

Western India, 28th November – 15th December 2015

Mike Hoit

mikee_hoit@hotmail.com



Blackbuck, Tal Chhapar (Mike Hoit)

Planning for this trip began uncharacteristically far in advance (over a year); it was high time to see Great Indian Bustard before it's decline reaches the seemingly inevitable conclusion... A visit to this area had been on my radar for a while, thanks to a list of special birds and mammals relatively low in quantity but high in quality. I was joined on the trip by Phil Davison, Ola Ellestrom, Dave Farrow, Reg Land, Keith Langdon, Will Soar and Tim Sykes who provided great company/spotting prowess/entertainment.

Logistics

All the ground logistics were handled by [Wildworld India](#). This was the third time I had employed their services, and, as usual, Vikram Singh and his team – especially Abhishek Sharma - did an exemplary job of arranging everything. As Vikram also acts as the agent for [Birdtour Asia](#), I shamelessly pinched their itinerary for parts of the trip; between us we amended it to be more mammal focussed by incorporating Gir and Velavadar National Parks, plus adding an extra day in Desert National Park. Thus we ended up with an 18 day itinerary, beginning in Delhi and ending in Gujarat. Inclusive of all food, accommodation, permits/entry fees, transport (a roomy coach) between sites, and jeeps etc. once at the sites, this came to US\$2606 (roughly £1700) per person. The cost would have been higher for fewer than eight participants –hence a larger group size – than I'd normally consider optimum, but this wasn't at all an issue in the habitats visited, especially as not everyone came spotlighting on all evenings (but see Gir NP below). CB Singh was assigned as our guide throughout, and did a brilliant job of making sure everything ran smoothly; Sanjay Sharma also accompanied us as he was learning the sites, and both were great guides as well as good company.

We arrived via various international flight; as an example, my flights (London Heathrow – Delhi via Doha, and back Ahmedabad – Doha – Heathrow) with Qatar were £465.

The travel times between localities were rather long; for example, 10 hours from Delhi to Tal Chhapar, 7 hours from Bikaner to Jaisalmer, and 10 hours from Greater Rann of Kutch to Gir. Something to bear in mind when designing an itinerary and choosing the mode of transport.

The weather was dry throughout; fairly hot (<32°C by day, 15°C at night) at the start of the trip, rapidly cooling off towards the end (low-mid 20s daytime, >8°C at night). It's unlikely that the drop in temperatures affected our mammal watching too much (see individual sites), but we were apparently just too late for either of the hedgehog species; I was told that most individuals are hibernating by mid-November.

Okhla Barrage, 28th November

Those of us arriving early enough on 28th made an afternoon visit to this excellent wetland on the east side of Delhi. Although primarily a birding destination, this area of the dammed Yamuna River, papyrus beds, acacias and grass is a good place to see some commoner Indian mammals. A few hours produced **Nilgai** and large numbers of the ubiquitous **Northern Palm Squirrel**; these two species were seen throughout the tour (at every site in the case of the squirrel). On a previous visit a semi-tame Small Indian Mongoose was hanging around near the picnic area. Plenty of microbats were foraging over the car park at dusk (more than I've seen on previous stays in Delhi, when it was much cooler in the evenings), so taking a detector could be productive. We saw a *Pipistrellus*-type, and a least two species of medium-sized bat.

Tal Chhapar, 29th & 30th November

A long drive across Haryana and Rajasthan produced just a few **Nilgai** and, for some, a couple of **Large Grey Mongooses** until we neared Ratangarh, where we saw the first **Chinkara** at the roadside. Subsequently we saw a few more, and increasing numbers of **Blackbuck**, as we approached Tal Chhapar (variously also Tal Chapar, Tal Chappar). At dusk several large bats were seen, presumably rousettes. We were supposed to stay at the forest rest house on the fringes of the national park, which may have provided some opportunities for nocturnal species; unfortunately the forest department had decided that the one other guest was important enough to have the place to themselves and house us elsewhere. So the particularly obnoxious park official moved us to some kind of religious hostel with prison-cell like rooms. Lovely.

