

Tour Report India – Nagarhole's Tigers, Wild Dogs & Leopards 27 March – 4 April 2023

Tiger



Asian elephant



Dhole



Stripe-necked mongoose



Compiled by Yajuvendra Upadhyaya



Day 1: Monday 27 March 2023

The group arrived in Bangalore at around 06:00 then we all headed straight to Taj Bengaluru, which is just a stone's throw away from the airport. After a lavish breakfast we started our four-and-a-half-hour journey to Kabini River Lodge. On arrival, we were met and briefed by naturalist Shivananda.

After lunch, we headed to Zone B for our first Safari. We sighted many spotted deer, a bold Malabar giant squirrel, which was busy feeding, and a troop of bonnet macaque with many young ones. As most of the group enjoy photography, we spent a good amount of time (close to 15 minutes) with a mother who was nursing her young.

We then decided to head towards the backwaters and, as we reached the spot, we were graced by a tusker feeding on the fresh grass. All of sudden, a few of the spotted deer started giving out distress calls and a big herd were seen running for their lives! Four dholes (Asiatic wild dogs) chased the deer for 300 metres before eventually giving up. The moment got even more exciting when we saw the tusker chasing the dholes in turn, definitely a natural history moment to cherish.

Almost immediately after that, we got information that there might be a tiger at a nearby waterhole, so we headed in that direction. We spent the rest of the afternoon waiting for the big cat to make an appearance, but unfortunately we ran out of time and had to return to the lodge. Interestingly, on our way back, we did hear a lot of alarm calls, but as there was hardly any time left we couldn't wait.

We returned to the comfort of the guesthouse for a well-earned dinner and rest.

Day 2: Tuesday 28 March 2023

We were up and having tea and coffee before dawn, in order to reach Zone A of the park. It was a cool morning, perfect for big cats, and as we reached the area close to the rest house we got information a tigress had been sighted in the area. We waited at one of her designated crossing points for almost 20 minutes, and were just about to start our engine and move on, when we heard distress calls of chital and sambhar.

Barely a few minutes later, an adult tigress appeared from the undergrowth and started to scent-mark her territory. She crossed the road once and scent marked on a teak tree, then moved back towards the undergrowth. We anticipated the tigress would cross another road, so we waited another ten minutes. She crossed the road again, this time we were very close to her and got a great view.

After the tigress disappeared again, we waited for her near a huge waterhole. It was getting warm, so we had hoped she would come to drink water, but she eluded us this time. Slowly we headed back to the lodge for breakfast.

After lunch we headed back into Zone A, keenly anticipating another sighting of the tigress. As soon as we entered the park, we had our eyes peeled for any sign of wildlife. We eagerly made our way towards a nearby stream, hoping to catch a glimpse of a leopard or tiger roaming along the riverbed. As we stood there, taking in the peaceful surroundings, we chatted excitedly about the possibility of spotting one of these elusive creatures.

After about 15 minutes, we decided to move on and continue our safari journey. Having driven only 300 metres, we were suddenly startled by the sound of spotted deer distress calls. A small herd came running out from the bushes and crossed the road right in front of us. Behind them, we could see a young tiger attempting to hunt. Our hearts were racing as we watched in awe, but to our relief, the deer managed to escape the tiger's grasp in a flash. The tiger then glanced at us for a few seconds before disappearing back into the Lantana bushes.

The rest of our drive was equally thrilling. We checked out various waterholes, hoping to catch sight of more wildlife, and were delighted to spot a Tickell's blue flycatcher and forest wagtail, an uncommon bird. These sightings, coupled with the beauty of our surroundings left us feeling exhilarated and grateful for the experience. It was a day we would never forget.

Day 3: Wednesday 29 March 2023

As the sun began to rise on day three of our trip to Nagarhole, we were eager to see what wildlife we would encounter. As we entered Zone B we couldn't believe our luck when we discovered the fresh pugmarks (tracks) of a tigress. We knew that she was around somewhere, and excitement filled the air. Being the first vehicle there, we had high hopes of spotting her. However, as we drove around, we didn't manage to catch a glimpse of the tigress.

