









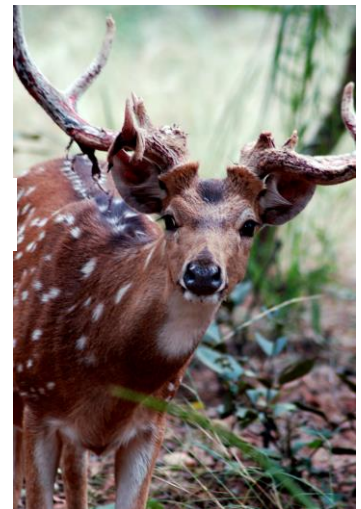
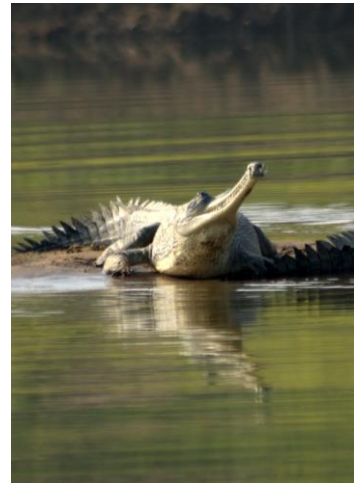
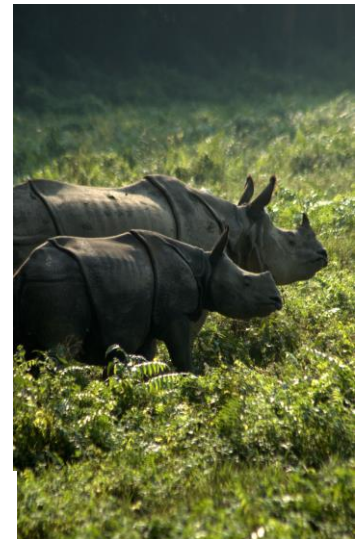


Chitwan Safari in Style

Destination: Nepal **Duration:** 11 Days **Dates:** 24th Nov - 4th Dec 2012

-  Hearing a male tiger roaring around 50m away in the jungle whilst on foot
-  Seeing 7 different rhinos and having a female burst out of the jungle in front of us
-  Spotting over 130 different species of birds throughout the tour
-  Seeing 5 large female gharials, making up around 25% of Chitwan's population
-  Enjoying the morning mist in the sal forests and grasslands on elephant back
-  Tracking sloth bears & leopards and hearing an angry leopard very close by
-  A close up sighting of a jungle cat entering the paddy fields near the lodge
-  Finding an old male rhino wallowing on the opposite side of the river
-  Seeing the 7 year old living 'Goddess' in Durbar Square, Kathmandu
-  Having a male tiger ahead of us and a female tiger behind us whilst on foot



Tour Leader / Guides

Martin Royle (Royle Safaris Tour Leader)
 Arjun (Driver in Kathmandu for sightseeing)
 Mukundha, Sanjay, Kalu Ram, Maun & Nund Lala (Local Guides)

Participants

Mr. Michael Easton
 Mrs. Victoria Easton

Overview

Day 1:	Kathmandu
Days 2-4:	Sapana
Day 5:	Night Tower
Day 6:	Sapana
Days 7-9:	Temple Tiger
Day 10:	Kathmandu
Day 11:	Home



Day by Day Breakdown

Overview

Walking through the long grass of Nepal's Terai region in search of the elusive tiger or majestic one-horned rhino is one of the most thrilling and adventurous things any wildlife enthusiast can do. This 11 day tour took ourselves deep into the Terai (the subtropical belt of forest from Uttarakhand in North West India through to Burma in the East), which is home to the last remaining Asian one-horned rhinos (a population split between Chitwan National Park in Nepal and Kaziranga National Park in India) as well as a large meta-population of tigers and many other species of birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians. The region is so good for wildlife it boasts large populations of sloth bear, Asiatic elephant, hog deer and other mammals which are endangered elsewhere in their range. In addition to the mammals the critically endangered gharial is also present here in good numbers. With Chitwan holding the second largest population in the world and around 20% of the global total (only 50!)

Whilst exploring the Terai (principally in search of the very difficult to see tiger) we would explore a section of Nepal's largest and most popular national park; Chitwan. We would enter these parks with the expert guidance of experienced naturalists from the local area and would experience the parks on foot, by jeep, on elephant back and by traditional dug-out canoe. This varied way of visiting the park increased the chances of seeing a huge range of wildlife and some of the fantastic mammal and bird sightings we had in a short amount of time testimony to that.

In addition to visiting the parks in search of the wildlife we were also treated to a couple of the local Tharu people's dances. Including the always comical Peacock Dance. Nepal has a long and good history of conservation in and around the Terai and it is through community projects like the cultural dance performances and the great work that Sapana Lodge conduct with local communities such as women's handicraft trade that is enabling the local people to earn directly or indirectly from having plentiful wildlife nearby. But our cultural immersion did not end there as we were also treated as one of the family during an afternoon and evening with a local family as they collected vegetables from the forest, prepared and then ate their dinner. This is one of the few instances where you experience the local culture first hand. There is no show put on, this is not rehearsed and it really gives you an insight into their way of life. As a result the level of poaching, illegal fishing, habitat encroachment, overgrazing, fire wood collection and deforestation is lower here than anywhere else in South Asia.

There are still some aspects of Nepal's 'eco'-tourism and the way the park is used which are not quite there in terms of acceptability to a Western standard; but the fact that the park boast increasing rhino, tiger, hog deer, leopard, sloth bear and stable gharial numbers means that they are doing many things right and this needs to be focused on. In time all the other aspects of the park will fall into place, and hopefully other Tiger parks around the Indian Subcontinent will begin to learn from the success that Chitwan is having by making all the local people feel involved in the conservation and responsible for the wildlife.