The park itself is rather small, and seeing smaller species can be a little tricky due to the length of grass. Although the area holds some decent species, we mainly included this site for birding (e.g. Indian Spotted Creeper, Demoiselle Crane) and can probably be omitted from a purely mammal watching itinerary. Still, we had an enjoyable visit. **Blackbuck** were very common throughout the area, with this reserve being a stronghold for the species since being re-established here in the 1920s, and a few **Nilgai** were about, plus quite a few Wild Boar which I believe are feral and/or hybrids with domestic animals. Early morning, we saw a pair of **Chinkara** in the acacia grasslands southeast of the village while birding, while mid-morning some of us saw **Indian Desert Jird** at a colony on the west side of the main section of the park, with several **Indian Hares** in the scrub there. In the afternoon we explored the latter area and salt pans to the west more fully, seeing a **Small Indian Mongoose** briefly, before encountering a superb '**Desert**' **Wildcat** along the track at



'Desert' Red Fox (*ssp. pusilla*), Tal Chhapar (Dave Farrow)

[27.790414, 74.416874](#) at roughly 5.15pm, followed by a '**Desert' Red Fox** shortly after. A (very) short spotlighting session along the road produced very little, and we had no success in interesting our drivers in such activities!

Other species possible here include Indian Hedgehog (common at the right time of year according to the guides, and I've seen a photo of one from the forest rest house apparently from December, so maybe they don't all hibernate!), Jungle Cat and Indian Fox (both appear in several birding trip reports).

Jorbeer Dump (Bikaner) & Jaisalmer, 1st December

This salubrious locality was visited en route to Jaisalmer primarily to see Yellow-eyed Pigeon, but the combination of waste from the city of Bikaner, combined with numerous dumped cow carcasses, also provides food for spectacular numbers of vultures and eagles. Presumably, a night time visit could produce foxes (and conceivably) Striped Hyaena, assuming they aren't deterred by the numerous feral dogs! From a mammal point of view, we saw some roadside **Indian Desert Jirds**; the 2.5 hour pre-dawn drive from Tal Chhapar produced a decent view of an **Indian Gerbil** on the road.

The remainder of the day (10.30-17.30) was spent travelling, producing nothing other than the standard few **Nilgai** from the roadside, before arriving at our hotel for the next three nights, Brys Fort on the west side of Jaisalmer. An investigation of the grounds with PD at dusk revealed that they weren't likely to support much mammal life, but we had superb looks at two **Leschenault's Rousettes** which emerged from one of the outer buildings, the shape and flight action being identical to bats seen at Tal Chhapar.

Desert National Park & Jaisalmer, 2nd & 3rd December

We spent two full days in this excellent area, including two mornings in the Sudaseri Enclosure (the core area and, sadly, the only part of the desertic grasslands which aren't degraded and farmed to some extent), one afternoon on the north and west sides of the core area and one afternoon at the Fossil Wood Park southeast of Jaisalmer. Again, it's a higher priority stop for birds than mammals, but we still had some good sightings. The highlight was our second '**Desert' Wildcat**, which gave great views mid-afternoon just east of Sam village and west of the tented tourist camps ([26.829253, 70.512168](#)). It was initially resting in the shade of a roadside bush before being disturbed by a passing motorbike and strolling around in full view in the sunshine!

On one pre-dawn drive I spotlit a couple of small gerbils on roadside sand dunes between the national park gate and Sudaseri; they didn't hang around to be identified, and range maps indicate that both *Gerbillus gleadowi* and *G. nanus* are possible [EDIT – *gleadowi* is mentioned as the common species around Sam [here](#)]. The (mostly) disused huts on the east side of the road at Sudaseri are worth checking for bats – the one south of the information board held a couple of pale, small-to-medium sized bats. Unfortunately I was looking through a broken window and they moved out of view away from the torch beam before a camera could be summoned. We also saw **Chinkara**, **Nilgai** (both common in the enclosure, with smaller numbers outside), a couple of **Indian Desert**

Jirds, Large Grey Mongoose (one in Sudaseri, and prolonged views of a pair in farmland between there and Sam) and '**Desert**' **Red Fox** (one in the enclosure, one in farmland to the southeast).

A friend who was visiting Jaisalmer concurrently with us spent some time looking for bats in the area and recorded several species using a bat detector; he also saw good numbers of Greater Mouse-tailed Bats in the fort within the city. I was a little surprised not to bump into Indian Fox, as it is frequently recorded in this area (although see below).