Despite this, we didn't lose hope and continued our drive. We soon came across a herd of elephants with young calves feeding, which was a magical sight to see. The giant squirrel also caught our attention as it jumped from one tree to another. As we drove further along the main road, we heard some distress calls. We knew that something was happening, but we couldn't quite figure out what it was. We remained vigilant and kept our eyes peeled for any signs of predators. Unfortunately, the rest of the drive didn't yield any direct sightings, but overall, it was a good experience. As we headed back to our camp, we couldn't help but feel excited about what the afternoon may bring.

We headed back to Zone A for our afternoon drive. As we made our way through the forest, we were delighted to spot a magnificent crested hawk eagle perched on a huge log at eye level. We stopped to watch it for a long time, taking in its beauty and majesty. Soon after, we heard some alarm calls and received information that a leopard had been spotted nearby by some of the forest department vehicles. We waited in anticipation for a long time, hoping to catch a glimpse of the elusive predator, but unfortunately, luck wasn't on our side.

But the excitement didn't end there. As the afternoon wore on, we were treated to a great sighting of a crested serpent eagle. And just when we thought the sightings couldn't get any better, one of our guests spotted a pair of stripe-necked mongoose really close to us for almost ten minutes. It was a rare and special sighting. We then made our way to the last watering hole for the evening and were greeted by a beautiful sight - four elephants with their calves drinking water. It was a peaceful and serene moment, and we watched in awe as the majestic creatures quenched their thirst.

As we were about to leave, we spotted a tigress crossing a road in the B Zone. We were disappointed that she was so far away as we couldn't get a great view. But to our surprise, the tigress suddenly changed direction and started moving towards us. At first, the guests had spotting her, but all of a sudden she gave a dramatic last-minute sighting, leaving us in awe and wonder. It was a day filled with thrilling sightings, rare moments, and unforgettable experiences. As we headed back to our camp, we couldn't wait to see what the following day would bring.

Day 4: Thursday 30 March 2023

Day four started with high hopes of spotting some predators in Zone A. However, the first hour didn't yield much excitement, except for a fantastic sighting of a giant squirrel feeding on a tree and a few birds. We heard very few alarm calls, and our hopes of encountering a predator were starting to dwindle. But then we came across the fresh pugmarks of a tigress, and we decided to wait for a while in hopes that she would show up. Unfortunately, after waiting for some time, we didn't see any sign of her, and we had to move on.

We then headed towards the temple tank, where we heard some alarm calls. The deer in the area were very alert, so we knew that something was happening. We waited for a long time, hoping that the tigress would come to drink water, but unfortunately she appeared in a different location. Although we didn't get a chance to see the tigress up close, we were still grateful for the opportunity to witness the beauty of nature and the



incredible animals that call Nagarhole Tiger Reserve home. We continued our drive, taking in the sights and sounds of the forest, and we felt truly lucky to be there. As we headed back to our camp, we knew that there was still so much to see and experience in the reserve, and we couldn't wait to see what the rest of the day would bring.

Our afternoon safari was in Zone B, and we were excited to explore the backwaters. As we made our way there, we came across a herd of elephants with a young calf that was around two months old. It was a heart-warming sight to see the mother elephant protectively caring for her little one.

Further on, we saw a herd of langur fighting and then spotted a Malabar pied hornbill perched on a eucalyptus tree. As we approached the edge of the water, we saw a tusker and another herd of elephants in the backwaters. While waiting there, we heard a lot of spotted deer alarm calls coming from the Bandipur side - the backwaters is the boundary of two tiger reserves, Nagarhole and Bandipur. However, the alarm calls stopped, and we didn't get to see any predators.

