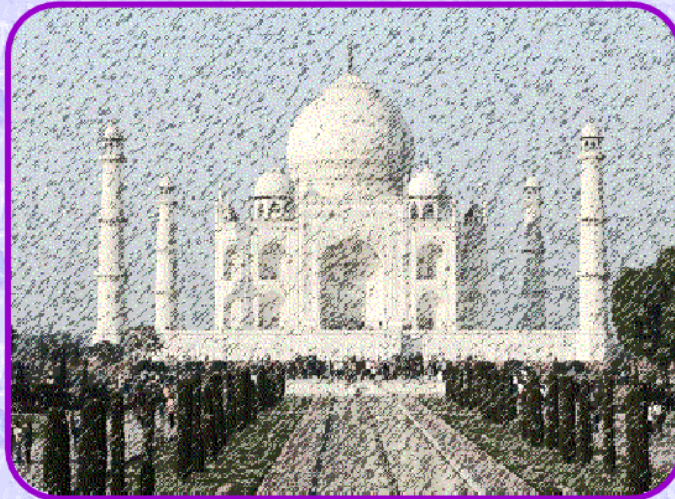


Madhyar Pradesh



India



9th to 20th January, 2011



Wednesday, 12 th	Kanha	6.30 – 11.30 15.00 – 18.00
Thursday, 13 th	Kanha	6.30 – 11.30 15.00 – 18.00
Friday, 14 th	Kanha	6.30 – 11.00
Saturday, 15 th	Bandhavgarh	6.30 – 10.30 14.30 – 17.30
Sunday, 16 th	Bandhavgarh	6.30 – 10.30 14.45 – 17.45
Monday, 17 th	Bandhavgarh	6.30 – 10.30 14.45 – 17.45

INDIA

9th – 20th January, 2011

Introduction

This trip had one objective – to see Tigers in the wild. With the perilous state of the world Tiger population, and the reported tightening of the number of visitors allowed by the government to the reserves, we decided the time was right to go in search of them. Any subsequent sightings of other wildlife, such as birds or other mammals, would be as a consequence of being in the Tiger reserves. We did latch a little culture to the beginning and end of the trip, with a day in Delhi and a day in Agra (home of the Taj Mahal). Even here, some species of bird were seen only at these unlikely places, such as Brown Rock Chat and Brown-headed Barbet (the latter was only heard elsewhere).



So where to go and for how long? One fact is true about seeing Tigers, and that is they are not guaranteed. A Tiger safari bears little resemblance to its Kenyan congener, where wildlife is more or less served up on a plate. While parks can be chosen with decent (comparatively) cat populations, their habitat is usually thick forest and they do tend to favour concealment. Some of the traditional parks, such as Ranthambor and Pench, have had their populations decimated, so we went for Kanha and Bandhavgarh, which both have healthy Tiger populations. We also felt that 3 nights in both, giving a total of 11 safaris, would give enough time in the field to maximise our chances of sightings.

There were various options of how to arrange the trip. Friends have found organising the whole tour independently to be slightly cheaper and more flexible, but we were looking for some professional organisation. After comparing a few travel agencies, Trailfinders balanced a reasonable cost with a more or less ideal itinerary, and also offered a tailor made service so that we could alter any part of the tour to suit our needs, and also did not have to share the journey in a group. Both the parks are some distance from airports, so decisions on transport had to be made. For Bandhavgarh, the best option is the train, with a major station at Umaria, about 35km (1 hour) from the park. This runs directly to Delhi (a 19 hour stretch) and also Agra (14 hours, which we did to see the Taj Mahal). Kanha is a 6 hour drive from Bandhavgarh, and can also be reached by flying to Nagpur, then driving for 6 hours to the reserve. As part of the Trailfinders organisation, we were picked up and driven each time by a driver in a 4 wheel drive.

Timing

Perhaps the best time to visit is between January and April. February and March are probably ideal, since April is quieter for other wildlife, and January can be particularly cold. However, work commitments pointed towards the latter, and it proved to be an excellent choice. Despite the weather warming up during this 4 month period, the early morning starts can be very cold, and this is compounded by the wind chill on the back of

the moving jeep. On the plus side, it keeps biting insects to a minimum – I saw only 1 mosquito during the trip. We had clear blue skies throughout.

Kanha

Kanha is a relatively large reserve, and currently holds a population of around 90 Tigers, although only 25% of the park is open to tourists. Much of the reserve consists of thick forest, giving the Tigers ample opportunity for concealment. Safaris are for 5 hours in the morning (from first light), and 3 hours in the late afternoon. Entry seems to be from one gate. There is no radio communication between the jeeps, so any finds are passed on by word of mouth or luck. 4 mahouts on elephants search before sunrise, and radio in to a central point if they have made a find. Following permission from the park ranger, short rides on the elephants can then be made to see any resting Tigers in close up. The lodges serving the park seem to be spread out in varying distances from the entrance. We were based at Chitvan Lodge, which was a handy 10 minute drive away. The 12 rooms are very spacious, and the basis of the establishment is as an eco lodge. Due to its remote location, electricity here can be sporadic, with the management trying to guarantee it running between 6pm and midnight. Plugs are an interesting affair, since they can accept various standards. The most reliable is the Indian round pin, but all sockets seemed to accept European standards (although they didn't always work).



Grounds of Chitvan Lodge



Room inside the Lodge

Bandhavgarh

This reserve is smaller in area than Kanha, but has a higher density of Tigers (around 55 currently). It is said that there is a greater chance of seeing them here, since the habitat is much less dense, and our experience certainly did not disprove this. Even so, some safaris went by without any being seen by any of the jeeps. There are 3 gates which allow entrance to the reserve, although gate #1 is the favoured one (gate #2 is used if the limit of 32 is reached at gate #1). Not all the tracks are allowed to be used these days, so jeeps are allocated out of the four available routes on any safari (imaginatively labelled A to D). As with Kanha, there is no radio communication between jeeps, and there seems to be a lot of competition between each one to get the best views (leading to mad driving at a sighting and apparent suppression of some information).

Many of the lodges are located in the village of Tala, which is more or less adjacent to gate #1, and so very close. Our choice of Tiger's Den was one of these, and was a bit of an oasis from the main street of the village. The rooms were spacious and clean,



with very tidy wall enclosed grounds. It has to be said that the food served by both of the lodges we used was of a very good and standard with plenty of variety.

Diary

Kanha – morning

(Day 1)



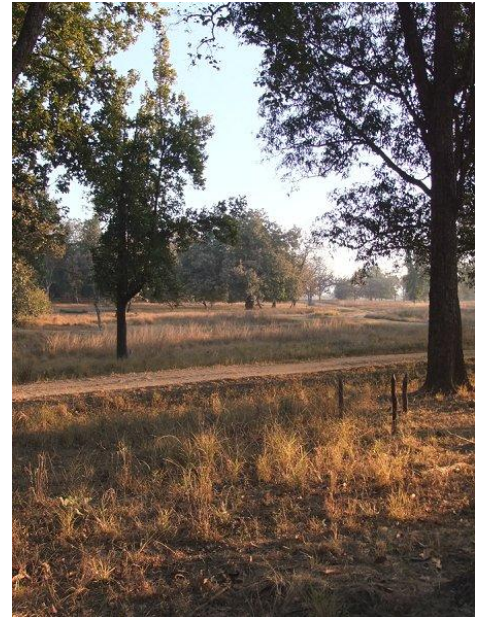
Kanha main entrance



The jeep queue

We gathered around the jeep at 6.15 in the morning at Chitvan Lodge, with the air still very cold, so we were wrapped up in arctic gear. The proffering of a blanket and hot water bottle each wasn't over-egging the temperatures, since both came in very useful during the first half hour of the excursion. Chitvan Lodge is very conveniently located only about 4km from the entrance to the park, leaving a short journey of around 10 minutes or so. We were greeted by the sight of a handful of jeeps lined up at the gate, all waiting for their allocated park guide. Our jeep now contained the driver, guide from the lodge, park guide, and two other guests from Chitvan Lodge. We entered the park with great expectations and cold faces, made even colder by the wind chill of the moving vehicle.