'Desert' Wildcat (*ssp. ornata*), DNP (Keith Langdon)

Jaisalmer – Kheechan- Siana, 4th December

Mostly a travel day, covering km and arriving at Siana a couple of hours before dusk (see below). As was often the case, we left early (04.30) to arrive at Kheechan for first light; this was one of the more productive pre-dawn drives, recording one **Indian Fox** (with another animal probably this species), **Indian Gerbil**, **Indian Hare**, **Chinkara**, and **Nilgai**. For those with even the most passing interest in birds, Kheechan is well worth a stop for the spectacle of several thousand Demoiselle Cranes flying over the village and cramming into a small compound to feed.

At our lunch stop in the only **House Mouse** of the trip was running around the restaurant!

Siana, 4th & 5th December

Siana (also spelt Siyana) is perhaps most famous for its population of Leopards, which were featured in the BBC series *Life of Mammals* as they strolled through the village. Sadly they are trickier to see now, although CB had seen them early in 2015, and apparently poisoning is becoming an issue locally. This fairly remote site is essentially an extensive area of villages, agriculture, plantations, thorn scrub and isolated rocky hills and ridges, holding a variety of sought-after birds and mammals. The place to stay is [Siana Gardens](#): very comfortable bungalows in a nice setting, great food, and knowledgeable guides. We arrived late afternoon to be met by Daksh, the son of the owners, who

was excellent company and made every effort to try to locate our targets. He was even keen to stay out spotlighting for longer than one could reasonably expect!

After piling in to a couple of the lodge's jeeps we quickly headed to a nearby scrubby hillside and adjacent fields to try for some of the specialities. Apart from the usual **Nilgai**, the only mammal before dark was an extremely confiding **Indian Bush Rat** which fed, unconcerned, almost at our feet for several minutes. As darkness fell, we headed off to an area east of Siana, spotlighting as we



went; this was mostly quiet until our guides took us to their favoured area and we soon had close views of a superb **Striped Hyaena**. Sadly it didn't stay long before skulking off into cover, but not before we'd all had a great look at this brute. Several mouse-tailed bat sp. were flying around in the torchlight in this area. The next couple of hours produced little of note, other than a **Indian Hare** and, for the other jeep, what was probably a **Common Palm Civet**, but we were more than happy.

Striped Hyaena, Siana (Keith Langdon)

The next day we returned to the previous evening's spot, but saw little in the way of mammals other than several **Indian Hares**, although many quills of Indian Crested Porcupine were littered about. In fact we saw very few mammals all day, other than a few more hares, several groups of **North Plains Grey Langurs**, and another **Indian Bush Rat**, having to 'settle' for some excellent birding instead!

A short bout of spotlighting around fields and the lodge only turned up **Indian Hares**. Given that visitors to the area invariably see Jungle and Wild Cats (often several), we were baffled to see neither, despite two jeeps making a decent effort. Were we just unlucky, or is the rumoured poison use having an effect on these?

Siana - Mt Abu - Zainabad, 6th December

Another very early start from Siana to arrive at Mt Abu for sunrise, although no wild mammals crossed the road. This isolated forested mountain, with the hill station of the same name, is mainly known as a birding site but could well be worthy of further investigation for mammals. Our guide has seen Sloth Bear close to Mt Abu town itself, Leopard apparently occurs in the forest, and the impressive temple must hold some bats. Unfortunately our limited time ruled out looking for these species, and we just saw a couple of **Large Grey Mongooses**, **Northern Plains Grey Langur**, **Asian House Rat**, quills of Indian Porcupine, and even more **Northern Palm Squirrels** than usual. Then it was onward into Gujarat, to the Little Rann of Kutch, with just a couple of brief rodents seen while birding during the last hour of daylight. We arrived at our base for the next two nights, near Zainabad, shortly after dark.

Little Rann of Kutch, 7th December

Unlike most visitors, we had elected to stay at Desert Coursers instead of Rann Riders near Zainabad, originally as it is a stakeout for roosting Striated Scops Owls. However, it turned out to also have good rooms, excellent food and staff... and the cheapest beer of the trip (surprising given that Gujarat is supposed to be a dry state). The drivers of our open-backed safari truck really seemed to know their stuff, and listen to instructions (the latter a rare quality on this trip). The only downside of our stay here was being woken at 2am on the first night by a wedding party starting up(!) which went on until 6am, with music so loud that it sounded like it was outside the rooms despite being 2km away. Obviously nothing the camp can do about that, and a short night walk during the enforced lack of sleep gave brief views of a **Wild Boar** on the entrance track.



