

## Mammal tour of the Western Ghats of South India in October 2015

Uditha Hettige, Lester Perera, Deepal Warakagoda, Chinthaka De Silva of Bird and Wildlife Team

(To see the detailed trip report please go to <http://www.birdandwildlifeteam.com/mammal-tour-of-the-western-ghats-of-south-india-october-2015/>)

Interestingly though members of Bird and Wildlife Team have been leading tours to south India since 2002, in October 2015 after much procrastination over the years we as a team was looking in to developing our portfolio with an additional products. Since our special mammal tours in Sri Lanka became very popular amongst the world mammal enthusiasts during last several years we looked at the possibilities of developing similar tours in South India. Our success in leading mammal tours in Sri Lanka, has been mainly due to the in depth knowledge, ability to find mammals (both nocturnal and diurnal), and effort in addition to the dedication of our tour leaders in the field. This has enables us to encounter a very high percentage of mammals of the country on every tour. For several years now our clients have been insisting us to look in to the mammal aspect of the Western Ghats, thus began the preparations for a recce tour there. The logistics, time constrains feasibility and new appropriate properties for lodging was top priority as these aspects could be considered important from a birding aspect as well since some birds are elusive so, we also had to find new sites too.



Western Ghats of South India (The range runs north to south along the western edge of the Deccan Plateau, and separates the plateau from a narrow coastal plain, called Konkan, along the Arabian Sea. A total of thirty nine properties including national parks, wildlife sanctuaries and reserve forests were designated as world heritage sites – twenty in Kerala, ten in Karnataka, five in Tamil Nadu and four in Maharashtra.

The area is one of the most important hotspots in the subcontinent with at least 325 globally threatened species which occur in the Western Ghats.

Our team's previous experience in India, subsequent discussion on the preliminary itinerary and fine tuning of it, we came up with the suitable final itinerary for our recce in the South India.



Ground arrangements were done just fine, as usual, by our ground agent in south India with whom we regularly work. We also must emphasize the fact that some of our dear friends and fellow birders at national parks, met up with us during the evenings when we were free and was great to see them.

Our emphasis was more on the mammal aspect and birding was secondary. Much of the time was spent looking in to the feasibility of conducting mammal watching tours there. Another of our priorities was to look in to the feasibility of conducting nocturnal drives. It is somewhat difficult to carry night drives in India, but knowing the right people at the right sites helped us a lot in this aspect. It must be reiterated that we likewise looked in to new sites for some of the more elusive endemics of the Western Ghats, which at times was quite a task in finding, though our experience have been fabulous from the birding perspective. One would know that these sites keep shifting and constant visits needed apart from net working with our birding friends too. We annually do on an average at least two to three tours there. Our sightings on bats and rodents was poor, nevertheless this aspect can be improved upon. Most importantly we discovered several sites with a high potential of observing some of the most sort after and elusive mammals such as Nilgiri Marten, Fishing Cat, Leopard Cat, etc.

We had 228 of bird and 47 mammal species on this tour. Much of the time was spent on forest birding and looking for the elusive mammals.

To see the detailed trip report please go to <http://www.birdandwildlifeteam.com/mammal-tour-of-the-western-ghats-of-south-india-october-2015/>

#### **Outline itinerary:**

08 Oct Arrives Kochi 0850hrs and transfer by road to Thattekkad (2hrs), overnight Thattekkad (3-nights)

09 Oct Thattekkad

10 Oct Thattekkad

11 Oct Morning transfer to Periyar (4hrs), overnight Periyar (2 nights)

12 Oct Periyar

13 Oct Morning transfer to Munnar (4hrs), overnight Munnar (3 nights)

14 Oct Munnar

15 Oct Munnar

16 Oct Morning transfer to Anamalai (Top Slip; 3hrs), overnight Sethumadai (2 nights)

17 Oct Anamalai

18 Oct Morning transfer to Ooty (3hrs), overnight Ooty (2 nights)

19 Oct Ooty

20 Oct Morning transfer to Mudumalai (2hrs), overnight Mudumalai (3 nights)

21 Oct Mudumalai

22 Oct Mudumalai

23 Oct Morning Mudumalai, later transfer to Bangalore (7hrs), depart from Bangalore to Sri Lanka.

To see the detailed trip report please go to <http://www.birdandwildlifeteam.com/mammal-tour-of-the-western-ghats-of-south-india-october-2015/>

### **Mammal List**

Indian Hare (*Lepus nigracollis*)

Indian Giant Squirrel (*Ratufa indica*)

Sri Lankan Giant Squirrel (*Ratufa macroura*)

Indian Palm Squirrel (*Funambulus palmarum*)

Dusky Palm Squirrel (*Funambulus sublineatus*)

Jungle Palm Squirrel (*Funambulus tristriatus*)

Indian Giant Flying Squirrel (*Petaurista philippensis*)

Travancore Flying Squirrel (*Petinomys fuscicapillus*)

Indian Gerbil (*Tatera indica*)

House Mouse (*Mus musculus*)

Little Indian Field Mouse (*Mus booduga*)

Indian Long-tailed Tree Mouse (*Vandeleuria oleracea*)

House Rat (Black Rat) (*Rattus rattus*)

Indian Crested Porcupine (*Hystrix indica*)

Small Indian Civet (*Viverricula indica*)

Asian Palm Civet (*Paradoxurus hermaphrodites*)

Jungle Cat (*Felis chaus*)

Rusty-spotted Cat (*Felis rubiginosa*) e

Striped-Necked Mongoose (*Herpestes vitticollis*) e

Indian Gray Mongoose (*Herpestes edwardsii*)

Golden Jackal (*Canis aureus*)

Dhole (*Cuon alpinus*)

Smooth Coated Otter (*Lutrogale perspicillata*)

Oriental Small-clawed Otter (*Amblonyx cinereus*)

Asian House Shrew (*Suncus murinus*)

Highland Shrew (*Suncus niger*)

Indian Flying Fox (*Pteropus giganteus*)

Greater Short-nosed Fruit Bat (*Cynopterus sphinx*)

Painted Bat (*Kerivoula picta*)

Rufous Horseshoe Bat (*Rhinolophus rouxii*)

Blyth's Horseshoe Bat (*Rhinolophus lepidus*)

Schneider's Roundleaf Bat (*Hipposideros speoris*)

Greater Asiatic Greater Yellow Bat (*Scotophilus heathii*)

Indian Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus coromandra*)

Grey Slender Loris (*Loris lydekkerianus*) e

Tufted Gray Langur (*Semnopithecus priam*)

Hooded Leaf Monkey (Nilgiri Langur) (*Trachypithecus johnii*)

Bonnet Macaque (*Macaca radiata*)

Lion-tailed Macaque (*Macaca silenus*)

Eurasian Wild Boar (*Sus scrofa*)

Indian Chevrotain (*Moschiola indica*)

Indian Muntjac (*Muntiacus muntjak*)

Sambar (*Cervus unicolor*)

Chital (Axis Deer) (*Axis axis*)

Nilgiri Tahr (*Hemitragus hylocrius*)

Gaur (*Bos gaurus*)

Asian Elephant (*Elephas maximus*)

To see the detailed trip report please go to <http://www.birdandwildlifeteam.com/mammal-tour-of-the-western-ghats-of-south-india-october-2015/>