After 5-10 minutes, we came across the Central Point, where the jeeps tend to gather to find out if the early riding mahouts on their elephants had found any resting Tigers. By this time, we had passed some small herds of grazing Spotted Deer alongside the track. The light by this time was strengthening, and it was obvious that Common Mynas and Rufous Treepies were abundant throughout the forest, as well as vociferous Greater Racket-tailed Drongos. The presence of fire lines were pointed out to us – artificial cuts through the trees which act as fire breaks, but which are also used by a lot of the wildlife as artificial corridors. This was a poignant comment, since after stopping at the second or third power line for 5-10 minutes, we were ridiculously fortunate to spot a Tiger slowly padding its way towards us. It took a short cut through the trees as it approached, exiting on the track directly behind us. We had passed a couple of forest workers along this very track earlier, and the Tiger paused to eyeball them when she spotted them



before deciding they were the wrong shape for brunch, following which she re-entered the forest.



Two for tea?



Back into the forest with the kill

The guides then took the correct decision that she was going to follow a predictable route along more fire lines, when we arched around her presumed route to try to intercept her progress. A short wait transpired before the alarm calls of a couple of Samba Deer indicated the likelihood of some good fieldwork, proving productive when the Tiger again emerged from the forest, eventually rounding the jeep to almost touching distance. And still she took no notice whatsoever of our presence. With this amount of luck, we drove further around the tracks, trying to intercept her for a third time, passing a group of 4 Spotted Deer on the way. The group contained a fawn, which may have been significant, since it didn't take long for the same Tigress to show herself yet again, this time with a kill – a young Spotted Deer. As she slowly strolled into the forest, we tried to second guess her movements yet again, successfully watching her distant frame progress towards us along another fire line. She crossed the track just behind us this time, just after we had come across a group of 7 Gaur – the only ones we saw on the whole trip – again right next to the track, one of which was suckling a dependent calf.



Breakfast at Central Point

With the mistaken belief that Tigers were perhaps a lot easier to see than earlier thought, our break at the Central Point found that no other jeep had seen a Tiger during the early part of the morning. Perhaps we should have guessed that we had been very fortunate with our experience by the delight that the experienced crew on our jeep had been showing – such a close animal and then with a kill are not everyday events! Once we were back on the tracks, a group of Barasinga, which are a rare speciality of the park, were easily spotted at one of the nearby watering holes, in the company of a small group of Spotted Deer. The latter were by far the most common mammal

present, but we were surprised by the low numbers of Langurs so far. Shortly before exiting the park, we spotted a Jungle Cat on the track ahead of the jeep, although it disappeared into the forest before offering any prolonged views.

Birdlife was consistent throughout the morning, with Common Mynas and Jungle Babblers notably prevalent, often accompanied by Greater racket-tailed Drongos, Red Junglefowl were surprisingly easy to see, with 4-5 individuals seen throughout the morning, as well as a couple of pairs of Common Peafowl, which were startlingly glossy in the direct sunlight. A few water holes were passed, each seeming to possess its very own Little Cormorant and small group of wildfowl, usually consisting predominantly of Pintail

and much lower numbers of Teal. One of the larger lagoons also held a quartet of Black Storks. 3 White-throated Kingfishers were sprinkled around the reserve. Smaller passerines were quite numerous but more often than not flyby's. Those that could be identified included groups of Plain Prinias and Zitting Cisticolas near to the Barasinga site, and Siberian Stonechat in one of the open areas. 2 Crested Serpent Eagles were seen, one landing almost directly overhead while watching one of the lagoons. The second was circling the plains.

While we stopped for breakfast at the Central Point, one or two flitty birds were in the canopy, including Greenish Warbler, Oriental White-eye and Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher. It appeared that a pair of Red-naped Ibis were in the process of constructing a nest. The temperature had soared as the morning progressed, rising to perhaps the mid twenties Celsius.



Mid morning in the forest

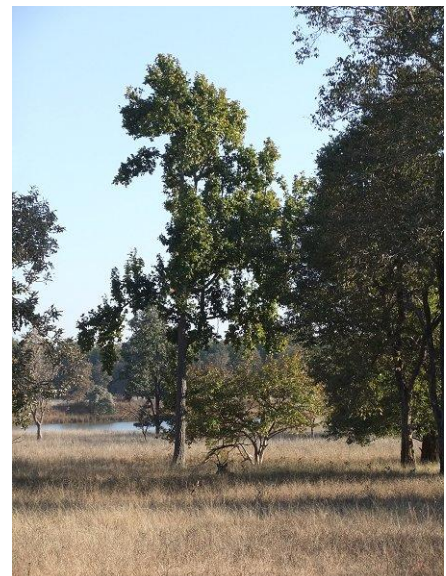


Water hole

Kanha – afternoon

The afternoon session is a little shorter than the morning one at 3 hours (as compared with 5 hours), and it is also initially greeted by hot sunshine. The jeep was also lighter by 2 – the pair with us earlier had departed for Bandhavgarh. The resultant drive was very much different to that of the morning, but no less enjoyable. Since we had such stunning views of the Tiger, the guide tried to follow up promising signs of Leopard from earlier in the day (mainly in the form of pug marks). This is not an easy task, given the shy nature of this elusive cat, but we did stumble on our first Sambar Deer of the day. The birds continued to be dominated by Jungle Babblers and lesser numbers of Common Mynas, although we did find the first of 3 Jungle Owlets which were posing particularly well. Not to be outdone, we added a pair of Spotted Owlets to the list, both only feet apart from each other as we approached the Central Point, in what is likely to be a known stake out tree. Spotted Deer were here again, led by a bold and showy large stag.

Perhaps the highlight of the afternoon was seeing a scurrying Ruddy Mongoose, which initially disappeared into the dense vegetation close to the jeep. We sat for some time and noticed what may have been the mongoose kill (appearing like the tail of a snake), after which the animal itself reappeared in the open directly in front of us, almost posing on a fallen tree trunk. The pool which had earlier held the Black Storks (still present) was even more active, with small numbers of Barasinga and playful Langurs. A group of 4 Wild Boar were nosing their way through the vegetation on the opposite side of the track at the margins of the smaller lagoon.



The air became decidedly colder again as the afternoon progressed, with the driver seeming to speed up somewhat to exit the park before the strict closing time. Once outside of the gate, and on the way back to the lodge, an Indian Hare bolted across the track in front of us.

Kanha – morning

(Day 2)

We had been approached by the guide the previous evening to discuss our interest in going on a "Tiger Show" this morning. This is where (not surprisingly) an extra 600 rupees each is paid to be ferried by jeep to a waiting mahout who has located a static Tiger, with a subsequent transfer to the elephant to get closer views. The mahouts will have been tracking Tigers since early morning, hopefully locate a Tiger, which would then be assessed to determine if it is sufficiently stationery, and then radio through to the park rangers, who would make the decision as to whether tourists could be brought in. 4-5 minutes views would then be made in turn. As it turned out, no Tigers were found by the mahouts this morning, which made their barren run lengthen to 3 days. The only view of a Tiger in the park this morning was a brief male across a narrow track minutes before we arrived at the scene.