Indian Fox, LRK (Keith Langdon)

Our day here began with a dawn departure to the Little Rann Wild Ass Reserve. The first couple of hours were spent alternately crossing the saline flats and driving through the slightly raised, sparsely vegetated 'islands', searching for Macqueen's Bustards. This activity also produced around 20 stately **Asiatic Wild Asses**, though they were often distant, an obliging **Indian Fox**, and **Nilgai**. Later in the morning we headed 60km out into the barren Rann to a remote ridge; although nothing new was noted out here, we found fairly recent Wolf prints.

After lunch we visited a seasonal lake surrounded by farmland south of Zainabad, which gave us fantastic close views of more **Ass** and **Nilgai**, before we headed back into the Wild Ass Reserve at dusk. An hour driving around the plains turned up a pair of '**Desert**' **Red Fox** but no other mammals, and an after dinner walk around the camp compound and surroundings produced only a couple of small unidentified rodents.

We departed after breakfast on 8th, seeing more **Asiatic Wild Asses** from the road near Bajana.

As with most of the other locations, Wildcat and Jungle Cat are all possible here, as is Striped Hyaena; I asked our host about porcupines but he had never seen one close to camp, but again remarked that hedgehogs are common in the warmer months. I would agree with Jon Hall and Richard Webb that LRK can probably be done as a flying visit if one is short on time, but it is definitely worth staying if you can; I really enjoyed spending time out on the desolately beautiful flats.



Male Asiatic Wild Ass & Nilgai, near Zainabad (Mike Hoit)

Greater Rann of Kutch, 8th, 9th & 10th December

On the recommendation of previous trip reports, I opted to stay at the Centre for Desert and Ocean at Moti Virani and, like those reports, I can only sing its praises. Many groups stay in Bhuj, which I guess has a good choice of more luxurious (and bigger) hotels. CEDO has five or six comfortable rooms, good food, and, most importantly, knowledgeable staff; the two 4WDs in which we were transported were a little cramped at times but generally adequate. The proprietor, Jugal, was on hand to advise on how to see all the mammal targets and proved a font of knowledge, while our guide from CEDO, Veer, proved excellent. I think he was more used to birding groups but knew where to find the mammals, and was keen to learn on stuff he didn't know; for example, when I quizzed him about bats and rodents, he would ask around for new sites, and was happy to be corrected on the ID of animals he's photographed.

The first afternoon was spent south of Nakhatrana. The first birding stop in rocky scrub at produced unbeatable views of an entertaining family of **Large Grey Mongooses**. At the next, in a picturesque area of acacia savannah and scrub, we had a male **Chinkara**, but there were also abundant prints of fox and small feline species, and Striped Hyena.



Indian Desert Jird, Moti Varani (Keith Langdon)

The morning of 9th was spent first at Fulay (the well-known spot for *Hypocolius*), where I saw a couple of brief but close **Indian Desert Jirds**, then Banni Grasslands, which produced two equally brief but very distant **Chinkara**. On the way back to CEDO for lunch we stopped just north of Nakhatrana to have a look at a small camp of **Indian Flying Foxes**, while on the way back out to Banni in the afternoon excellent views were had of a colony of

Indian Desert Jirds. Not many mammals were seen for the remainder of the afternoon, but the drive back post-dusk turned up three **Golden Jackals**, **Indian Hare** and a couple of rodents on the road including one **Indian Gerbil**. Perhaps most impressive was the potentially deadly Yellow Fat-tail scorpion which reacted rather aggressively to our presence!

After dinner, Veer took me, PD & TS on an extra night drive back into Banni grasslands, departing at 9pm and returning just after midnight. Numbers of mammals were general disappointingly low, but the highlight was a fantastic **Striped Hyaena** which we were able to follow with the vehicle for more prolonged views than at Siana. Otherwise we had decent views of **Small Indian Field Mouse** in the headlights, and several **Indian Hares**, plus close-up Sykes's Nightjars.

On 10th we spent the morning looking at shorebirds along the coast at Mandvi. Here we had at least three **Indian Humpback Dolphins** just offshore, in the vicinity of [22.810149, 69.394912](#). This seems to be a regular area for them, and they were seen on and off over a couple of hours on a rising tide, although they could be elusive in the surprisingly choppy waters and against the glare. In this area we also saw two **Golden Jackals** close to the road just south of Mandvi town, a couple of **Indian Desert Jirds** in the dunes, and two **Large Indian Mongooses** on the way back to CEDO after lunch. Late afternoon we returned to Banni grasslands, via a stop at a monastery for **Egyptian Tomb Bat**. This was quite an experience, as the bats fly all around you and the perched views are incredible. Brilliant. After dusk we made a long drive around the Chhari Dhandh area, but again mammals were thin on the ground; just another **Jackal**, a couple of **Hares** and a **Little Indian Field Mouse** on the road.