We then headed towards a forest patch, where we heard more alarm calls from langurs and spotted deer. The langur calls were very intense, indicating that there was a leopard around. We waited for almost 40 minutes in the area, hoping to spot the elusive predator, but unfortunately, it didn't show up. We decided to head back towards the backwaters, where we spotted some interesting birds like osprey, black-headed lbis, and red-napped ibis. We heard alarm calls while on the road, but nothing happened, even after waiting for some time. However, the drive wasn't disappointing as we had a super-close sighting of a crested serpent eagle on the MM road. We also saw the uncommon bar-winged flycatcher-shrike and an Indian peacock preening its tail feathers on a stump. On our way back to the lodge, we were delighted to spot a mottled wood owl just as soon as we entered the lodge.

Day 5: Friday 31 March 2023

As soon as we entered the forest we could feel the excitement building up in the jeep. We were on a safari and we were determined to spot a predator. As the last few rounds were predator-less our hopes were starting to dwindle. But then, as we drove past a small pond, we saw a small herd of sambhar drinking water and we spent several minutes watching them in awe. However, our thirst for adventure wasn't quenched yet.

We continued to drive around, focusing on water holes, and hoping to catch a glimpse of a predator. We spent a lot of time at the tiger tank water hole, but it was empty. The same went for GK water tank and Bisalwadi water tank. But we didn't give up. As we were driving, we suddenly spotted a white-bellied woodpecker - one of the largest woodpeckers in India. We were thrilled to see the bird up close and took some amazing photographs. As we continued our drive, we also saw the endemic Malabar woodshrike and lesser hill myna.

The forest was alive with the sounds of nature, and we couldn't help but feel grateful for the chance to witness it first-hand. Just when we thought our safari couldn't get any better, we saw a herd of elephants and their adorable calves at the tiger tank. We watched as they swam in the water and played in the sun, and we were reminded once again of the beauty and wonder of nature. Although we didn't see any predators that day, we left the forest feeling fulfilled and grateful for the incredible sights we had witnessed. It was a reminder that sometimes, the most unexpected moments can be the most memorable.

In the afternoon, we were back in Zone A. As we reached the first waterhole, we spotted a wild boar. We were excited, as many believe that if the first animal you spot is a wild boar, a tiger sighting is inevitable. The hot afternoon called for spending time around waterholes, so we continued our drive. We checked out Biserwadi pond and tiger tank, but unfortunately, there was no predator movement. We spent almost an hour around these two waterholes. However, our hopes were fading fast.



As we drove along the Power Line road, we spotted a beautiful white-rumped shama. We decided to follow some tracks in the forest which other tourists rarely venture out to. These roads generally have no tiger movement, but as we reached a dry riverbed, we spotted a sub-adult tigress sleeping there. We couldn't believe our luck! For the next 15 minutes, we watched her as she slept, rolled around and looked at us. We were in awe of her beauty and grace. We returned to the lodge leaving the tigress to continue her nap.

Day 6: Saturday 1 April 2023

In the morning we decided to spend most of our time near the backwaters. We took a road that is rarely taken by tourists, hoping to find some unique sightings. As soon as we entered the zone, we heard the intense alarm calls of langurs and saw a herd of spotted deer running out of a forest patch. We waited for a while, hoping to catch a glimpse of a predator, but the distress calls stopped after some time. Undeterred, we continued our drive towards the backwaters.

En route, we spotted a grey-headed fishing eagle and a guest spotted an osprey which was very well camouflaged. We were thrilled to see these rare birds up close. We also saw a huge flock of yellow wagtails and a herd of elephants grazing on the edge of the backwaters. It was a beautiful sight to see these majestic animals in their natural habitat. As we headed back to the lodge, we decided to check out the area where we had heard the alarm calls earlier. En route, we had a fantastic sighting of the Malabar giant squirrel again. And then in a moment of good fortune, we spotted a single wild dog on the road. It was a rare sighting, and we couldn't believe our luck!

The afternoon was hot, so we decided to focus on Zone A's waterholes. Our highlight of the day was when a big herd of elephants with calves fully submerged themselves in a water tank. As we watched, a tusker joined the herd, which was an even more impressive sight.