Temperatures were a little higher than on the previous early morning, but didn't subsequently reach the highs at midday. Mammal watching was fairly slow before the breakfast break, although we did have our best views yet of a trio of Sambar Deer next to the jeep - a fully grown female was chewing on what looked like the most unappetising of dry leaves, along with 2 fawns, the younger of which was very jumpy. Birding was quite good, and we did chance upon a decent bird wave, located in a fairly open area of the forest, consisting of a pair of Scarlet Minivets, Black-hooded Oriole, Large Cuckooshrike, singing Brown-cheeked Fulvetta (heard only), White-bellied Drongo, and a pair of Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpeckers. We arrived at breakfast a little later than yesterday, since it appeared that the guides had put even more effort into seeing the elusive Tigers, yet it still proved to be a good session, nevertheless.



As we were finishing our breakfast, news filtered through of a pair of Dhole, or Wild Dogs, which were playing alongside the track not far from the Central Point. This is apparently an uncommon occurrence, and the guides seemed quite excited with the prospect. So we dutifully made haste into the jeep, drove the short distance, and were rewarded with a pair of Dhole relaxing in front of us for 10-15 minutes. They thoughtfully stayed next to the track (and sometimes on it) so we didn't have to peer through vegetation to observe them. One of the pair was particularly playful, skipping around as we approached. Following this, the guide decided to go to an area of the park where Leopard was more likely, although they still remain very difficult to see here. We weren't surprised not to find one, although we did come across a pair of Muntjac bounding across the road in front of us, and a brief Sirkeer Malkoha flew up into the canopy. Before leaving the park for lunch, a small troop of Langurs were seen playing in the soft light next to the track.

Kanha – afternoon

Having now covered much of the reserve, and seeing Tigers, Wild Dogs, etc, our guide wanted to do something slightly different this afternoon, so we were to finish the day on the plateau, which is the highest part of the park, offering a different mix of birds in particular, as well as a notable sunset. As usual, we began by slowly covering old tracks, although mammals were fairly few and far between (apart from a Ruddy Mongoose scuttling across the track, and a few Spotted Deer here and there). A mini bird wave at a bridge stop included Scaly-breasted & Tricoloured Munias. A fleeing Green Sandpiper was at a subsequent water stop. Jungle Babblers continued to be the predominant species, with occasional Greater Racket-tailed Drongos and Rufous Treepies. We started the ascent to the plateau about three quarters of an hour before sunset, taking a very steep red dust track up through enclosed forest. The habitat here was in contrast to below, with smaller trees more thinly scattered, in what was apparently a dry deciduous zone, which eventually opened out to a grassy plateau. Within the bushy area, we had very good views of 3 Sirkeer Malkohas, and a few pairs of Yellow-footed Green Pigeon. 2 White-eyed Buzzards were on flypast, with a Black-winged Kite perched on one of the bushes.

Once in the more open area, fleeting LBJ's were most probably Zitting Cisticolas. It didn't take long before we reached the lookout point, which was to be our homage to the setting of the sun. This provided a stunning view of the whole of the reserve, with one or two of the fire control areas standing out. There were good numbers of Bulbuls and Prinias here, many of which could be watched by visiting the usual outdoor urinal. The Bulbuls were mainly Red-vented, but did also include a trio of Red-whiskered, and the predominant Plain Prinias include at least 1 Rufous-fronted Prinia. Since the sunset brought the time to near 6pm – closing time – we had to exit via one of the alternative park gates. This opened on to a road used by public transport through the park itself, but with close monitoring of time spent by vehicles in the reserve, and also numbers of individuals contained therein. A benefit of this route back is that Tigers and Leopards can sometimes be seen in the waning light from the tarmac road on occasion, leaving our return progress slow enough for observation, while being passed by many buses, cars and bikes. We also stopped once or twice to look for this evenings non-existent felines.



The plateau

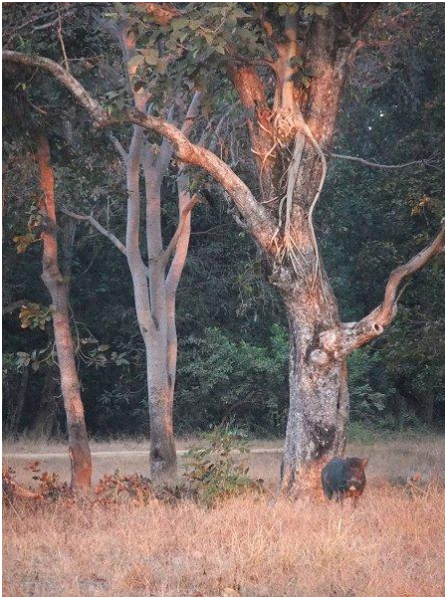


Sunset overlooking the reserve

Kanha – morning

(Day 3)

This was to be our last morning in Kanha, so it was cut short by just over half an hour to allow for return to the lodge and pick up at 12 noon. Temperatures were slightly warmer than the last couple of days, although there was still the wind chill factor on the back of the jeep, leaving the blanket and hot water bottle still as firm friends. We had said yes to the Tiger Show should the mahouts find any Tigers this morning, visiting the Central Point early to check up on this after a short look around the reserve. Up until now, deer numbers were lower than usual, although for some reason, Sambar Deer seemed more evident than Spotted for once. A couple of males were impressively strutting their stuff



around the large open lagoon. Wild Boar had also put in more of an effort, with 7 near to the Central Point. Even birdlife was a little quieter, although we did witness an irate White-naped Woodpecker trying to chase off a pair of Greater racket-tailed Drongos from what it seemed to consider was its own tree. News from the mahouts was that a Tiger had been found, but it was still mobile.

We waited for some time, had breakfast, and listened for any further news, to find that the Tiger had eventually given the mahout the slip, leaving the Tiger Show a no show! Again, only one brief Tiger had been seen in the morning from a jeep. We ploughed on again after breakfast, with one jeep going to the site of the mahout's sighting, but with no luck. We did come across some monkey warning calls and staked out the area with no luck.

Journey from Kanha to Bandhavgarh

We eventually left Chitvan Lodge before 12 noon to begin the 7 hour journey to Bandhavgarh, which turned out to be fascinating, with the variety of both landscape and people on the way seeming to make the time go past faster than it actually did. There was even wildlife to be seen from the moving taxi, choice of which was a Jackal over the road in front of us. Quite a few new birds for the trip were also seen, including 7 Indian Robins, which seemed to frequent the verges of the roads towards the higher ground. Pied Bushchat and Black Redstart were in a similar sort of habitat. One notable sighting was when we took a break at the fossil museum, where a Large Cuckooshrike was at the top of a bare tree as we walked around it.