Day 1 Kathmandu

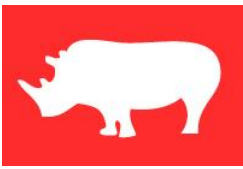
Arrival & Sightseeing

On arrival at Kathmandu International Airport you met your tour leader, Martin Royle and with the help of the local driver, you were transferred into the heart-beat of Kathmandu, the buzzing district of Thamel. After settling into the accommodation, we participated on an afternoon tour of some of Kathmandu's best sights. First we visited the largest Stupa in the world, Bodnath Stupa and after walking around the auspicious Buddhist site we moved on to the historic Durbur Square. With its dozens of temples, shrines and monuments to an equally stunning array of gods and deities, you could get lost spending hours meandering around the winding streets. Needless to say after a long series of flights and with a 6 hour bus journey tomorrow, we didn't spend hours and hours picking our way through the dozens of temples and instead opted for a quick look around at some of the largest and most impressive ones as well as paying a visit to the living Goddess Taleja herself. It was a busy day at Durbur Square, it is not every day that the goddess makes an appearance and with TV cameras, a stage and some sublime dancing it was a perfect occasion fit for any pre-teen goddess. So after this we headed back to Thamel for your early dinner at the Kathmandu institution which is The Kathmandu Guesthouse. All this and a good nights sleep in time for tomorrow's journey to Chitwan National Park was the ideal way of welcoming you to the wonderful and diverse country of Nepal.

Day 2 Chitwan National Park

Travel & Relaxation

This morning we boarded the tourist bus from Kathmandu to Chitwan National Park. The journey takes you out of the Kathmandu Valley and through the Shivalik hills before entering the flat lowlands of the Terai. Here you transect



the interspersed Tharu villages, industrial Indian border towns, rice paddies and community buffer zone forests until you reach the final bus station in Sauraha. One of the most important sights along the way (from a conservation stand point anyway) is the community zone forests which have helped to make the Nepalese Terai a real success with conservation. The wildlife (including Tigers, Rhinos and Elephants) can all move freely between the 9 protected areas in the Terai and this landscape will form a crucial part of Panthera's long term project for a Tiger Corridor linking North West Indian Tiger populations with ones through Nepal, North East India, Bhutan and Burma (The ambitious Terai Landscape Arc Project). Well after around 5-6 hours of winding mountainous roads we reached the small and now very touristy village of Sauraha and after a very short jeep transfer we arrived at the accommodation. Lunch was promptly served with a nice view over the floodplain and a visit from a Eurasian kingfisher and some other aquatic birds we settled in for an afternoon of rest before we delved into the park for the first time tomorrow.



Day 3 **Chitwan National Park**

Wildlife Watching

This morning started with a dug-out canoe ride along a section of the Rapti River as the morning mist was beginning to rise and disappear. The Rapti River forms the Northern border of the park and is home to the mugger crocodile and the gharial as well as several bird species and the occasional bathing rhino. Our canoe ride reaped plentiful birds including, many ruddy shelducks, Indian pond herons, cattle egrets, little egrets, intermediate egrets, great egrets, white-browed wagtails, Oriental pied hornbills, black storks and white-breasted kingfishers. We also got great views of a couple of small (~1.5m) long gharials and a foraging troop of Rhesus macaques along the river bank. We also heard that one of the wild bull elephants had been seen in the area recently so we went on foot to have a look for him in a promising looking area with no joy. Carrying on the canoe we spotted a very old male rhino enjoying a morning sleep in the river, so we climbed ashore on the opposite side of the river and watched as he climbed out of the water and into the grassland beyond. Not long after this rhino we came to 5 large (+3m) female gharials all basking on the river banks as well as a good sized mugger crocodile. Their differences easily discernable from their very different but equally well adapted heads and jaws. We were able to sex the larger gharials as males begin to grow the bulbous 'ghara' on their nose once they reach maturity at around 3m long, so any individuals larger than 3m without a bulbous nose will be female. After cruising the river a little further and seeing a small group of chital drinking and many bird we arrived at our starting point for a walk through the park. As soon as we left the canoe and began to climb the bank we saw tiger, rhino and elephant tracks in the thick mud near the riverbank. The walk would take us the 2-3miles back towards Sauraha village and along a well used trail. It wasn't long before we started to see many forest specialist birds including a large mixed foraging flock made up of jungle babblers, greater flamebacks, lesser yellow-naped woodpeckers, black-hooded orioles, white-bellied drongos and even a three-striped palm squirrel. We broke the walking up by stopping at some of the various observation towers built high over the grasslands. These are nice places to rest, eat a snack and stare out over the park and the endless wilderness stretching into the Chuirra hills in the distant. The grasslands mixed with dense forest is prime tiger habitat, unfortunately it is also perfect habitat for tigers to disappear into and become next to impossible to find. However with the help of Mukundha and Nundala we had the services of two excellent trackers who would do their best to try and get a sighting. As we walked along searching for the first evidence of recent tiger movements Mukundha took time out to discuss some of the plants and trees that make up the 600+ floral species here; including the kapol (silk-cotton) tree, curry tree (different from the curry plant where we get curry leaves from) and the rhino apple tree. The first evidence we found of tiger was a very old scat full of hog deer hair, in the grasslands the hog deer are the preferred prey of the sub-adults that are not quite not quite able to bring down the larger sambar deer. The next break we took was at a tower close to a couple of lesser adjutant stork nests, these enormous relatives of Africa's marabou storks are the largest bird known from Chitwan and they look very out of place perched by in a tree. After lunch we walked to the tree of one of these nests and got great views of two chicks complete with the fluffy down surrounding their heads and necks. Further along we found another old tiger scat, this one full of the darker, longer and coarser hair of the sambar deer. Presumably from a resident adult tiger in the area, however it was the other species of big cat that took our attention for the next hour or so. As we stared high into a canopy to watch a grey-headed barbet we heard a very loud, deep three-note wap-wap-wap. This was one of the oddest noises either Mukundha, Nundala or Martin had heard, with Mukundha thinking tiger and Martin inclined towards rhino we investigated the area further and heard the noise again. Whatever was making the noise it was clearly a warning or disturbance call from the thick grass and within 100m of us. We searched the road adjacent to the grass and came across very fresh scrapes and prints of a female leopard. The sand still being wet from the urine (with the direct sunlight today we can be safe to assume that the leopard had been here within the hour), we carried on searching and found a series of scrapes and prints, indicating that she was patrolling here territory, probably heard the two or three jeeps that had recently come down the path and hid in the grassland, where she was disturb-



ed by something (possibly us) and gave out this strange (but after further research – not unheard of) sound. We confirmed the presence of a leopard in the area within the last hour or so a little further on with a very fresh (still moist) leopard scat on the road. Evidently this section of road is very well used as within a few meters of this we found several tiger scats (dating between 1 week and 6 months old) as well as sloth bear faeces from a mother and cub. These were the freshest of all the evidence we had seen today and we had probably just miss the bear by 10-20 minutes. We tracked the bears for around half a mile and found a great set of prints belonging the adult female, we then went into the forest for a little while in one last attempt to track the sloth bears, however we were careful not to pursuit the bears to hard as a mother with a cub is one of the most dangerous animals in the world and we didn't want to confront the bear or be confronted by the bear. As we neared the end of the walk we stopped at one last tower, a tower that it not just used by people as the bear faeces on top is testament. We completed the walk with a nice sighting of a male chital ahead of us about to cross the road before he saw us and disappeared back into the forest, we also came across a large troop of Rhesus macaques feeding, playing and fighting the trees before crossing back over the Rapti and arriving back in the village of Sauraha and then onto Sapana for dinner and a good rest.