While at the same waterhole, we also spotted the endemic Blyth's starling, a new bird for us. It was a beautiful, colourful bird, and we were thrilled to add it to our list of sightings.

Later in the afternoon, just before sunset, we visited a high point in the park. We heard a lot of alarm calls from a forest patch nearby, but unfortunately, we had to leave because we ran out of time.

Day 7: Sunday 2 April 2023

We were greeted in the morning by a herd of sleeping elephants in Lantana, next to the backwaters. We also spotted a red-headed vulture on the ground and a giant squirrel in the beautiful golden morning light. A langur with young ones then made an appearance, as did a peacock in full display.

We got information about the movement of dholes, and we were excited for the possibility of a sighting. Sure enough, we had a half-hour sighting of a pair of dholes, who came very close to our jeep and groomed each other. We were lucky enough to witness them leaving their scent, which was a rare experience.

As we were photographing a crested serpent eagle in the golden morning light, out of nowhere, we spotted a tigress coming out on the road. Since we were the only vehicle in the area, we decided to give her space and let her walk. She walked on the broken tarmac road for almost 80 metres, before getting off and walking on the edge of the forest for a while. Eventually, she disappeared into the thickets. It was an incredible safari, filled with unique sightings of elephants, birds, and predators like the dholes and the tigress.

We then continued and spotted a tusker near the barrier entrance. Just before the stream, we found tiger tracks and saw a new bird for our list, the lesser whistling duck, at Biserwadi Pond. We then got information that a tiger had run across the road, so we waited for it to come out, but unfortunately, it did not move in our direction. Next, we checked the rest house area for any signs of a leopard, but we did not find any. As we



were heading to exit the zone, someone told us about a leopard movement next to the highway. We rushed over, but it was already dark, and we couldn't really see the leopard.

Day 8: Monday 3 April 2023

On our last safari in Nagarhole, we were determined to focus on predators. However, within ten minutes of entering the park, we spotted two crested hawk eagles feeding on grey jungle fowl. We were able to get really close to them and spent a good amount of time observing them before moving on. At Bisalwadi waterhole, we spotted a peacock perched on a tree, adding to our already impressive list of sightings. Since there were hardly any signs of predators, we decided to take a long, lesser-frequented road towards the exit. It was there that we saw two male gaur in a stand-off position. It was clear from their body language that a fight was inevitable, and we waited at a good distance from them. Within the next 20 minutes, they had two head-on bouts, and we were in awe of their power and size. These animals weigh 1,200 kilogrammes, and we could feel the vibrations from a distance. We spent around half an hour with them before heading back to the lodge.

After a quick but heavy breakfast, we started our journey back to Bangalore at 10:30. We reached our hotel by 15:00 and decided to meet at 18:30 for an early dinner.

Day 9: Tuesday 4 April 2023

We started just before 15:00 to drop off the guests for their early morning flight back to London.



Checklist



	Common Name	Scientific Name	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8
	BIRDS									
1	Grey Francolin	Ortygornis pondicerianus	\checkmark		\checkmark					
2	Red Spurfowl	Galloperdix spadicea		\checkmark		\checkmark				\checkmark
3	Grey Jungle Fowl	Gallus sonneratii	\checkmark							
4	Lesser Whistling Duck	Dendrocygna javanica							\checkmark	
5	Indian Spot Billed Duck	Anas poecilorhyncha	\checkmark							
6	Common Teal	Anas crecca	\checkmark							
7	Asian openbill	Anastomus oscitans	\checkmark							
8	Wolly-necked stork	Ciconia episcopus			\checkmark					
9	Black-headed Ibis	Threskiornis melanocephalus		\checkmark		\checkmark		\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
10	Red-naped Ibis	Pseudibis papillosa		\checkmark	\checkmark					
11	Eursian Spoon Bill	Platalea leucorodia		\checkmark		\checkmark				
12	Indian Pond Heron	Ardeola grayii	\checkmark							