Bandhavgarh – morning

(Day 4)

Queuing up for entry to the park at 6.30am was a different experience to that at Kanha, partly because it was Saturday, and also due to the different operating of the parks. There did seem to be many more jeeps – at least 20 – all queuing in their respective ranks and looking to vie for the best entry slot. The half light was barely breaking and the first few Spotted Deer spotted, when the jeep in front of us stopped next to the stream to the right of the track (some jeeps had already taken off further into the park) due to the emergence of an impressive Tigress. This was the cue for a driving frenzy, with all the drivers striving for pole position. No track courtesy here then! We found ourselves in a fortunate position, due to the early quick departure of some of the jeeps, who by default then missed the Tiger, leaving ourselves and one other jeep at the head of the herd, with the Tiger crossing the track directly in front of us. This left the rest craning their necks for views, leading to at least one metallic thud as a pair of bumpers



collided. With the light still struggling, we gorged on the animal as she slowly made her way into the bush.

We then spent a couple of hours combing the numerous different types of habitat that Bandhavgarh has to offer, encountering numerous small groups of Spotted Deer, and lower numbers of Sambar Deer. Primates at this time of the morning were few and far between. A particularly classy spot was an open meadow with the hills behind, catching the early morning light as it painted the open plains. Apart from an early Indian Grey Hornbill, birds outside of the usual plethora of Jungle Babblers and Greater Racket-tailed Drongos were hard to find. A few possible Asian Palm Swifts were over the open areas (although closer inspection may have revealed them as Crested Treeswifts), and the odd White-bellied Drongo was chanced upon. Parakeets were numerous, with those seen well mainly being Rose-ringed, with the odd Alexandrine.

After trying to sort out a medium sized raptor on an exposed dead tree, which was likely to be White-eyed Buzzard, we stopped for morning tea at a minor hub of commercialisation that is the Central Point, where the local villagers had set up a hot spot to sell tea and nibbles for a pittance of a price (eg 5 rupees for a tea) to the many jeeps parking up. Primates began to increase in numbers following our stop – all Langurs – and we did encounter one or two making alarm calls, which unfortunately didn't result in Tiger sightings. After passing singles of Oriental Magpie Robin and Indian Robin, we stopped at a spot which had commanding views of the surrounding hills, one with accompanying temple at its peak, and Shikra circling above. We continued to pass regular groups of Spotted Deer scattered throughout the bush, and not too far from the exit to the park stumbled behind a Tiger jam of jeeps. The half a dozen or so vehicles were gorging on a magnificent male Tiger, which had selected its sunbathing spot well. We studied him for some time, albeit noting his main exercise was to flick his ears at the annoying flies. Almost at the exit, we stopped at a tree next to the track to eyeball a pair of Mottled Wood Owls, which no doubt have a regular entourage of jeeps doing exactly the same thing.



Plains in early morning light



Higher location with hill surround

Bandhavgarh - afternoon

This turned out to be a tremendous session, centred around one male Tiger. After finally sifting out Plum-headed Parakeet while on the starting position at the main gate, we headed on to our allotted route, nodded cursorily at the pair of Mottled Wood Owls in their favoured roosting tree, notched up our first 5 Wild Boar for the park, then turned off in the direction of the morning view of the resting male Tiger. A Ruddy Mongoose provided a suitable distraction on this short track, as it crossed in front of us some distance away, to be then pinned down with half views in the undergrowth. As we passed the location where the Tiger had been lying, I made the comment that it would have been nice to see it stand up and walk away, when we were beckoned by another jeep metres ahead of us, watching the same impressive beast now lying in the middle of the track, totally unconcerned at our presence. He remained almost motionless for a short time, before standing up to demonstrate his bulk, before slowly meandering further down the track and into the forest. Not to be outwitted, the guides felt they could guess where it would come out of the trees again, so we made some pace to what was apparently an off limits part of the reserve. It only took a matter of minutes before we were treated to a second helping. After some indecision on his part, the Tiger decided to cross the track between the two jeeps and back into the forest once more.



Along the track . . .

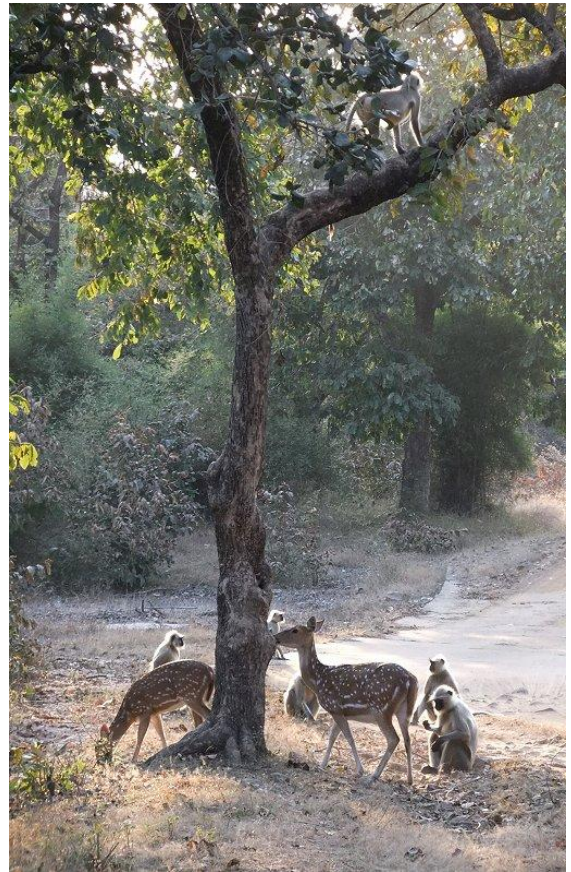


. . . to reappear from the dry stream bed

We weren't surprised when the guides again felt the confidence of predicting the Tiger's intended route, so we made a loop to the double crossing of a dry river bed, picking up other jeeps on route. Our new positioning had been immaculate, since the driver had turned the jeep in the opposite direction to the half a dozen or so others in wait, and the Tiger reappeared from the dry river in our direction, at first parallel in the bush, and then in the centre of the track in front of us. The positioning meant that we were one of the two jeeps at the head of the cavalcade, in what turned out to be a free for all, with each individual driver trying to steam past into the pole viewing position. However, we somehow kept at the head of this as the Tiger progressed along the dusty track – stock car racing in the wild (not a pretty sight!). It was fortunate that the Tiger paid no attention to this grim spectacle, since there seemed to be scant respect in the other direction. I was pleased to see that our driver/guide combo kept a reasonable distance

from the animal, until overtaken by more aggressive drivers, who cut off along the forest edges. The Tiger again re-entered the forest, after which we found ourselves and the group of jeeps in an open area again waiting for a re-appearance. Whilst here, an overflying Alexandrine Parakeet gave notice of a small group of circling Indian Vultures. This was a slightly surprising yet welcome sighting, bearing in mind the crash in vulture populations in the country following the use of antibiotics in cattle. After a short sojourn a little further along, we came back to this spot, to find the Tiger once again in the open for the fourth and last time.

We then started to appreciate the more common mammals of the park again, with an impressive view of a group of Spotted Deer and Langurs, collected under a tree in superb backlight. After a short diversion to marvel at some ancient caves and a statue of one of the Hindu gods, we stopped briefly to look on to a waterhole, where a few male Peafowl were strutting their stuff, and a Lesser Adjutant stalked around the rear. We had just enough time to admire a family trio of Sambar Deer next to the track, at a small pool taking in a drink in the fading afternoon light.



Bandhavgarh – morning

(Day 5)

This morning seemed a little cooler and more windy than the previous day, with the same plethora of jeeps waiting to enter the park. We were towards the rear of the group this time, which seems to have little significance, since they all thin out along allotted routes once in the park. Our own session remained Tigerless, although we did pass one of the mahouts who had located the mother with 2 cubs, and were touting the ride to see them at close quarters. If we hadn't seen Tigers so well, this would have been a tempting prospect, but we decided to leave this to others, and continue on a lone search. Mammals were fairly quiet up to the break at the Central Point, apart from 2 small separate groups of Wild Boar, and sparse Spotted Deer. Even the birds seemed to be thinly scattered early on, with fewer collections of Jungle Babbler, and no Rufous Treepies – a single Orange-headed Thrush was the only bird of note.