Day 4 Chitwan National Park

Wildlife Watching

This morning started with a great elephant back safari on one of Sapana's own elephants, wandering through the grasslands and sal forests in the thick morning mists is a magical experience. Watching the sunrise as an burning orange beacon breaking through the ruler straight trees and penetrating the mists, all whilst tracking rhinos and tigers on elephant back is the perfect way to start any day in Chitwan National Park. Currently the rhino sightings were few and far between, speaking to other guides and tourists it appeared that no body had seen a tiger for a couple of weeks and the rhinos seemed to have moved away from their regular haunts and deeper into the forests. This elephant safari was no different unfortunately, however there were close up sightings of sambar deer, barking deer and chital as well as a nice view of a solitary wild boar; following him as he went to drink at a small waterhole. But no rhinos this morning, on the return from the elephant safari we headed back to the lodge for breakfast and a bit of rest before lunch. The lunch is positioned perfectly on the banks of the Hanta River and has excellent birding opportunities and whilst we breakfasted and warmed up in the morning sun we spotted many cattle egrets, intermediate egrets, common mynahs, white-bellied drongos, red-vented bulbuls, sand martins and even a red-necked falcon. Closer to terra firma we also spotted a small Indian mongoose scurrying around the grass and disappearing into the thicker bushes close to a mustard plantation. Then after lunch we departed for the night tower around 5km east of Sapana, once we arrived in the tower we immediately saw a male sambar deer feeding on the lush vegetation around 50m away. It wasn't long before we also rewarded with a large male rhino (complete with radio collar) walking through the field and out of sight, but once Sanjay had scouted it out we climbed down and walked into the grass to get a closer look. We were on the opposite side of a shallow waterhole / mud wallow and watched as he stood in a small clearing (posing perfectly for pictures as shafts of sunlight broke the canopy of the forests all around him) before he sprayed in typical male rhino fashion and entered the forest away from us. We headed back to the tower and started scanning the forest again, coming across 3 female sambar feeding on the forest egde and mostly remaining hidden. We were not alone in the area though as two or three of the last elephant back safaris were also around, we could hear one of the elephants (or should I say the elephants passengers) was making a fair amount of noise and with some crashing and plenty of snorting a young rhino burst out of the forest and bolted across the field and away into the forest on the other side. The speed was impressive and without the presence of its mother around it was safe to say that it was around 8 years old and at the dispersal age. Its size was put in the age range of a newly dispersed individual or a rhino still hanging around its mother. But after 30 minutes or so without the mother making an appearance we put its nervous disposition down to being on its own for the first time and unsure of what to make of large elephants and noisy humans without its mother to calm it down. We didn't have any other mammal sightings for the rest of the afternoon (a part from the occasional female sambar poking her head up from the forest edge as they fed), but we did have a beautiful black stork fly low past us and then turn and come back around for a second look. We also spotted a pale morph juvenile changeable hawk-eagle, landing in a couple of trees within view and allowing for fantastic views through the spotting scope. Then as the sun began to set we heard the distinctive grunting snorts of mating rhinos close by, these calls continued for a couple of hours without the rhino coming into view before it was too dark to see without torches. We stayed up and used spotlights and torches to scan the forest edge and grassland for a few more hours, this resulted in a nice male hog deer walking towards us, small bands of chital feeding in the field and the same female sambar feeding on the forest edge. Then at around 11:30pm Michael and Victoria saw a light walking down the main road to the tower, fearing it was a poacher (as the light went off when they spoke and turned back on when they were quiet for a couple of minutes) they informed Martin. It was only then that we began to hear someone in the forest around 50m away, the familiar mahout commands, coupled with earlier elephant trumpeting led us to the conclusion that one of the domestic elephants had broke her bonds and wandered into the forest, possibly to meet Romeo the resident solitary bull elephant who was known to be in the area; so the light walking down the pathway must have been the mahout searching for his escapee elephant. In the morning we confirmed this with Sanjay who said it was a fairly common occurance when Romeo was in the neighbourhood.



