds there. What a show he put on - it was unbelievable!

By the time we were done with the tiger it was almost 17:45, and we were trying to decide where to go next, when we heard of a leopard sighting. We rushed over there and saw a beautiful male asleep on a big branch of a tree. We stayed there until it was time to head back. What a wonderful evening!

Day 3: Wednesday 8 March 2023

This morning we decided collectively to go and look for a sloth bear, as we were in Zone B again. We headed to the favourite location for spotting one and, as if on cue - came across a sloth bear foraging there. We saw it the moment we arrived and it gave us a few minutes before it ran away into the bushes.

This evening we tried our luck in Zone A once again. We decided to take it slowly and not chase after anything, and instead wait at one location and soak in the forest atmosphere. We saw a lot of birds come to the water to drink, or for a splash bath which was so much fun. We also saw terrapins sunning themselves on the side of the bund, and spotted deer coming down to the water, plus langurs coming to drink but apart from that there was no more movement.

Day 4: Thursday 9 March 2023

As usual we started early and were the first in the park. There is an advantage to being the first inside as we soon discovered when within the first ten minutes we stumbled upon a tigress walking on the road ahead of

us. She was watching something and walking very slowly, so we kept our distance and followed her until she left the road and headed into the bushes. So the early bird gets the worm! We were all excited to see a tiger first thing. Later on we enjoyed sightings of gaur, elephants and other animals.

This evening we took it slow once again, stopping at various locations to listen for alarm calls or warning sounds, and also to look for birds. We found plenty, stopping to watch woodpeckers, parakeets, orioles, wood shrikes, starlings, rollers etc. We also enjoyed seeing some elephants, gaur, sambar and langur before heading back to the lodge.

Day 5: Friday 10 March 2023

This morning we headed out bright and early, as always. We headed into Zone A to see if we could spot some dhole (wild dogs), but instead got news of a tigress crossing the road. We rushed to the spot to see and had to wait only a few minutes before the tigress came into view as she left the forest, crossed the road in front of us, and vanished into the bushes on to the other side. This was a great sighting! Afterwards we continued in search of the wild dogs – without any luck. When the time was right we headed back to lodge for breakfast.

This evening we were allocated Zone B once again. We had heard a few alarm calls and were searching for a leopard that was on the move, waiting for it to appear at crossroads, when we received a call saying the black panther had been seen in Zone A. We couldn't resist the temptation and didn't want to miss this chance, so I had to pull a few strings and make sure we could go into Zone A. Within 20 minutes or so we were waiting in the area where the panther had been seen, and after a long wait with hundreds of alarm calls, it started moving and walked just on the periphery of the bushes. We were able to see it whenever it crossed an opening. We spent the rest of our evening watching this beautiful black beast walking along the edge of the bushes, where he kept giving us glimpses every now and then. It was truly an amazing experience!

Day 6: Saturday 11 March 2023

For some strange reason on both our drives today we just kept seeing elephants, sambar, gaur, wild boar, langur and mongoose along with a lot of birds on the backwaters and in the forests. However there wasn't much in the way of sightings of big cats or wild dogs today.

Day 7: Sunday 12 March 2023

This morning, based on my gut feeling, we headed straight back to the black panther's old territory, just in case, as he had last been seen there a few days earlier. We reached the place where we planned to wait to listen for alarm calls or any other signs, and after waiting there for a long time we spotted another jeep waiting on the other end of the road. We approached them to see if they had seen anything and were disappointed to learn that they had just seen the panther cross the road. However you listen to your gut feeling - which kept saying stop and wait. We waited and waited, then started to hear alarm calls and saw something black walking towards us just behind the bushes. We tried to move and position ourselves to get a better angle, but by chance parked next to the director of the park, who asked us not to move. This meant when the panther emerged from the bushes it was in full view and crossed the road behind our vehicle. This is what my gut had been telling me all morning, and what a sighting it was! No words could describe the sheer joy we experienced!

Since we had had such a fabulous morning we decided to go out on the boat ride in the evening and see what the river safari had to offer. Even before we reached the park we saw a lot of birds and a lone otter on the riverbank. Then, when we finally entered the park, we saw three otters feasting on a huge fish on an island, elephants, lots of water birds, gaur, spotted deer, osprey, grey-headed fish eagle, and crocodiles. This made for a very relaxing evening.

Day 8: Monday 13 March 2023

We headed out early as usual for our last drive in the park - back to Zone A to see if we could spot anything on the drive. As usual we stopped to listen for calls and other signs, and after a while we spotted a tiger moving through the woods before crossing the road as it marked its territory. It was fascinating to see this behaviour on our last drive. We also saw elephants, sambar, langur and lots of peacocks.