This changed as soon as we left the tea stop, when we startled a Crested Serpent Eagle from the floor, which then landed on an open branch not far from us. It sat watching us



Mahout



Tea stop at the Central Point



for some time before landing directly over our jeep. A little further into the journey, we stopped at a dry stream crossing, where a pair of Wire-tailed Swallows helped us to locate a feeding Ultramarine Flycatcher. Spotted Deer and Langurs were also starting to pick up in numbers, with a large group of the latter showing all types of interesting social behaviour. A Tigress had been spotted briefly earlier in the morning, but was nowhere to be seen when we tried a stakeout at the site. We did have decent views of Grey-breasted Prinia here, which had a red front to their forehead from the pollen in the red flowers they were feeding on. A pair of Jungle Owlets were perched separately close to the track, with Plum-headed Parakeets, Indian Roller, and Spotted Dove preceding a Small Minivet just beyond the wall of the adjoining village. In one of the clearings, a feeding chat on a small mound proved to be Grey Bush Chat, showing the red in its rump and outer tail clearly. Brown Shrike was a little way along from this. Across

the open area from these birds was a pair of Ruddy Mongooses, one appearing as if on castors as it trundled along the forest edge. As we almost completed the morning session at the park gate exit, we were shown some Tiger pug marks next to the gate itself!

Bandhavgarh - afternoon

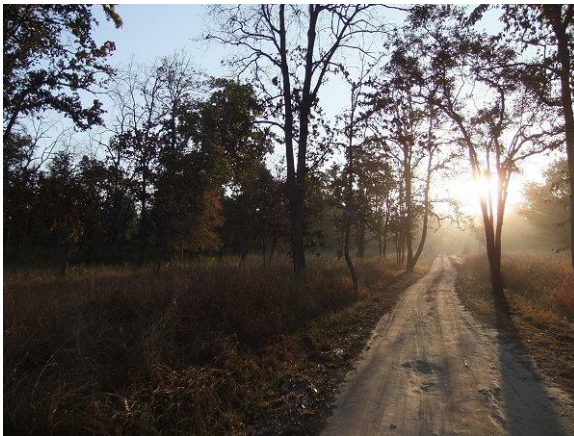
This session started fairly quietly on the mammal front. The main interest throughout the afternoon was the birdlife, although even here they didn't seem too numerous. Another Lesser Adjutant was passed, this time fairly close to (in the same clearing as the earlier Rufous-tailed Flycatcher), and an even closer Indian Roller was a little further along, resplendent in its log top position. Green Bee-eaters were perched overhead at one point. Mammalian activity continued to be almost non-existent, with only a few Spotted Deer for our troubles. We did pick up some female Tiger pug marks heading in the opposite direction, so we doubled back in pursuit of the owner. This turned out to be a wild Tiger chase, but it did lead us back to the opening where we had seen the male Tiger yesterday, and proffered more Indian Vultures overhead.



We were told that studies, including ones in this park, may be indicating that they are making something of a recovery. There was news of one of the cubs by the dry river bed being seen, so we staked this spot out for some time, but again to no avail. Despite us actually seeing no Tigers throughout the day, we did experience the roars within the forest – apparently one of the males proclaiming territory. As we sat and listened, the sound seemed to be approaching, whereby the guide became more excited (camera now at the ready!) and we sat alongside a possible exit route. However, with time, the roars once again retreated. Time was now pressing, resulting in a rather faster exit along the tracks towards the main gate than we were used to. After flashing past small groups of Sambar Deer and Wild Boar, as well as a large collection of Rhesus Macaques on the open grassland, we made it back to the gate with only 3 minutes to spare. This is important for the driver and guide, since they may be fined or suspended if they reach the exit after closing time (5.45pm today).

Bandhavgarh – morning*(Day 6)*

This morning started by returning to the very cold weather, with frost on the ground by the trackside. We found ourselves driving along the route taken on the first morning, and were soon rewarded with a pair of Indian Scops Owls which were pointed out by the guide – the third of 4 species of owls seen in both parks which had known roosting sites. They were sitting side by side in a hole within a dead tree. As we traversed one of the clearings, the large pug marks of a male Tiger were followed – it had probably been along that road early morning. Red-breasted Flycatcher preceded the alarm calls of Spotted Deer, and we found ourselves as one of 4 jeeps lined up loosely peering into the forest in the direction of the calls. We were rewarded with the distant sight of a Tigress moving through the forest, although views were quite brief and a little distant. We continued on to the area of the previous day's sighting of one of the cubs, but there was again no joy this morning, and in no time, it was time to visit the Central Point for a cup of tea.

*Pug mark of male Tiger*

Following this, we returned to one of the familiar tracks, where 2 of the other jeeps were parked up at the intersection, listening to some alarm calls from Spotted Deer. While waiting, Ultramarine Flycatcher and Greenish Warbler were in bushes nearby. As we travelled on, we picked up a few decent birds, including a couple of Grey-headed Canary-Flycatchers and a pair of Indian Grey Hornbills overhead. Plum-headed Parakeets seemed to be the most common parakeet this morning, with at least one Alexandrine showing itself. The jeep stopped a little further on to try to pick out a pair of Painted Spurfowl, which peered out of the undergrowth intermittently. A third bird was a little closer as we departed the scene. A male Oriental Magpie Robin was at the edge of the track, and a pair of Northern Palm Squirrels fed on the soon to be dying bamboo. Langurs seemed to be in lower numbers this morning, although we did pass a small posse of Rhesus Macaques, with the more aggressive expressions as we studied them than their more passive Langur relatives. A trio of owl species for the day was totted up when we passed a single Jungle Owlet near to the Mottled Wood Owls which were present as usual near to the gate.

Bandhavgarh - afternoon

This afternoon's treat was to be taken into the reserve through gate #2. Each previous session had been through gate #1, which is the main gate. The apparent reason is that a maximum of 32 jeeps are allowed through the latter, and this is on some sort of rotational basis, leaving the overspill to go through the former. This took us initially along the poorly maintained main road which is tarmac (or at least some of it is!) to the smaller gate #2. This then covers some new tracks, although there is some sharing of the earlier routes. After passing Large Cuckooshrike and Green Bee-eaters, the sharing of routes was obvious when we again followed the same pug marks as this earlier. Not long after, we heard the alarm call of a Sambar Deer, just inside the bush from where we were stationed. We waited for some time, and another jeep (the "National Geographic



Staking out the Tiger

Jeep”) reported seeing a Tiger briefly crossing the fire line in the direction of the water hole. We doubled back to watch over the water hole for a short time, before deciding to go back to where the deer had been calling. Good decision – a male Tiger appeared on the track in front of us, reportedly being the father of the male seen on the first afternoon here. It took a brief look at us before entering the thick bushes. We pushed the jeep forward to this spot, and managed to locate him resting in the dense undergrowth only yards inside.

After about 10 minutes, he yawned a few times and then moved further into the forest. We stayed here for a while longer –

he didn’t reappear, but we did have Indian Vulture and Short-toed Eagle overhead.