Day 5 Chitwan National Park

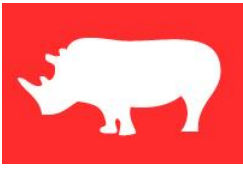
Wildlife Watching

We woke before sunrise this morning to try and get the jump on any rhinos or other animals in the field beneath the night tower before they dispersed with the rising sun. However the mist had set in so thick that at 05:30am it was impossible to see more than 5m even with a powerful spotlight. So we headed back to bed for a little bit and rose at around 06:15am as the sun was beginning to break through the mist. Although we could now see into the grassland there were no animals feeding here so we left the tower and after a short walk back through the forest followed by a short jeep transfer we arrived at the elephant back safari station at this side of the park. This area is the known territory of an old tigress with a very young cub (possibly under 1 months old), this would be the focus of the elephant safari this morning however the chances of seeing a tiger defending and hiding a young cub in the long grass is incredibly slim. This particular tiger had been forced out of the park and the better territories due to her age and it is surprising that any of her latest litter have survived, but she is now finding food easy as she has taken to killing cows and domesticated buffalo close to the village. Hopefully she does not take a human life and there is no need to try and deal with her as she lives out the last couple of years of her life on the periphery of the park. The safari itself was extra long and focused heavily on the grassland but with no joy, only the 'normal' chital, sambar, peacocks, red jungle fowl and a nice barking deer were to be seen this morning. We then went back to Sapana and after breakfast rested before lunch and then embarked on a jeep safari deep into the park. Once again the jeep safari was fairly quiet (by now Martin was beginning to wonder why the sightings (especially of rhino) were so low at the moment), maybe the constant development and increasing tourist numbers were finally having an adverse affect on the animals movements. Suaraha is a near constant building site with more and more hotels, restaurants and shops springing up every month. The main draw of Sauraha was the near guaranteed sightings of rhinos close to the village (sometimes even in the village) but if this continues I am not too sure what the future has in stall for quality safaris based in Sauraha. On the jeep safari we did spot a young wild boar and its mother close to the road, a couple of nice land monitor lizards basking in trees, an Indian grey mongoose crossing the road and also found a large Indian crestless porcupine quill on the road (maybe left from an encounter with a leopard recently). These sightings coupled with a crested serpent eagle and a changeable hawk-eagle made up the bulk of the wildlife seen before and after a visit to the gharial breeding centre close to the park headquarters deep in the park. This is a worth while practise and has resulted in a large number of gharial being released, albeit with limited success. But a 1% increase in population from each reintroduction is better than no increase so it is a worth while venture by the park and it also allows people to get up close to a large 4.5m long male gharial (born in 1978) this is around two thirds the size they can grow and it makes anyone realise the incredible creature that the world is close to losing for good. As well as breeding gharials they also have reintroduced mugger crocodiles as well as some of the 10 species of freshwater turtles which should be found here. The mugger crocodiles (like most crocodile species worldwide) do very well when they are breed and reintroduced and their numbers are very strong again, however for some unknown reason when the gharials are released (even when they are released at the size and age of sexual maturity with very few if any natural predators) they do not survive very long. With only 5.5% recruitment to the population and 7.7% survival after the first 2 years of reintroduction their numbers are still dwindling. There are only around 250 breeding individuals in the world and with a total population around 1,800, they are critically endangered and need all the help they can get. On leaving the gharial breeding centre and heading back towards the park entrance we saw one of the anti-poaching patrol elephants and what a magnificent specimen he was too, standing a good 3.5m at the shoulder and with 2m long curving tusks he is a beautiful animal. But our luck didn't change and we had no further joy on the remainder of the safari and heading back to the lodge for dinner.

Day 6 Chitwan National Park

Wildlife Watching

This morning we were met at breakfast by a nice flock of cattle egrets as they gave us a low fly by before heading on to find cows or buffalo. We then left for a second dug out canoe ride, this time the Kapok tree canoe would take us down the Buddi Rapti River (Old Rapti) and around an area where a male tiger had been seen in the last 24 hours by the local farmers. Whilst the chances are slim on a canoe it was worth a try. We didn't see the tiger but did once again see many species of birds including black-hooded oriole, citrine wagtails, Indian peafowl, greater coucal, Asian brown flycatcher and two new species of kingfisher the large stork-billed kingfisher and the rare blue-eared kingfisher. As well as the birds we also saw two large mugger crocodiles, a male completely exposed on the river bank and showing off his 3.5m plus body and a larger female in the water with only her head visible. At the end of the canoe ride we visited the elephant breeding centre briefly, seeing some interesting bird species along the way including a rufous treepie and a couple of black-crested bulbuls. The main reason for visiting the area around the elephant breeding centre was that the large male tusker (Romeo) was in the area and had been seen at the centre only 10 minutes before we arrived. However the bush here is too dense to enter and a wild bull elephant around



females is not the best animal to go tracking, so we left and heading back to the lodge after half an hour or so. During the midday sun, Michael enjoyed washing one of the lodge's elephants in the river outside the restaurant, after lots of rolling, scrubbing and spraying it was hard to tell how was washing who but the elephant seemed to enjoy the attention and the nice long bath. The afternoon was left open activity wise and Michael and Victoria decided that they would like to try the elephant safari around where the old female and cub are known to live. We didn't see the elusive big cat but did have great views of male and female hog deer, sambar and chital as well as wild boar and more bird species such as the grass loving common stonechat, red-vented bulbul and red-whiskered bulbul. When we returned to the platform and climbed down the elephant the local guides and mahouts confirmed that no body had seen anything out of the ordinary today and for some reason the rhinos where being very shy and hard to see out in the open. Maybe Temple Tiger and a section of the park which is seldom visited would reap more benefits but for tonight we marked our time at Sapana with a great local dance performance. Tharu stick dances and fire dances performed by local boys around a camp fire is a great way to end the day and prepare for the next stage of our Chitwan safari adventure.



Day 7 Chitwan National Park

Travelling & Wildlife Watching

This morning we were picked up after breakfast and transferred back towards Narayngarh and then westwards to a new area of the park and one that is seldom visited, there are a couple of lodges around here and so there is a much higher chance of spotting rarer wildlife. We arrived at the newly located Temple Tiger Lodge around lunch time and promptly ate al fresco overlooking the paddy fields and soaked up the serenity compared with the hustle and bustle of the constantly growing Sauraha. We were also buoyed by the news that they were seeing lots of rhinos at the moment (averaging nearly 10 per day) and also a leopard had been seen twice in the last week. So we were very shocked when our afternoon elephant safari found no rhinos at all! Even our experienced guide Kalu Ram said this was the first time he had failed to see rhinos on elephant back here! What we did see where wild boar, barking deer, chital, Rhesus macaques, Oriental-pied hornbills and a crested serpent eagle quite close. This lack of wildlife was beginning to worry us all and may be a result of increased tourism and especially the unregulated tourism of the buffer zones and community forests. Or we were just being incredibly unlucky, we all hoped for the latter and prayed for a change in fortune. But maybe a change in fortune was brewing as on our way back to the lodge we saw a nice jungle cat walking amongst the paddy fields. The jungle cat stayed and stared at us for 5 minutes, such a beautiful species and a very close sighting unfortunately the light was fading and it was just a little dark for pictures. But a predator and even better a species of cat, so hopefully tomorrow would be better again.