Overall this was a great area, although not much seems to be seen by day. I was surprised how few Chinkara we saw; they seem to be commoner in the Naliya grasslands area of GRK, although we did note droppings and tracks of them. Rodent numbers were apparently at a low ebb in late 2015, with Lesser Bandicoot Rats notably lacking, although we saw fewer rodents generally than when e.g. Jon Hall visited. Perhaps linked to this was our failure to see Indian Fox and Desert and Jungle Cats, all often recorded. Rusty-spotted Cat has been seen a couple of times by Jugal and Veer, but this is obviously a long shot.

Egyptian Tomb Bats, GRK (Mike Hoit)

GRK – Sasan Gir, 11th December

Mostly a travel day, with just the usual common species seen until late afternoon, when we made a stop for a large colony of **Indian Flying Foxes** in roadside trees an hour or so short of Gir. More of the same were flying over the town of Sasan Gir at dusk, but the microbats were more interesting: while waiting for the lengthy process of purchasing tourist permit to buy beer(!), we watched a

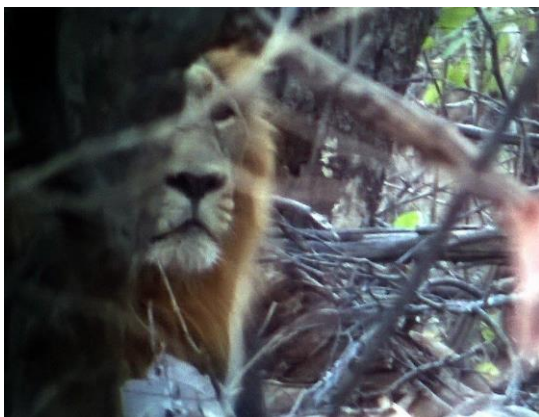
group of what appeared to be **Dormer's Bats** hawking and gleaning ants from a tree trunk. There were also several pipistrelles and a couple of Myotis-types flying around. Our accommodation was at Lion Safari Camp, an extremely comfortable 'tent' style resort with good food southwest of Sasan Gir; this overlooked an area of wetland and scrub, and produced several species (see below).

Gir NP 12th & 13th December

The pros and cons of this site have been well covered in reports; writing this and the following sections were quite difficult, as it would be easy to go overboard on the infuriating negative aspects at the expense of the positives. From a personal point of view, I was more than ready to leave after variously enjoying/enduring six drives over two full days! The bureaucracy is maddening, with access strictly controlled despite the fact that there are villages within the park and several public roads criss-crossing it. Aside from the wildly varying quality of drivers and guides (some excellent, some I could happily have dumped in the forest), the set-up is pretty hopeless at times. For each drive, your vehicle is allocated a route (from which there is no deviation) which may or may not be through areas that hold your target species, and the time to complete this route is insufficient if you actually want to stop and look at anything – so any pauses necessitate a very dusty high speed dash to the exit. Add to this the fact that the first and second game drives overlap (06.30-09.30 and 09.00-12.00) and the frustration mounts...

The group was divided between three jeeps, which gave us ample room to move around within the vehicles. Personally, I'd have sacrificed a little bit of comfort to squeeze into two cars for ease of travelling in convoy within the park, although not everyone might agree.

HOWEVER – the positives. We had some excellent sightings, and the reserve is for the most part in good condition and full of wildlife. We had two encounters with single **Asiatic Lions** – good views of a female on the third drive on 12th, then a superb adult male on the first drive on 13th, which was relatively brief before excellent work by our drivers and guides positioned us so he strolled past at fairly close range. Our only **Leopard** sighting was also on the afternoon of 12th; excellent views were had of a large individual by the first two vehicles, although those of us in the rear jeep had much more brief views due to our incompetent driver refusing repeated requests to keep up with the others. Apparently our guide saw it well, although one of us missed it (and I only got tickable views by leaving the vehicle)! We narrowly missed a Leopard on drive three of 13th, hearing it at close range after it moved into cover, followed by the sounds of two mating; sadly we were rushed to leave so we could exit the park on time.



Asiatic Lions, Gir NP (Dave Farrow; phone-scoped due to camera fees of US\$60 per day!)