We then ventured into a new part of the reserve (to us), which can only be accessed via gate #2. This brought us to an open area in the warmth of the evening light, which hosted a couple of Black Drongos and White-eyed Buzzard, which was prowling on the ground looking for insects. Black-hooded Oriole flew over. We then found ourselves at the main gate #2 entrance, which is apparently a little too far from the village of Tala and gate #1 (where the entry sheets are distributed) to be used in practice. When we were just about to admire a Yellow-wattled Plover in the field, a pair of Golden Jackals crossed the track in front of us, and meandered through the forest to the side, where the trees were quite thinly spaced. Two small groups of Peafowl and a couple of Black Drongos preceded a White-bellied Drongo. Time was once more against us, but as we neared the location of the earlier Tiger, there was a loud and close alarm call from a Sambar Deer. We loitered for the 5 minutes or so that we could spare, and while we didn’t see the Tiger again, it was an experience to leave the park listening to the trademark alarm calls of its prey as we left for the last time.



SPECIES SEEN

Painted Spurrow

Galloperdix lunulata

What looked like a pair and a separate single bird were keeping to the cover of bushes near to the track at Bandhavgarh

Red Junglefowl

Gallus gallus

Quite regularly seen in the forest, either in singles, or groups of up to 6 birds. All seen were males. Kanha (7, 1, ~6), Bandhavgarh (7)

Indian Peafowl

Pavo cristatus

Commonly seen in the forest, and also occasionally in open farmland. They are also quite vocal. Kanha (~15, ~16, ~10), Bandhavgarh (~10, ~10, ~12), train journey (~8), Agra to Delhi (2)



Greylag Goose

Anser anser

A group of ~20 were usually to be found on a pool in open ground at Kanha

Ruddy Shelduck

Tadorna ferruginea

Almost exclusively seen on the river adjacent to the Taj Mahal in Agra, with a group of ~40 birds. 2 were also seen on the journey from Agra to Delhi

Northern Pintail

Anas acuta

2 separate groups of birds were on pools within Kanha, totalling ~40 birds

Eurasian Teal

Anas crecca

A small group of 3 birds was with the larger collection of Pintail on one of the pools at Kanha

Little Grebe

Tachybaptus ruficollis

This species seems to be common on open water throughout the countryside: Kanha (2); journey from Kanha to Bandhavgarh (6); train journey (2); journey from Agra to Delhi

Black Stork

Ciconia nigra

A group of 4 birds was regularly seen on one of the pools at Kanha. A single bird flew over Chitvan Lodge

Woolly-necked Stork

Ciconia episcopus

A pair of birds was seen from the car during the journey from Kanha to Bandhavgarh

Lesser Adjutant

Leptoptilos javanicus

Only seen in small numbers at Bandhavgarh. A single bird was at a small pool with Peafowl late one afternoon; a pair and a separate bird were on the reserve on our second day; a single bird was near to the road on the third day



Red-naped Ibis

Pseudibis papillosa

Kanha – a pair of birds must have been building a nest in the vicinity of the Central Point, with regular noisy flyovers. A group of 4 were perched towards the centre of one of the pools

Indian Pond Heron

Ardeola grayii

A common bird throughout, they were seen in small numbers: journey from Nagpur to Kanha (2); Kanha (2, 2, 2); Bandhavgarh (1, 1); train journey (5); journey from Agra to Delhi (~12)

Intermediate Egret

Egretta intermedia

The only definite bird was at Kanha

Eastern Cattle Egret*Bubulcus coromandus*

Very common throughout

Little Egret*Egretta garzetta*

Kanha (1); Bandhavgarh (1); train journey (1)

Little Cormorant*Microcarbo niger*

Kanha (5, 1)

Great Cormorant*Phalacrocorax carbo*

River adjacent to Taj Mahal, Agra (~100); pools alongside railway tracks on train journey (~40)

Black-winged Kite*Elanus caeruleus*

Journey from Nagpur to Kanha (~8); Kanha (2, 2); Chitvan Lodge (1); journey from Kanha to Bandhavgarh (3); Bandhavgarh (1); train journey (1); journey from Agra to Delhi (1)

**Black Kite***Milvus migrans*

These were abundant in the cities such as Agra and Delhi, yet all but non-existent in the countryside, where the only birds noticed was a group of ~20 on the journey from Nagpur to Kanha. A pair were even nesting within one of the monument's grounds in Agra

**Egyptian Vulture***Neophron percnopterus*

The first birds seen were 3 at the Taj Mahal, with 2 overhead, and 1 perched on the building itself. The only others were on the journey from Agra to Delhi, when 4 were loosely associating with small numbers of Black Kites

Indian Vulture*Gyps indicus*

The vulture population was hit very hard some years ago due to the overuse of antibiotics in cattle, so it was a nice surprise to see a handful of this one species in small numbers. 3 were high over Bandhavgarh late one afternoon. Small numbers were seen again over the reserve on subsequent days (4, 2, 1)

Short-toed Snake Eagle*Circaetus gallicus*

While staking out the possible location of a Tiger in Bandhavgarh, a light phase individual passed overhead

Crested Serpent Eagle*Spilornis cheela*

2 birds were particularly close, with 1 behind the jeep in Kanha, and another flying from the forest floor to land in a tree nearby, then to fly even closer when it perched directly over our heads. A third bird was flying overhead at Kanha

**Shikra***Accipiter badius*

Single bird circled above Bandhavgarh

White-eyed Buzzard*Butastur teesa*

Most interesting was one of two birds late afternoon at Bandhavgarh, strutting over open ground looking for insects. A third bird had been seen perched near to the Central Point at Bandhavgarh, with 2 birds on flypast at Kanha

Common Kestrel*Falco tinnunculus*

2 separate birds were in the air on one day at Bandhavgarh

Common Moorhen*Gallinula chloropus*

Only seen while travelling, with a single bird on the journey from Kanha to Bandhavgarh, and ~30 on roadside pools when travelling from Agra to Delhi

Eurasian Coot*Fulica atra*

As with Moorhen, only seen while travelling, with ~50 sharing the roadside pools with that same species

Sarus Crane*Grus antigone*

A group of 4 were in an agricultural field while travelling from Agra to Delhi

Black-winged Stilt*Himantopus himantopus*

Apart from a group of birds at rest in the river adjacent to the Taj Mahal, Agra, most birds were seen on the train journey and from Agra to Delhi

Yellow-wattled Lapwing*Vanellus malabaricus*

Single bird at rest in a field late afternoon at Bandhavgarh

Red-wattled Lapwing*Vanellus indicus*

Kanha (2, 4, 3); journey from Kanha to Bandhavgarh (5); Bandhavgarh (5, 5); train journey (~8); journey from Agra to Delhi (~30)

**Green Sandpiper***Tringa ochropus*

1 flew from a poolside at Kanha, with a second bird from the train (in flight)

Common Pigeon*Columba livia*

Abundant in built up areas – Delhi and Agra in particular

Eurasian Collared Dove*Streptopelia decaocto*

2 at the Taj Mahal, Agra

Spotted Dove*Spilopelia chinensis*

Chitvan Lodge (2); Kanha (2, 6); Bandhavgarh (~6, ~4, 1)

Laughing Dove*Spilopelia senegalensis*

2 in the grounds of Tiger's Den, Bandhavgarh

**Yellow-footed Green Pigeon***Treron phoenicopterus*

Chitvan Lodge (2); Kanha (4, 3); Bandhavgarh (~10, 3, ~20)