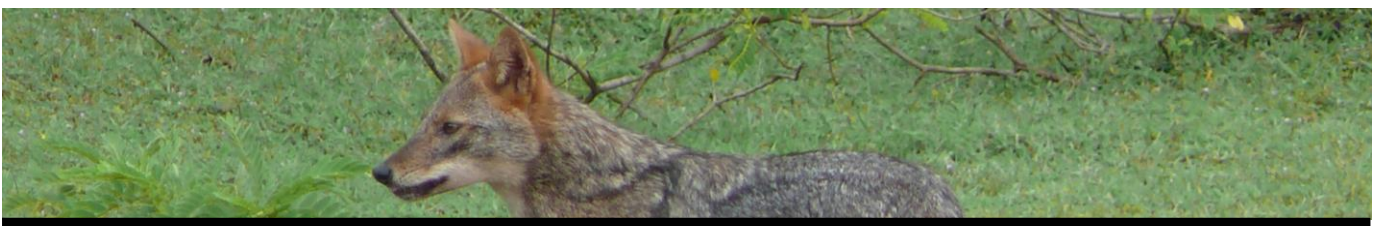
Day 8 Chitwan National Park

Wildlife Watching

This morning we left the lodge at a very misty 07:30am and walked down to the Narayani River banks to take a boat ride deep into the park. The boat trip lasted around 1.5 hours and through the very thick mist we saw and heard dozens of ruddy shelducks as well as some common mergansers, garganeys, gadwall, sand martins, pied kingfishers, common sandpipers and also a couple of common greenshanks and a spotted redshank. We then disembarked and walked along the sandy beach, coming across tracks of a female tiger and her three 2 years old cubs as well as fresh tracks of rhino from this morning before carrying on to a salt lick that is regularly used by many of the herbivores here including the deer (of which we spooked some chital) as well as rhinos and elephants. The tusk and incisor marks from the elephants and rhinos respectively clearly seen on the mud face. We also saw very fresh tiger tracks, these large prints belonged to the large resident male that holds a large territory (which would contain everywhere we would go today), he had passed through here last night. We also saw some of his recently used scrapes and a couple of patches of bush were he had rolled around, probably ridding himself of ticks and other parasites as well as spreading his scent further. As we continued we found old scratches from sloth bear, gouge marks from rhinos teeth and tiger scratches on various trees close to the path. Always reminders of the many animals that live here even if we struggle to find them, there are over 200 sloth bears, 120 tigers and around 500 rhinos currently living in Chitwan and the surrounding community forests and buffer zones; surely making Chitwan one of the greatest wilderness ecosystems in the whole world. We continued inland from the river bank and into the old growth sal forest, and after a pair of wild boar crossed the road in front of us we found a large heard of chital feeding with some Terai tufted langurs; their symbiotic relationship is well know and it is nice to see close up. We continued onwards to get better views of the langurs as they fed and moved around the trees above us. We were heading towards the lodge Temple Tiger Lodge, the one that we would have been staying in if the government of Nepal hadn't recently placed a ban on all accommodations inside the national park. This will benefit the wildlife for sure, if not the tourists but it would still provide a nice place to stop for lunch. As we approached the lodge on the main trail to we heard a barking deer making its very loud alarm call ahead of us. So we walked slowly and quietly onwards, the alarm call carried on for a few good minutes, this is always a good sign of a predator being around



and soon enough we were rewarded with a pack of 4 golden jackals padding their way along the trail around 20m ahead of us. We followed the jackals (meeting up with them every couple of minutes or so as they remained 20-50m ahead) for around 1km before arriving at the lodge and having our packed lunch on the viewing platform. Immediately we spotted a rhino wallowing in the lake below us, watching the rhino and the many birds that live here year around or just use the lake as a pit stop on their long migrations was an excellent back drop to our picnic. After lunch we headed back into the forest and this time in search of fresh evidence of the female with three cubs, there are at least 2 adult females and the large adult male tiger that are known from this area and with three nearly fully grown cubs as well this has to have the highest density of tigers in Chitwan currently. We saw lots of tiger, leopard and bear tracks around a dry riverbed before deciding to stake out a small stream for an hour or so. We did see two critically endangered Indian softshell turtles basking on a log. These (like all of the freshwater turtles in Nepal) are considered a delicacy and are very low in number. We waiting at this look out over the stream for until around 15:00 at which point we had to stop and begin the walk back to the boat before dark. This walk back would take us through the grasslands and a riverine forest that was known to be rich in tigers, rhinos and sloth bears so it would be interesting as the light began to fade. First we walked through some of the remaining sal forest and stopped regularly to listen to the jungle and see if any animals were making alarm calls and before long we reached the first section of grassland and the regular pathway of the resident male tiger in the area. We stopped and staked out a potential spot with a good view of the road and game trail and waiting for around 20 minutes. During this time we heard some chital alarm calls and figured that the tiger had awoke from his sleep deep in the grass and began to wander his territory, but after a few more minutes we realised that he wasn't coming this way; so we heading into the grassland and towards the riverine forest. On entering the riverine forest we once again took regular stops and listened to the jungle, this appeared fruitless until we spotted a rhino standing just around the bend in the middle of the road. The young rhino had not spotted us but could hear us and stood rigid with ears turning in all directions trying to pin us to a location. We remained silent and still until the rhino settled down and walked on, we followed and this continued for around 200m or so. We slowly and quietly following a 2 tonne rhino along the road, until we spooked it into the jungle and the rhino silently disappeared into the jungle. Being within 30m of this huge animal on foot gives you a real perspective of their size, taller than most Land Rovers and weighting twice as much they are one of the most formidable animals in the world to see and a thrill to encounter on foot like this. Once the rhino had vanished into the jungle we continued and came to the next area of grassland, this was uneventful except for a couple of common quails erupting from the grassland and spooking us for a second. Once we arrived at the river bank and the edge of the grassland, we realised how close we had come to seeing a tiger, the large male tiger had left tracks on this pathway only 20 minutes before, if we hadn't stopped so many times or if the rhino was not on the pathway we would have arrived at this junction at the exact time the tiger did. But c'est le vie, this is the wild, but it showed that we were in the right place at the right time and most importantly it showed us where not to be tomorrow. As when an adult tiger is moving purposefully through its territory like this male is we knew it wouldn't be back in this area tomorrow. So we had a starting point for tomorrow's tracking and we heading back to the lodge for our dinner and prepared for our last shot at tracking the tigers of Chitwan.