Of the commoner species, we saw **Spotted Deer**, **Sambar**, and **Northern Plains Grey Langur** on every game drive, **Wild Boar** and **Nilgai** on four, pairs of Large **Grey Mongooses** on three occasions, and point-blank views of a pair of **Golden Jackals** on the first drive. On the second drive on 13th, a very striking bat was seen flying by day and then perched but as yet we haven't been able to identify it.



Other species sometimes recorded are Ruddy Mongoose (frequently seen but just a matter of bumping into them; I thought six drives would give us a decent chance), Chowsingha (possible on any game drive I suppose; apparently not seen very often but different drivers gave different answers) and Rusty-spotted Cat (apparently not that rare, but extremely unlikely on game drives given the restrictions on access at night; perhaps possible near hotels?).

Unidentified bat, Gir NP (Will Soar)

Aside from the big cats, our best sightings (at least for some of us) were from close to the accommodation. The track to Sasan Gir runs through scrub and fields, and produced **Little Indian Field Mouse**, **Indian Bush Rat**, **Indian Flying Fox**, **Spotted Deer** and **Nilgai** en route to the NP; on one night, PD and I decided to spotlight the area on foot. We hadn't even left the bank overlooking the marsh when we immediately picked up a close **Jungle Cat**! Luckily this hung around long enough for everyone to see it. Numerous unidentified rodents were heard moving around and/or glimpsed, with **Indian Hares** in the fields, before we heard something larger noisily moving through the dry leaf litter. I got the spotlight on it in time to get a view of the back end of an **Indian Crested Porcupine** lumbering away. Excellent. Unfortunately, at this point we were accosted by our guide and a driver from the resort – apparently it was far too dangerous for us to be out of sight of our hotel, and we were at risk of lion attack! So we were driven back, slightly embarrassed, though I maintain if there was any real chance of large predators we'd have been charged a fee to access the area by day... Confined to camp, we checked out the dump area behind the tents and were rewarded with a superb **Small Indian Civet** sitting in the spotlight until we eventually walked off! We went back pre-dawn and saw a cat showing all the features of Wild Cat (large, correct tail pattern etc), but the proximity of the camp and staff quarters makes me suspicious that it wasn't at least part domestic moggy. This same area held what I'm pretty sure was **Soft-furred Field Rat** feeding in the grass on a previous night. It's definitely worth exploring this area if you can, there's clearly some more potential for rodents here, and Rusty-spotted Cat must be possible

Velavadar NP, 14th & 15th December

After a relatively sedate start, we travelled to Velavadar, arriving early afternoon. Our accommodation was the spectacularly plush Blackbuck Lodge, a slightly more high-class establishment than most of us are used to say the least, and right next door to the national park. The grounds here held many **Blackbuck**, **Nilgai**, **Wild Boar**, a couple of **Indian Hare**, and **Northern Palm Squirrel**, and just before departure some of us had a bizarre, close-up encounter with an aggressive **Jungle Cat**. At dusk, KL and WS photographed a number of presumed **Dormer's Bats** emerging from the eaves of their bungalow.



Presumed Dormer's Bats, Velavadar (left, Keith Langdon; right, Will Soar)

Unfortunately, this accommodation had its downside. At the time of our visit there was some animosity between the guides from the park and those from Blackbuck Lodge (the latter accompanied us on all drives), even though they are employed by the same organisation. Essentially, it appears that the park drivers were refusing to let our guides know the location of recent wolf and hyena sightings! Signing in on our game drives also took an age, and we were extremely restricted in our visiting hours (see below). It appears the park staff were essentially reducing the chances of visitors observing target species! Hopefully this issue was addressed and rectified after our visit, but after Gir it added to the frustrations we had at these two NPs.

Our game drive on the afternoon on 14th was disappointing, other than the impressive numbers of stunning Blackbuck. Despite officially starting at 15.00, we were only allowed to access the park after 15.30, and had to be out by 17.30, well before dusk and curtailing our viewing of the huge numbers of harriers coming in to roost. Despite our efforts to hold the driver up in his attempts to leave, the last of the daylight was spent scanning from the road. There had been a lot of seemingly aimless driving and very little scanning, picking up only the common species, something we wanted to change for the second drive.