Alexandrine Parakeet*Psittacula eupatria*

More were likely to have been seen than the following, since parakeets were a very common sight and sound, leaving many non-specifically identified: Delhi (3); Kanha (1); Bandhavgarh (1, 2, 2)



Rose-ringed Parakeet

Psittacula krameri

These were a very common sight and sound in most areas, with the only place where they seemed to be few and far between being Kanha



Plum-headed Parakeet

Psittacula cyanocephala

Only specifically identified at Bandhavgarh, where at least 15 were seen on the last day, with fewer numbers on the previous two days

Greater Coucal

Centropus sinensis

Journey from Nagpur to Kanha (1); Kanha (2); journey from Kanha to Bandhavgarh (1); Bandhavgarh (1 in the village of Tala)

Sirkeer Malkoha

Taccocua leschenaultia

1 was seen briefly flying away from the jeep on a morning safari at Kanha, with 3 much better views later while on the plateau at Kanha



Asian Koel

Eudynamys scolopacea

Single male only at Bandhavgarh

Indian Scops Owl

Otus bakkamoena

A pair was pointed out from the jeep in Bandhavgarh, side by side in a tree hole



Mottled Wood Owl

Strix ocellata

What must be a regular pair were usually to be found roosting under the canopy of one of the trees near to the entrance of gate 1 at Bandhavgarh

Jungle Owlet

Glaucidium radiatum

The most common owl seen, and unlike the others, none were known regulars known by the guides: Kanha (3, 2, 1); Bandhavgarh (2, 1)



Spotted Owlet

Athene brama

A regular pair was roosting in a nearly bare tree near to the Central Point at Kanha

Crested Treeswift*Hemiprocne coronate*

1 over a clearing at Bandhavgarh

Asian Palm Swift*Cypsiurus balasiensis*

2 together over Kanha

Little Swift*Apus affinis*

The only ones seen were a group of ~40 over one of the temples at Agra

Indian Roller*Coracias benghalensis*

These were a welcome and common sight in all areas apart from the busy centres of the large cities, although a few were even seen on roadside wires in some of the towns: Journey from Nagpur to Kanha (~30); Kanha (1, 2, 1); journey from Kanha to Bandhavgarh (~12); Kanha (1, 3, 2); train journey (3); journey from Agra to Delhi (2)

**White-throated Kingfisher***Halcyon smyrnensis*

Journey from Nagpur to Kanha (7); Kanha (4, 2, 2); journey from Kanha to Bandhavgarh (2); Bandhavgarh (2, 1); journey from Agra to Delhi (3)

Green Bee-eater*Merops orientalis*

Journey from Nagpur to Kanha (6); Kanha (2); journey from Kanha to Bandhavgarh (2); Bandhavgarh (2, 2)

**Eurasian Hoopoe***Upupa epops*

Kanha (1); Bandhavgarh (2); Taj Mahal, Agra (1); train journey (2)

Indian Grey Hornbill*Ocyrceros birostris*

A few birds were seen briefly at Bandhavgarh (1, 2, 1), with an additional bird which landed briefly in the Tiger's Den

Brown-headed Barbet*Megalaima zeylanica*

These were regularly heard at both Kanha and Bandhavgarh, but strangely the only one seen was a bird on the grass within the grounds of one of the cultural sites in Delhi

**Coppersmith Barbet***Megalaima haemacephala*

One was seen briefly from the car on the journey from Nagpur to Kanha, and another brief sighting was made as the jeep passed under one at Bandhavgarh. Occasional birds were also heard at both reserves

Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker*Dendrocopos nanus*

2 were part of a bird wave in Kanha

White-naped Woodpecker*Chrysocolaptes festivus*

2 birds were seen on one day in Kanha. The second was the more entertaining, since it wasn't happy about the presence of a pair of Greater Racket-tailed Drongos, which it deigned to chase off

Large Cuckooshrike*Coracina macei*

Most of the birds were seen at Kanha, with 3 separate birds on the second day, and another the following morning. A single bird was posing in the grounds of the Fossil Museum stop on the Kanha to Bandhavgarh journey, and a 6th was seen at Bandhavgarh

**Small Minivet***Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*

Single female at Bandhavgarh

Scarlet Minivet*Pericrocotus speciosus*

A pair were amongst a bird wave at Kanha

Brown Shrike*Lanius cristatus*

A single bird was perched on a small twig in the same clearing as the Rufous-tailed Flycatcher at Bandhavgarh

Long-tailed Shrike*Lanius schach*

Journey from Nagpur to Kanha (~10); Chitvan Lodge (2); journey from Kanha to Bandhavgarh (3); Bandhavgarh (1); train journey (1)

Black-hooded Oriole*Oriolus xanthornus*

Kanha (2, 2); Bandhavgarh (1)

Black Drongo*Dicrurus macrocercus*

After being seen in good numbers on the journey from Nagpur to Kanha, smaller numbers were seen regularly in open areas: Kanha (1, 1); journey from Kanha to Bandhavgarh (3); Bandhavgarh (1, 2); train journey (2); journey from Agra to Delhi (~5)

White-bellied Drongo*Dicrurus caerulescens*

More of a forest species than Black Drongo, all birds seen were from the jeep on safari: Kanha (2); Bandhavgarh (1, 2, 2)

Greater Racket-tailed Drongo*Dicrurus paradiseus*

Very much a bird of the forest, these were commonly seen and heard at both Kanha and Bandhavgarh: kanha (~30, ~12, ~10, ~5); Bandhavgarh (3, 2)

Rufous Treepie*Dendrocitta vagabunda*

Another common bird of the enclosed forest, being seen and heard regularly: Kanha (~15, ~8, 3); Bandhavgarh (~6, 1); Tiger's Den, Bandhavgarh (1)

**House Crow***Corvus splendens*

Very common in large towns and cities

Large-billed Crow*Corvus macrorhynchos*

Despite some birds being seen in towns and villages, this was the only one of the two *Corvus* crows to be seen in the forest: Journey from Nagpur to Kanha (3); Chitvan Lodge (2); Kanha (~12, ~6, ~4); journey from Kanha to Bandhavgarh (~20); Bandhavgarh (~20, ~8, ~6); train journey (~10)



Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher*Culicicapa ceylonensis*

1 bird was in one of the trees at the Central Point, Kanha; 2 separate birds were on one of the routes in Bandhavgarh

Great Tit*Parus major*

Kanha (1, 1)

Red-whiskered Bulbul*Pycnonotus jocosus*

The guide was a little surprised when I pointed out 3 of this species amongst the Red-vented Bulbuls next to the viewing area on the plateau, Kanha

Red-vented Bulbul*Pycnonotus cafer*

Common in all areas and habitats, including cities

Brown-throated Martin*Riparia paludicola*

~40 were in a tight flock over the Central Point, Kanha – they were seen on only one occasion

Barn Swallow*Hirundo rustica*

Common on the journey from Nagpur to Kanha, and from Agra to Delhi

Wire-tailed Swallow*Hirundo smithii*

Only 2 seen, perched overhead at Bandhavgarh

Hume's Leaf Warbler*Phylloscopus humei*

1 in the Central Point area of Kanha, and a second within the Tiger's Den, Bandhavgarh

**Greenish Warbler***Phylloscopus trochiloides*

Kanha (2 separate birds on different days, both around the Central Point); 2 separate birds at Bandhavgarh

Zitting Cisticola*Cisticola juncidis*

Kanha (2, ~6, ~6)