Day 9 Chitwan National Park

Cultural Tour

Today we decided to enter the park as early as possible, unfortunately the mist in the morning dictates how safe it is and we couldn't go much earlier than 8:00am. However after the boat trip into the park and a jeep drive through the grassland (which can be very dangerous in bad visibility) and close to the dry river bank where we had seen many tracks of tigers, leopards and sloth bears yesterday. We would stay here for a couple of hours, hidden and see if anything walked past. This is a well used pathway so there was every chance a tiger or leopard patrolling their territory would come by. As the sun began to rise and the mist disperse we walked back to the old Temple Tiger lodge and had breakfast over looking the lake. After breakfast we walked around the forest, past some very recently used sloth bear dens and to a larger river (mostly dry but with some water flowing through), we positioned ourselves on the top of one bank overlooking a female sambar deer and some feeding bulbuls and a Eurasian kingfisher. We waited here until the midday sun made us retreat back to the lodge for a couple of hours and lunch. Once again the resident rhino made an appearance and waded out into the middle of the shallow lake, feeding on aquatic vegetation. There were also over 100 black-crowned night-herons as well as a large grey-headed fish eagle that scanned the lake shore from various trees as it travelled the length of the lake in search of fish. We also watched a beautifully coloured purple heron as it caught a catfish, killed it and swallowed it down in one go. So we stayed here until around 3:00pm when we Kalu, Maun and Martin decided that we would hedge of bets and try and cut off the male tiger as it seemed to be patrolling his territory. After we had seen the fresh tracks near the river yesterday the army spotted him moving during the evening in a familiar pattern so we used our best judgement and got the jeep to



drop us off where he should be walking towards. We arrived in an open area of woodland, just a number of large sal trees and a fig tree allowing us to see deeper into the forest than usual. We did see a large herd of chital feeding around 70m away, we waited for around 30 minutes and the chital were all very relaxed, so we headed off and walked the main trail towards the boat (about 2 hours away). We had got around 500-600m down the trail when we heard chital alarm calls coming from the herd we had just been near, it was too far to walk back and the alarm calls suggested that the tiger was moving towards us. He was very probably resting close to where we were and just waited for us to leave before getting up and carrying on his patrolling. So we walked slowly and quietly down the trail through the riverine forest intently listening for any sign from the jungle and wildlife of the presence of a tiger. We then got to a section of the trail that was around 50m straight in front of us before it bent to the left and entered the grassland, just at the top right of this straight we spooked three large adult chital that bolted from one side and straight into the forest on the other side of the trail, as soon as they entered the forest they alarm called which was instantly followed by a low pitched tiger roar, there were two roars and then a very low frequency growl. This was not your typical long distance contact call and we could only deduce that the chital had smelt the tiger in the area and were on edge, they then heard us and freaked out. Bounding across the trail and straight into the male tiger that had overtaken us at this point and spooked the tiger as much as the tiger spooked the chital. Judging by the tiger's calls he was well within 100m of us and very possibly just at the top of this straight section of trail inside the forest. So we partially hid behind a tree and waited to see if he would continue his pathway and cross the road in front of us. After a few more minutes we heard alarm calls further away ahead of us, the tiger had changed course and was now heading into the long grasslands to the left of us. We moved on and now realised that the chances of this tiger doubling back on himself and making an appearance were slim; so we moved on along the trail and through the grassland. We past some of his scrapes and a scent marking tree which still smelt quite pungent, we stood and waited with this tree in view as we were still hearing faint chital and macaque alarm calls from further down the road behind us. This was from a different female tiger (not the one with three cubs we tracked yesterday), and having seen fresh prints from her along this pathway from the last 24 hours we guessed that she was looking for the male, probably as she is in oestrous. We knew that if she was following us down the trail then she would defiantly stop at the scent marking tree (which was now around 70m away down the road from us). So there we stood waiting with a female tiger moving towards us from behind and a male tiger ahead of us in the grass somewhere; when all of a sudden the loud grunts, snorts and bellows of mating one-horned rhinos broke the silence. Kalu, Maun and Martin ushered Victoria and Michael behind a couple of trees close to path just as the female rhino burst through the vegetation 10m in front of us and began running straight towards the tree with Michael and Victoria behind, Kalu stood in front of the tree banging his stick on the ground and with Maun also banging his stick and all three of the guides shouting the rhino slammed on the brakes and swerved away and into the vegetation over the road. We stood in silence and waited to see if the male was about to follow her, Kalu moving close to where she had run from and shook the bushes, in an attempt to make the male either run away or break cover. Either way it was better to know where he was than have him still spooked and hidden in the vegetation that we would have to walk past. Well whilst all of this was going on Martin and Maun had heard close chital and langur alarm calls from the direction of the female tiger. So once we knew where the male rhino was we turned around and once again focused on the scent marking tree, It was only after the dust settled and we all caught our breath that we realised that the large divot the rhino left when stopped and swivelling away from the tree was only around 1.5m away from the tree and amazingly around 1m away from where the 5ft 3in Kalu Ram was stood in front of the tree defiantly banging his stick (the saying '*Your either very brave or very stupid*' springing to mind!). But the action was not over just yet; as we were watching the scent marking tree Martin noticed the rapidly moving ears of the female rhino through the bush that we were stood next too, only around 5m away. We had all assumed she had run off deep into the forest but she had silently stood only 5m away from us this entire time. So we decided to make a hasty retreat from the area and continue the walk back to the boat. The light was fading and being surrounded by a male and female tiger as well as rhino was not a situation anyone wants to be in when the sun goes down. We made it back to the boat as the light was getting quite dark, a torch lighting the sections of riverine forest for us before cruising back across the Narayani River and onto the lodge via a ox-cart. Despite not seeing the tigers this was an extremely good day and getting as close to rhino as we did safely and without causing the charge (the aggressive male rhino has to take responsibility for that one) is always a thrilling and incredible experience. Well all in all it was a great ending to a comprehensive exploration of Chitwan by jeep, elephant, dug-out canoe, boat and on foot.

Day 10 Kathmandu

Travelling

This morning we had breakfast before being taken back to Narayangarh with Maun to make sure that we make the bus. The bus journey was typically long and bumpy (as is the standard in Nepal) and after getting past a police diversion around some construction vehicles, an abandoned van and then Kathmandu's notorious traffic we made it back to Thamel and checked into the hotel. After some shopping for souvenirs Michael and Victoria met Martin and went to a nice restaurant for your last meal together on the tour.



Day 11 Kathmandu***Departure***

This morning Michael and Victoria were picked up at the hotel at 09:30am and transferred to the airport to catch the return flight to the UK.