13	Grey Heron	Ardea cinerea	\checkmark		\checkmark		\checkmark	\checkmark		
14	Cattle Egret	Bubulcus ibis	\checkmark							
15	Great Egret	Ardea alba			\checkmark		\checkmark			
16	Intermediate Egret	Ardea intermedia	~	\checkmark						
17	Little Egret	Egretta garzetta	\checkmark							
18	Darter	Anhinga melanogaster	~		\checkmark			\checkmark		
19	Little Cormorant	Microcarbo niger	~	\checkmark						
20	Great Cormorant	Phalacrocorax carbo		\checkmark						
21	Black Kite	Milvus migrans	~							\checkmark
22	Osprey	Pandion haliaetus			\checkmark				\checkmark	
23	Grey-headed Fish Eagle	Haliaeetus ichthyaetus					\checkmark			
24	Crested Honey Buzzard	Pernis ptilorhynchus						\checkmark		
25	Red-headed Vulture	Sarcogyps calvus					\checkmark			
26	Short toed snake eagle	Circaetus gallicus			\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark		
27	Shikra	Accipiter badius		\checkmark		\checkmark				
28	Booted Eagle	Hieraaetus pennatus			\checkmark					
29	White-breasted Waterhen	Amaurornis phoenicurus	✓	\checkmark						
30	Red-wattled Lapwing	Vanellus indicus	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	✓	\checkmark



31	Common Sandpiper	Actitis hypoleucos	~		\checkmark		\checkmark			
32	Nilgiri Wood Pigeon	Columba elphinstonii	\checkmark			\checkmark	\checkmark			
33	Eurasian collared Dove	Streptopelia decaocto	~	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark		
34	Yellow-footed Green Pigeon	Treron phonyceptaurus	\checkmark			\checkmark				
35	Emerald Dove	Chalcophaps indica		\checkmark						
36	Rose-ringed Parakeet	Psittacula krameri	\checkmark							
37	Plum-headed Parakeet	Psittacula cyanocephala	\checkmark							
38	Blue-faced Malkoha	Phaenicophaeus viridirostris	\checkmark	\checkmark		\checkmark	\checkmark			\checkmark
39	Southern Coucal	Centropus sinensis					\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	
40	Mottled Wood Owl	Strix ocellata					\checkmark			
41	Alpine Swift	Tachymarptis melba		\checkmark						
42	Little Swift	Apus affinis			\checkmark					
43	Common Hoopoe	Upupa epops	\checkmark							
44	White-throated Kingfisher	Halcyon smyrnensis	\checkmark							
45	Blue-bearded Kingfisher	Megaceryle alcyon					\checkmark			
46	Green Bee-eater	Merops orientalis	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark					
47	Indian Grey Hornbill	Ocyceros birostris						\checkmark		
48	Malabar Pied Hornbill	Anthracoceros coronatus				\checkmark				





49	White-cheeked Barbet	Psilopogon viridis	\checkmark							
50	Malabar Barbet	Psilopogon malabaricus						\checkmark		
51	Rufous Woodpecker	Micropternus brachyurus	~				\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	
52	White-bellied Woodpecker	Dryocopus javensis			\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark		\checkmark	
53	Streak-throated Woodpecker	Picus xanthopygaeus		\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark			
54	Lesser Goldenback	Dinopium benghalense	~	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark			
55	Indian Pitta	Pitta brachyura			\checkmark					
56	Malabar Wood Shrike	Tephrodornis sylvicola					\checkmark			
57	Large Cuckooshrike	Coracina macei		\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark				
58	Bar-winged Flycatcher Shrike	Hemipus picatus				\checkmark				
59	Small Minivet	Pericrocotus cinnamomeus	~			\checkmark		\checkmark		
60	Orange Minivet	Pericrocotus flammeus	~			\checkmark		\checkmark		
61	Bay-backed Shrike	Lanius vittatus						\checkmark		
62	Greater Racket-tailed Drongo	Dicrurus paradiseus	~	\checkmark						
63	Spangled Drongo	Dicrurus bracteatus			\checkmark					
64	Black Drongo	Dicrurus macrocercus		\checkmark						
65	White-bellied Drongo	Dicrurus caerulescens			\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark			
66	Bronze Drongo	Dicrurus aeneus	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark			