Rufous-fronted Prinia*Prinia buchanani*

A single bird was singled out at the lookout point on the plateau, Kanha

Grey-breasted Prinia*Prinia hodgsonii*

1 at Bandhavgarh

Ashy Prinia*Prinia socialis*

1 in the grounds of Chitvan Lodge, Kanha

**Plain Prinia***Prinia inornata*

Quite common at Kanha, including some birds within the Chitvan Lodge grounds

Common Tailorbird*Orthotomus sutorius*

Only 2 seen - together in the grounds of the Chitvan Lodge

Jungle Babbler*Turdoides striata*

Possibly one of the most common sights and sounds of the forest, where these birds were always in small, noisy gangs. A group was also in the grounds of the Taj Mahal, Agra

Oriental White-eye*Zosterops palpebrosus*

One at the Central Point, Kanha

Common Myna*Acridotheres tristis*

Apart from within Bandhavgarh, where only 4 birds were seen, these were abundant in all habitats

**Brahminy Starling***Sturnia pagodarum*

1 seen on the lawn of Nagpur airport

Orange-headed Thrush*Zoothera citrina*

Kanha (3, 1, 2); Bandhavgarh (1)

Oriental Magpie-Robin*Copsychus saularis*

Chitvan Lodge (1); Kanha (1); Bandhavgarh (1, 1, 1)

Indian Robin*Saxicoloides fulicatus*

7 were seen on the journey from Kanha to Bandhavgarh, all at the roadside in hilly areas, and 1 more was at Bandhavgarh

Black Redstart*Phoenicurus ochruros*

2 at a rest stop on the Nagpur to Kanha journey; 1 on the journey from Kanha to Bandhavgarh

Siberian Stonechat*Saxicola maurus*

3 single birds were seen on subsequent days at Kanha

**Pied Bush Chat***Saxicola caprata*

1 on the journey from Kanha to Bandhavgarh

Grey Bush Chat*Saxicola ferreus*

The presence of this bird was a bit of a surprise. At first unidentified, this sleek brown chat was feeding from a small mound situated in a clearing at Bandhavgarh. After some time, the rufous on the rump and outer tail feathers could be clearly seen

**Brown Rock Chat***Cercomela fusca*

I had expected these to be seen in wild, rocky areas if they were seen at all, but was surprised to find 1 at one of the monuments in Delhi on the first day, and 3 within the grounds of the Red Fort at Agra

Red-breasted Flycatcher*Ficedula parva*

2 on one day on Kanha, and 1 at Bandhavgarh

Ultramarine Flycatcher*Ficedula superciliaris*

2 separate males were in Bandhavgarh

Purple Sunbird*Cinnyris asiaticus*

Pair one day at Bandhavgarh, and 2 separate males the following day

House Sparrow*Passer domesticus*

Small number seen on the journeys between sites

Yellow-throated Sparrow*Gymnoris xanthocollis*

~7 were seen (and heard) at the tops of trees in Kanha, with 3 the following day

Scaly-breasted Munia*Lonchura punctulata*

~6 in a bird wave in Kanha

Tricoloured Munia*Lonchura Malacca*

~6 were in the bird wave with the Scaly-breasted Munias

Grey Wagtail*Motacilla cinerea*

Kanha (2); Bandhavgarh (1)

White Wagtail*Motacilla alba*

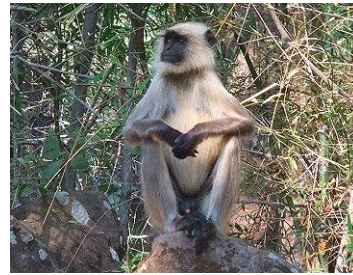
1 on the journey from Kanha to Bandhavgarh

Common Rosefinch*Carpodacus erythrinus*

2 in the grounds of Chitvan Lodge

TOTAL SPECIES = 110**MAMMALS****Rhesus Monkey***Macaca mulatta*

These could be found both in cities and forest, although in smaller numbers than Langurs in the latter habitat. They were even seen commonly on the road during journeys. They tend to be more aggressive than the Langurs. Ghandi's tomb, Delhi (~12); journey from Nagpur to Kanha (common); journey from Kanha to Bandhavgarh (3); Bandhavgarh (3, ~40, ~10); Agra (~30)

**Black-footed Grey Langur***Semnopithecus hypoleucos*

These are a very common sight in the forests, with occasional individuals outside of this habitat, and are constantly entertaining. They don't seem to like the early mornings, with most being seen after mid-morning. Journey from Nagpur to Kanha (1, 2); Kanha (~30, ~25, ~30); journey from Kanha to Bandhavgarh (~10); Bandhavgarh (commonly seen on all days)

Northern Palm Squirrel*Funambulus pennantii*

This is one of the two striped squirrels of the country, and seems to be best identified by its distribution, since the difference between 3 and 5 stripes appear to be small. They were common in some of the cultural sites in Delhi and Agra, with only occasional sightings in the forests: Kanha (1); Bandhavgarh (1, 2)



Indian Hare

Lepus nigricollis

1 ran in front of the jeep while returning to Chitvan Lodge from one of the morning game drives

Indian Flying Fox

Pteropus giganteus

3 seen in the air on the journey from Nagpur to Kanha

Jungle Cat

Felis chaus

1 seen in the distance on the track in Kanha before disappearing into the forest

Tiger

Panthera tigris

We were very lucky with our sightings during the 11 safaris which we took to maximise the chances of seeing Tiger. Some visitors didn't see any during repeated safaris in Kanha, but we were fortunate to see a female on four occasions early on the first outing, even witnessing her carrying a kill on the third sighting. Luck was even higher in Bandhavgarh, with a female crossing the track in front of us minutes into the first safari, with a huge male being followed in the afternoon after seeing him at rest late morning. A female was distant on the last morning, with another male crossing the front of us on the last afternoon safari



Ruddy Mongoose

Herpestes smithii

The first was staked out when seeing its back end leave the scene of what may have been a reptile kill next to the track in Kanha, with good views when it re-emerged. Subsequent sightings of another at Kanha and 3 at Bandhavgarh were much more distant



Golden Jackal

Canis aureus

First was seen crossing the main road just after leaving Kanha on the journey from Kanha to Bandhavgarh, with a pair on the last afternoon at Bandhavgarh, and a final one crossing the road at night during our journey to the train station

Dhole

Cuon alpinus

2 playful individuals were watched for some time at the trackside in Kanha after being reported by an earlier jeep



Wild Boar

Sus scrofa

Groups of 4 and 7 were on separate days in Kanha, with 5 and ~9 on separate days in Bandhavgarh

Chital

Axis axis

Very common in both Kanha and Bandhavgarh



Red Muntjac

Muntiacus muntjak

1 briefly at Kanha

Barasingha

Rucervus duvaucelii

Probably the rarest mammal seen, Kanha is one of the three strongholds of this species. It isn't too difficult to see here, living up to its other name of Marsh Deer when it is often found next to water. Kanha (~20, 6, ~10)



Sambar

Rusa unicolor

More of a thick forest deer, occasional individuals will venture into the open areas, such as two strutting males at Kanha. Kanha (1, 3, ~12); Bandhavgarh (~8, ~12, ~15)

Gaur

Bos frontalis

Only one sighting of a group of 7 while waiting for the tigress to show for the fourth time at Kanha. One was a mother suckling a youngster



Nilgai

Boselaphus tragocamelus

A group of ~10 were in the middle of an agricultural field on the journey from Agra to Delhi

TOTAL SPECIES = 17