Species List

Chitwan Safari in Style November / December 2012

Mammals (* = heard or signs only)

	Common Name	Binominal Name	November							December			
			24	25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4
1	Chital	<i>Axis axis</i>			6	22	61	3	~115	31	74		
2	Hog deer	<i>Axis porcinus</i>				3	2	5					
3	Gaur	<i>Bos gaurus</i>									*		
4	Golden Jackal	<i>Canis aureus</i>								4	*		
5	Sambar	<i>Cervus unicolor</i>				10	4	3		1	2		
6	Asiatic elephant	<i>Elephas maximus</i>			*					*			
7	Jungle Cat	<i>Felis chaus</i>							1	*			
8	Indian palm squirrel	<i>Funambulus palmarum</i>			1								
9	Indian gray mongoose	<i>Herpestes edwardsii</i>			1		1						
10	Small Asian mongoose	<i>Herpestes javanicus</i>				1							
11	Indian porcupine	<i>Hystrix indica</i>					*						
12	Black-naped hare	<i>Lepus nigricollis</i>									1		
13	Rhesus Macaque	<i>Macaca mulatta</i>	1		33				~15		~10		
14	Lesser false vampire bat	<i>Megaderma spasma</i>		2									
15	Sloth bear	<i>Melursus ursinus</i>			*					*	*		
16	Indian Muntjac	<i>Muntiacus muntjak</i>				1			1	*	1		
17	Leopard	<i>Panthera pardus</i>			*					*	*		
18	Tiger	<i>Panthera tigris</i>			*					*	*		
19	Indian Pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus coromandra</i>		1	3	3	2	*	*				
20	Java pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus javanicus</i>						3					
21	One-Horned Indian Rhino	<i>Rhinoceros unicornis</i>			1	2				2	3		
22	Little Nepalese horseshoe bat	<i>Rhinolophus subbadius</i>				3							
23	Terai Tufted Langur	<i>Semnopithecus hector</i>			4		7			48	~10	2	
24	Wild Boar	<i>Sus scofra</i>			1	1	7		1	5			

Birds (* = heard or signs only)

	Common Name	Binominal Name
1	Shikra	<i>Accipiter badius</i>
2	Jungle Mynah	<i>Acridotheres fuscus</i>
3	Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>
4	Common sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
5	Eurasian Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
6	White-throated Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo leucogaster</i>
7	Blue-eared kingfisher	<i>Alcedo meininting</i>
8	Brown crane	<i>Amaurornis akool</i>
9	White-breasted waterhen	<i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i>
10	Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>
11	Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>
12	Asian Openbill	<i>Anastomus oscitans</i>
13	Oriental Darter	<i>Anhinga melogastor</i>
14	Oriental Pied Hornbill	<i>Anthracoceros albirostris</i>
15	Paddyfield Pipit	<i>Anthus rufulus</i>
16	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>
17	Grey heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
18	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
19	Indian Pond Heron	<i>Areola grayii</i>
20	Bengal eagle owl	<i>Bubo bengalensis</i>
21	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
22	Common buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>
23	Little green heron	<i>Butorides virescens</i>
24	Sand lark	<i>Calandrella raytal</i>
25	Temminck's stilt	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>
26	Large-tailed Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus macrurus</i>
27	Indian nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus asiaticus</i>
28	Lesser Coucal	<i>Centropus bengalensis</i>
29	Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>
30	Common green magpie	<i>Cissa chinensis</i>
31	Emerald Dove	<i>Chalcophaps indica</i>
32	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>

November							December			
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4
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		4								
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	4	3		1	2		1	3	2	
		1								
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	1	4		4	7	4	7	37		
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		10	2			1	5	4		
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		2			2	1	1			
							2			

33	Greater Flameback	<i>Chrysocolaptes lucidus</i>
34	Woolly-necked Stork	<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>
35	Black stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>
36	Greater coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>
37	Rock (Feral) Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>
38	White-rumped Shama	<i>Copsychus malabaricus</i>
39	Oriental magpie robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>
40	Indian Roller	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>
41	Large cuckooshrike	<i>Coracina macei</i>
42	Large-billed Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>
43	House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>
44	Common quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>
45	Nepal House Marten	<i>Delichon nipalense</i>
46	Rufous Treepie	<i>Dendrocitta vagabunda</i>
47	Fulvous-breasted pied woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos macei</i>
48	Fulvous whistling duck	<i>Dendrocygna bicolor</i>
49	Lesser whistling duck	<i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>
50	Bronzed drongo	<i>Dicrurus aeneus</i>
51	White-bellied Drongo	<i>Dicrurus caerulescens</i>
52	Spangled Drongo	<i>Dicrurus hottentottus</i>
53	Black Drongo	<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>
54	Greater racket-tailed drongo	<i>Dicrurus paradiseus</i>
55	Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus remifer</i>
56	Himalayan Flameback	<i>Dinopium shorii</i>
57	Little egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
58	Black-headed bunting	<i>Emberiza melanocephala</i>
59	Black-backed forktail	<i>Enicurus immaculatus</i>
60	White-bellied yuhina	<i>Erpornis zantholeuca</i>
61	Red-necked falcon	<i>Falco chicquera</i>
62	Common Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>
63	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula porphyrio</i>
64	Red Jungle Fowl	<i>Gallus gallus</i>
65	Greater necklace laughing-thrush	<i>Garrulax pectoralis</i>
66	Asian Pied Starling	<i>Gracupica contra</i>
67	Stork-billed Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon capensis</i>
68	Large hawk cuckoo	<i>Hierococyx sparverioides</i>
69	Common hawk cuckoo	<i>Hierococyx varius</i>
70	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>