After similar endless form-filling, and a hike in camera fees as the exchange rate had apparently changed overnight (not in any way a rip-off, of course...) we entered the park around 07.00 on 15th. After a short drive, we insisted on stopping to scan from a raised bank, and I almost immediately located two **Indian Wolves**. Success! These superb beasts were slightly distant but gave excellent scope views, before apparently moving across the road to the north section of the park. Moving to that area, we had another brief look at one chasing Blackbuck, but then we lost them, despite watching some very edgy Blackbuck for a while. Some of us managed a brief **Jungle Cat** amongst the usual common species before we were required to leave, before the afternoon drive to Ahmedabad for our flights home.

Despite the big highlight of the wolves, it was hard not to be disappointed with Velavadar; amongst other things, we had high hopes for further views of Striped Hyaena here. Hopefully the issues we encountered have been resolved, as it's a great area.

Species List

DNP – Desert National Park; LRK – Little Rann of Kutch; GRK – Greater Rann of Kutch

1. **Northern Plains Grey Langur** *Semnopithecus entellus* Siana, Gir
2. **Northern Palm Squirrel** *Funambulus pennant* Daily sightings, all sites
3. **Indian Gerbil** *Tatera indica*
Indian Hairy-footed/Pygmy Gerbil *Gerbillus gleadowi/nana* DNP (not specifically identified)
4. **Indian Desert Jird** *Meriones hurrianae* Tal Chhapar, Jorbeer, Siana, GRK
5. **Indian Bush Rat** *Golunda ellioti* Siana, Gir
6. **Soft-furred Field Rat** *Millardia meltada* Lion Safari Camp (Gir), matches images of this species
7. **House Mouse** *Mus musculus*
8. **Little Indian Field Mouse** *Mus booduga* GRK, Gir
9. **Asian House Rat** *Rattus rattus* Mt Abu
10. **Indian Porcupine** *Hystrix indica* Gir; quills at Siana & Mt Abu
11. **Indian Hare** *Lepus nigricollis* Tal Chhapar, Jaisalmer, Siana, GRK, Velavadar
12. **Fulvous Rousette** *Rousettus leschenaultia* Jaisalmer; probables Tal Chhapar
mouse-tailed bat sp. *Rhinopoma* sp. Siana
13. **Egyptian Tomb Bat** *Taphozous perforates* GRK
14. **Dormer's Bat** *Scotozous dormer* presumed this sp, Gir & Velavadar
15. **Jungle Cat** *Felis chaus kutas* Gir, Velavadar
16. **'Desert' Wild Cat** *Felis silvestris ornata* Tal Chhapar, DNP
17. **'Asiatic' Lion** *Panthera leo persica* Gir on two drives out of six
18. **Leopard** *Panthera pardus fusca* Gir on one drive, heard on another
19. **Small Indian Civet** *Viverricula indica* Lion Safari Camp (Gir)
Common Palm Civet *Paradoxurus hermaphroditus* possible seen by one person Siana
20. **Small Asian Mongoose** *Herpestes auropunctatus* Tal Chhapar
21. **Indian Grey Mongoose** *Herpestes edwardsi* DNP, Mt Abu, GRK, Gir
22. **Striped Hyaena** *Hyaena hyaena* Siana, GRK
23. **'Desert' Red Fox** *Vulpes vulpes pusilla* Tal Chhapar, DNP, LRK
24. **Indian Fox** *Vulpes bengalensis* Between Jaisalmer & Khichan, LRK
25. **Golden Jackal** *Canis aureus* GRK, Gir

26. 'Indian' Wolf <i>Canis lupus pallipes</i>	Velavadar
27. Indian Humpback Dolphin <i>Sousa plumbea</i>	Mandvi
28. Asiatic Wild Ass ('Khur') <i>Equus hemionus khur</i>	LRK
29. Eurasian Wild Pig <i>Sus scrofa davidi</i>	LRK, Gir (apparently hybrids or feral pigs Tal Chhapar & Siana)
30. Blackbuck <i>Antelope cervicapra</i>	Tal Chhapar, Velavadar
31. 'Salt Range' Chinkara <i>Gazella [bennettii] salinarum</i>	Tal Chhapar, DNP
32. 'Gujurat' Chinkara <i>Gazella [bennettii] christii</i>	GRK
33. Nilgai <i>Boselaphus tragocamelus</i>	all sites
34. Spotted Deer <i>Axis axis</i>	Gir
35. Sambar <i>Rusa unicolor</i>	Gir



Indian Wolf (ssp. pallipes), Velavadar (Keith Langdon)

