

Tour Report

India – Nagarhole's Tiger, Leopard & Wild Dogs

6 – 13 March 2023

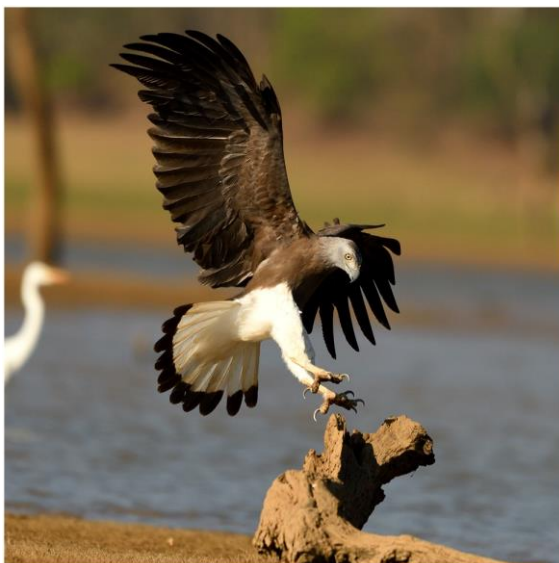
Tiger



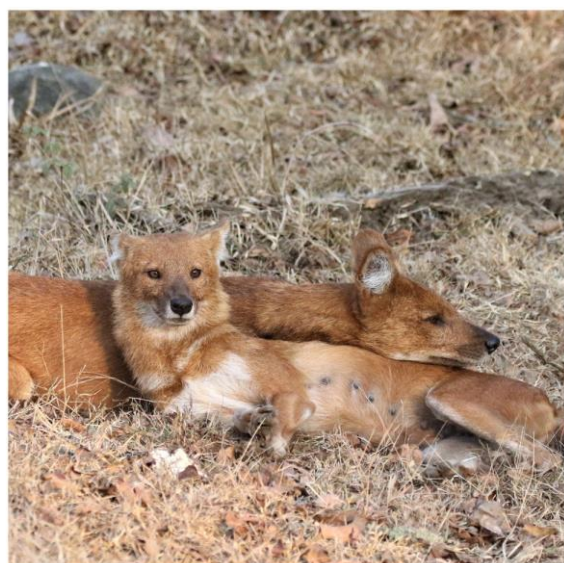
Asian elephant



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

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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

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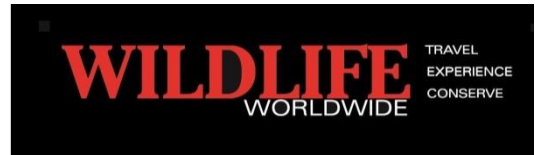
We headed out early as usual for our last drive in the park - back to Zone A to see if we could spot anything on the drive. As usual we stopped to listen for calls and other signs, and after a while we spotted a tiger moving through the woods before crossing the road as it marked its territory. It was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

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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

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