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				20						12			

71	Pheasant-tailed Jacana	<i>Hydrophasianus chirurgus</i>
72	Grey-headed Fish Eagle	<i>Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus</i>
73	Brown shrike	<i>Lanius cristatus</i>
74	Long-tailed Shrike	<i>Lanius schach</i>
75	Lesser Adjutant	<i>Leptoptilos javanicus</i>
76	Black-headed Munia	<i>Lonchura malacca</i>
77	Scaly-breasted munia	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>
78	Kalij pheasant	<i>Lophura leucomelanos</i>
79	Lineated barbet	<i>Megalaima lineata</i>
80	Brown-headed barbet	<i>Megalaima zeylanica</i>
81	Common merganser	<i>Mergus merganser</i>
82	Green bee-eater	<i>Merops orientalis</i>
83	Intermediate Egret	<i>Mesophoyx intermedia</i>
84	Bronze-winged Jacana	<i>Metopidius indicus</i>
85	Little cormorant	<i>Microcarbo niger</i>
86	Pygmy cormorant	<i>Microcarbo pygmaeus</i>
87	Collared falconet	<i>Microhierax caerulescens</i>
88	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>
89	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>
90	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>
91	Citrine wagtail	<i>Motacilla citreola</i>
92	Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>
93	White-browed Wagtail	<i>Motacilla maderaspatensis</i>
94	Asian Brown Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa dauurica</i>
95	Red-crested pochard	<i>Netta fufina</i>
96	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
97	Blue-bearded bee-eater	<i>Nyctynornis athertoni</i>
98	Indian grey hornbill	<i>Ocyceros birostris</i>
99	Black-hooded Oriole	<i>Oriolus xanthornus</i>
100	Common Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>
101	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
102	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>
103	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
104	Indian Peafowl	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>
105	Puff-throated babbler	<i>Pellorneum ruficeps</i>
106	Scarlet minivet	<i>Pericrocotus flammeus</i>
107	Oriental Honey Buzzard	<i>Pernis ptilorhyncus</i>
108	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>

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		46						2	1	

109	Hume's leaf warbler	<i>Phylloscopus humei</i>
110	Lemon-rumped warbler	<i>Phylloscopus proregulus</i>
111	Grey-headed woodpecker	<i>Picus canus</i>
112	Lesser yellow-naped woodpecker	<i>Picus chlorolophus</i>
113	Greater yellow-naped woodpecker	<i>Picus flavinucha</i>
114	White-browed scimitar babbler	<i>Pomatorhinus schisticeps</i>
115	Ashy prinia	<i>Prinia socialis</i>
116	Jungle prinia	<i>Prinia sylvatica</i>
117	Red-naped ibis	<i>Pseudibis papillosa</i>
118	Plum-headed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula cyanocephalus</i>
119	Rose-ringed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>
120	Alexandrine Parakeet	<i>Psittacula eupatria</i>
121	Rock martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne fuligula</i>
122	Red-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>
123	Red-whiskered Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus jocosus</i>
124	Himalayan bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus leucogenys</i>
125	Black-crested bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus melanicterus</i>
126	White-throated Fantail	<i>Rhipidura albicollis</i>
127	Plumbeous redstart	<i>Rhyacornis fuliginosa</i>
128	Plain Martin	<i>Riparia paludicola</i>
129	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>
130	Pied Bushchat	<i>Saxicola caprata</i>
131	Sibeiran Stonechat	<i>Saxicola maurus</i>
132	Indian Robin	<i>Saxicoloides fulicata</i>
133	Spotted dove	<i>Spilopelia chinensis</i>
134	Crested Serpent eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>
135	Changeable Hawk-eagle	<i>Spizaetus cirrhatus</i>
136	Eurasian collared dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>
137	Little grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
138	Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>
139	Common woodshrike	<i>Tephrodornis pondicerianus</i>
140	Orange-breasted green pigeon	<i>Treron bicinctus</i>
141	Yellow-footed green pigeon	<i>Treron phoenicoptera</i>
142	Pompadour green pigeon	<i>Treron pompadora</i>
143	Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>
144	Common greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
145	Jungle Babbler	<i>Turdoides striatus</i>
146	River Lapwing	<i>Vanellus duvaucelii</i>

						1				
						3				
						1		1		
		1								
		1								
							3	1		
						1				
								1		
		5		1	1		3	3		
		23		~20	9		7	2		
				~20		4				
					1			3		
		3								
	12	76	15	~90	~100	~15	7	10		
		2		1	13		2	12		
								2		
					2					
						1				
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		6	1		7		3			
		237	~50	~25	~140		100's			
		1								
		3	1	1	1					
		1								
					1		1		3	
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		1			4					
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		212	*	~100			174	39		
						2				
								1		
					~25		~30			
							2	~20		
							1			
		4					3			
		16		40	9					
		3			2			12		

147	Red-Wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>
148	Scaly thrush	<i>Zoothera dauma</i>

							7			
				1			3			

Reptiles (* = heard or signs only)

	Common Name	Binominal Name
1	Indian Garden Lizard	<i>Calotes versicolor</i>
2	Mugger Crocodile	<i>Crocodylus palustris</i>
3	Gharial	<i>Gavialis gangeticus</i>
4	Yellow-green House Gecko	<i>Hemidactylus flaviviridis</i>
5	Asian House Gecko	<i>Hemidactylus frenatus</i>
6	Indian softshell turtle	<i>Nilssonina gangetica</i>
7	Indian Forest Skink	<i>Sphenomorphus indicus</i>
8	Bengal monitor	<i>Varanus bengalensis</i>

November							December			
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4
		2								
		4		13	5			2		
		7								
							1			
	2	3	4	3						
								2		
					1			1		
		1		2						

Amphibians (* = heard or signs only)

	Common Name	Binominal Name
1	Common Indian Toad	<i>Bufo malenostictus</i>
2	Indian Skittering Frog	<i>Euphlyctis cyanophlyctis</i>

November							December			
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4
			1					1		
						~30				

Freshwater Fish (* = heard or signs only)

	Common Name	Binominal Name
1		<i>Barilius bendelisis</i>
2		<i>Labeo boga</i>
3		<i>Wallago attu</i>

November							December			
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4
		1								
			~30							
								1		

Notable Invertebrates (* = heard or signs only)

	Common Name	Binominal Name
1	Golden Orb Spider	<i>Nephila</i> spp.
2	Praying Mantis	<i>Caloteleia elegans</i>
3	Large Nepal Honey Bees	<i>Apis dorsata</i>
4	Red Terai dragonfly	<i>Epiophlebia</i> spp.
5	Millipedes	<i>Kophosphaera</i> spp.
6	Common tiger butterfly	<i>Danaus genutia</i>
7	Stick insect	<i>Phasmida</i> spp.
8	Field crickets	<i>Gryllus</i> spp.
9	Red cotton bug	<i>Dysdercus koenigii</i>
10	Fireflies	<i>Peroptyx</i> spp.
11	Leeches	<i>Himalistra</i> spp.
12	Mosquito	<i>Aedes</i> spp.

November							December			
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4
			1			1		3		
							1			
		100's						100's		
		1								
								1		
		~14	~10	~17	~19	~10	~12	~10		
		1								
		~30								
		~50	~50	~50	~50		~50	~50		
								~50	~50	
			1							
	2		1		2	43		5		