67	Indian Golden Oriole	Oriolus kundoo		\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	
68	Asian Paradise Flycatcher	Terpsiphone paradisi	\checkmark							
69	Rufous Treepie	Dendrocitta vagabunda	\checkmark							
70	Indian Jungle Crow	Corvus culminatus	\checkmark							
71	House Crow	Corvus splendens	\checkmark							
72	Great Tit	Parus major					\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	
73	Wire-tailed Swallow	Hirundo smithii			\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark			
74	Barn Swallow	Hirundo rustica		\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark				
75	Malabar Lark	Galerida malabarica	~			\checkmark		\checkmark		
76	Red-whiskered Bulbul	Pycnonotus jocosus	~	\checkmark						
77	Red-vented Bulbul	Pycnonotus cafer		\checkmark					\checkmark	\checkmark
78	Grey-brested Prinia	Prinia hodgsonii			\checkmark					
79	Common Tailorbird	Orthotomus sutorius	~							
80	Blyth's Reed Warbler	Acrocephalus dumetorum	~	\checkmark						
81	Puff-throated Babbler	Pellorneum ruficeps		\checkmark			\checkmark	\checkmark		
82	Indian Scimitar Babbler	Pomatorhinus horsfieldii						\checkmark		
83	Jungle Babbler	Turdoides striata	~	\checkmark						
84	Indian Nuthatch	Sitta castanea		\checkmark	\checkmark		\checkmark	\checkmark		



85	Lesser Hill Myna	Gracula indica		\checkmark				\checkmark		
86	Jungle Myna	Acridotheres fuscus	\checkmark							
87	Common Myna	Acridotheres tristis	✓	\checkmark						
88	Chestnut-tailed Starling	Sturnia malabarica						\checkmark		
89	Ornage-headed Thrush	Geokichla citrina				\checkmark		\checkmark	\checkmark	
90	Indian Blackbird	Turdus simillimus	\checkmark							
91	White-rumped Shama	Copsychus malabaricus							\checkmark	
92	Blue Rock Thrush	Monticola solitarius		\checkmark	\checkmark					
93	Tickell's Blue Flycatcher	Cyornis tickelliae		\checkmark						
94	Jerdon's Leafbird	Chloropsis jerdoni		\checkmark						
95	Purple Sunbird	Cinnyris asiaticus						\checkmark		
96	Indian Silverbill	Euodice malabarica			\checkmark					
97	Forest Wagtail	Dendronanthus indicus		\checkmark						
	MAMMALS									
1	Indian Leopard	Panthera pardus fusca							\checkmark	
2	Royal Bengal Tiger	Panthera tigris tigris		\checkmark		\checkmark		\checkmark		
3	Asiatic wild dogs	Cuon alpinus	✓					\checkmark	\checkmark	
4	Spotted deer	Axis axis	\checkmark							



5	Sambar deer	Rusa unicolor		\checkmark						
5			•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
6	Gaur	Bos gaurus		\checkmark		\checkmark	\checkmark			
7	Asian Elephant	Elephas maximus	~	\checkmark	\checkmark		\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
8	Wild boar	Sus scrofa	~	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark			
9	Malabar giant squirrel	Ratufa indica	\checkmark							
10	Three striped palm squirrel	Funambulus palmarum	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark			\checkmark	\checkmark	
11	Ruddy mongoose	Urva smithii		\checkmark						
12	Stripe-necked mongoose	Herpestes vitticollis	~	\checkmark						
13	Northern plains gray langur	Semnopithecus entellus	~	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	~	\checkmark
14	Bonnet macaque	Macaca radiata	\checkmark							