Heading back to the lodge, we had a quick breakfast, and checked out before the 5-6-hour drive back to Bangalore, where the group had an early dinner followed by an early morning flight back home.



Checklist



| | Common Name |
|----|-----------------------------|
| | MAMMALS |
| 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 | Russy mongoose |
| 15 | Striped-necked mongoose |
| | BIRDS |
| 1 | Grey partridge |
| 2 | Grey jungle fowl |
| 3 | Red spurfowl |
| 4 | Indian peafowl |
| 5 | Lesser whistling duck |
| 6 | Cotton pygmy goose |



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| 7 | Spot-billed duck |
| 8 | Common teal |
| 9 | Little grebe |
| 10 | Painted stork |
| 11 | Wolly-necked stork |
| 12 | Open-billed stork |
| 13 | Black stork |
| 14 | Black-headed ibis |
| 15 | Red-naped ibis |
| 16 | Glossy ibis |
| 17 | Eurasian spoonbill |
| 18 | Indian pond heron |
| 19 | Grey heron |
| 20 | Purple heron |
| 21 | Cattle egret |
| 22 | Great egret |
| 23 | Intermediate egret |
| 24 | Little egret |
| 25 | Darter |
| 26 | Little cormorant |
| 27 | Indian cormorant |
| 28 | Great cormorant |
| 29 | Black kite |
| 30 | Brahminy kite |
| 31 | Black-winged kite |
| 32 | Osprey |
| 33 | Grey-headed fish eagle |
| 3 | Oriental honey buzzard |

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



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| 63 | Yellow-footed green pigeon |
| 64 | Alexandrine parakeet |
| 65 | Rose-ringed parakeet |
| 66 | Plum-headed parakeet |
| 67 | Malabar parakeet |
| 68 | Common hawk cuckoo |
| 69 | Indian cuckoo |
| 70 | Asian koel |
| 71 | Blue faced malkoha |
| 72 | Greater coucal |
| 73 | Brown fish owl |
| 74 | Jungle owlet |
| 75 | Mottled wood owl |
| 76 | Crested tree swift |
| 77 | Alpine swift |
| 78 | Little swift |
| 79 | Hoopoe |
| 80 | Indian roller |
| 81 | White-throated kingfisher |
| 82 | Common kingfisher |
| 83 | Green bee-eater |
| 84 | Chestnut-headed bee-eater |
| 85 | Indian grey hornbill |
| 86 | Oriental pied hornbill |
| 87 | White cheeked barbet |
| 88 | Coppersmith barbet |
| 89 | Rufous woodpecker |
| 90 | White-bellied wood pecker |

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| 91 | Streak-throated woodpecker |
| 92 | Lesser goldenbacked |
| 93 | Greater goldenbacked |
| 94 | Malabar woodshrike |
| 95 | Ashy woodswallow |
| 96 | Large cuckoo shrike |
| 97 | Common iora |
| 98 | Small minivet |
| 99 | Orange minivet |
| 100 | Long-tailed shrike |
| 101 | Brown shrike |
| 102 | Greater racket-tailed drongo |
| 103 | Black drongo |
| 104 | Bronze drongo |
| 105 | Indian golden oriole |
| 106 | Asian paradise flycatcher |
| 107 | White browed fantail |
| 108 | Black naped monarch |
| 109 | Rufous treepie |
| 110 | House crow |
| 111 | Indian jungle crow |
| 112 | Great tit |
| 113 | Dusky crag martin |
| 114 | Barn swallow |
| 115 | Red-rumped swallow |
| 116 | Jerdon's bush lark |
| 117 | Oriental skylark |
| 118 | Red-whiskered bulbul |



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| 119 | Red-vented bulbul |
| 120 | Jungle babbler |
| 121 | Oriental white eye |
| 122 | Indian nuthatch |
| 123 | Lesser hill myna |
| 124 | Common myna |
| 125 | Jungle myna |
| 126 | Chestnut-tailed starling |
| 127 | Blyth's starling |
| 128 | Brahminy starling |
| 129 | Orange-headed thrush |
| 130 | Indian black bird |
| 131 | White rumped shama |
| 132 | Oriental magpie robin |
| 133 | Asian brown flycatcher |
| 134 | Tickell's blue flycatcher |
| 135 | Jeron's leaf bird |
| 136 | House sparrow |
| 137 | White-rumped munia |
| 138 | Yellow wagtail |
| 139 | Grey wagtail |
| 140 | Forest wagtail |
| 141 | White-browed wagtail |