

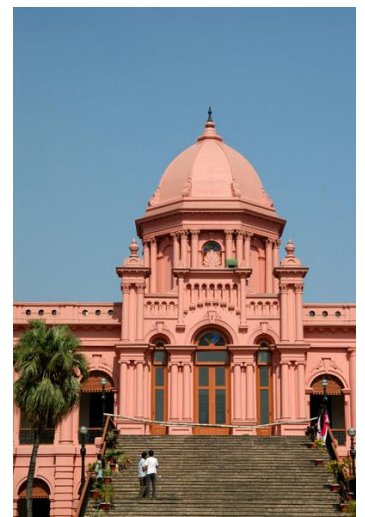
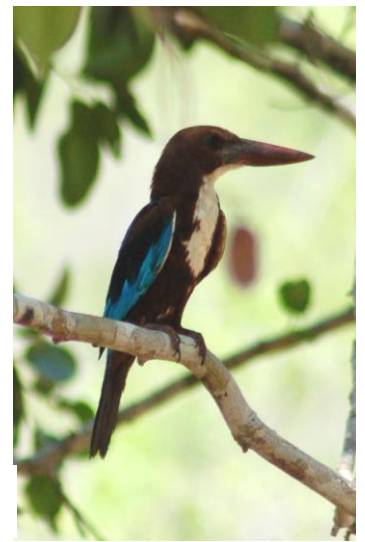


## King of the Swingers

**Destination:** Bangladesh **Duration:** 10 Days **Dates:** 25<sup>th</sup> Nov - 5<sup>th</sup> Dec 2013

-  Learning about the human – tiger conflict that is rife in the Sundarbans
-  Spotting 3 species of primates (despite only have a number of hours in the forests)
-  Observing 50 different species of birds; not bad considering the curtailed tour
-  Whilst hiking in Lawacharra we came across fishing cat tracks – very rare!
-  Spotting 8 species of mammals in such a short amount of time in the wild
-  Exploring Lawacharra in search of primates with the passionate Shamol Deb Barma
-  Enjoying great sightings of Pharye's leaf monkeys – the rarest species around here
-  Watching a yellow-spotted keelback snake hunting among aquatic vegetation
-  Visiting the Mughal Lalbagh Fort and the British style Pink Palace in Dhaka city
-  Watching a Pallas's fish eagle feeding close by in agricultural land near Baikka Beel



### Tour Leader / Guides

Martin Royle (Royle Safaris Tour Leader)  
 Abdul Azim (Cultural & Logistical Guide)  
 Shamol Deb Barma (Guide in Srimangal National Parks)  
 Dilip & Mail (Drivers for transfers)

### Participants

Ms. Cheryl Antonucci  
 Mrs. Marie King  
 Mr. Tom King  
 Mr. Andrew Sneddon  
 Ms. Sarah Womack

### Overview

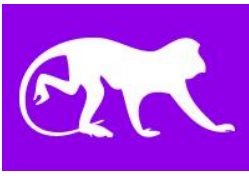
**Days 1-4:** Dhaka

**Day 5:** Srimangal

**Days 6-10:** Dhaka

**Day 11:** Home

Original itinerary severely curtailed due to unforeseen political problems and so we only managed one trip to Srimangal for wildlife with the remaining days spent in Dhaka in amidst a countrywide blockade of all road, rail and river transportation.



# Day by Day Breakdown

## Overview

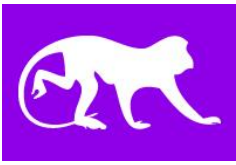
When mentioned Bangladesh usually evokes images and thoughts of over-population, flooding, poverty, child labour and the textile industry. Whilst this is the commonly accepted external persona of the country (and not without justification), there are some wonderfully wild regions remaining in the 9<sup>th</sup> most populated country in the world. This tour is a pioneering tour and the only dedicated wildlife watching holiday to this region; our main focuses being the primate rich lowland dipterocarp forests of the eastern borders with the Indian states of Manipur and Tripura. Here the biodiversity of Bangladesh is at its greatest with a rich floral base being home to many species of birds and 7 species of primates. Most of the forests in Bangladesh have been cleared and one species of primate the endangered western hoolock gibbon has seen their numbers reduced from over 20,000 in Bangladesh alone (in the 1940's) to around 300 today. The largest population of this 300 are found in the West Bhanugach Forest Reserve where around 67 individuals can be found in Lawacherra National Park; along with the gibbons there are Assamese, rhesus and northern pig-tailed macaques, capped langurs, Phayre's leaf monkeys and the nocturnal Bengal slow loris. Being based in one of Srimangal's tea plantations we would explore these forests in search of some of these primates, birds and possibly some of the other mammals such as wild boar, Indian muntjac and various squirrel species. From here we would charter our own boat and cruise the world's largest mangrove forest in the world, this incredible and truly wild Sundarbans. Once covering nearly 17,000km<sup>2</sup> (6,500miles<sup>2</sup>) the forest has been reduced over the years to its current range which is 6,000km<sup>2</sup> (2,300miles<sup>2</sup>) which is still home to the world's largest continuous population of tigers as well as many other species. Whilst tigers are high on anyone's list of wildlife to see in the Sundarbans they are very secretive here and are seldom seen, we increase our chances by exploring the forests and waterways in small boats and by walking with experienced guides and trackers in areas that are known territories of tigers. We also use a high powered spotlight from the safety of the boat after dark to see if we can catch a glimpse of a tiger coming down to the shoreline to drink or as one patrols the shore in search of chital, wild boar or maybe just scent marking their territory. Other wildlife that is more readily encountered includes salt-water crocodiles, chital, northern plains langurs, wild boar and the endangered Gangetic river dolphin. So whilst these fantastic wilderness areas (the protected forests of eastern Bangladesh and the wonderful Sundarbans) were our intended destinations, however when we arrived this was thrown into disarray with the current political situation ending in a 48 hour transportation blockade being imposed by the opposition party to the government over next year's general election schedule and unconstitutional behaviour of the Prime Minister. Martin and John had prepared for the possibility of a hartal (the standard strike) that is common employed to convey unrest and disapproval with government policy and during a hartal we could still have reached our destinations (albeit using trains instead of our private vehicle). But when this unique blockade was announced and all road, rail and river transportation in and out of major towns and cities was stopped (either by crude road blocks or the removal of train tracks), we were forced to make alternative arrangements and stay in Dhaka for the 48 hour long countrywide blockade and hope for a compromise with the government and the opposition party and after the blockade we could carry on with the tour. However if no compromise was reached we would have to play it each day as it comes but the possibility that we would not be able to leave Dhaka was real. The mood was understandably muted as we all became experts in Bangladeshi politics and hoped for a compromise and an end to the blockades. So below is a breakdown of the daily sightings and a summary of each day on the tour and at the end of this report is a sightings log that includes all of the species and the numbers that we saw on a day by day basis. We hope this enables you to relive some memories and also help in identifying some of your pictures of birds.



## Day 1 **Dhaka**

## *Arrival & Sightseeing*

The day before the tour 'officially' started Andrew, Cheryl and Sarah had arrived and checked into the hotel, so this morning Martin and Azim went to meet Tom and Marie as they arrived from London via Dubai and we transferred back to the hotel. After freshening up the whole group met for the first time in the hotel reception and we departed with Monjeel, Azim and Martin for a sightseeing tour of Dhaka. The traffic in Dhaka is notorious but today was the worst Martin had experienced and even Azim (born and bred in Dhaka) commented on the amount of traffic. To be fair you didn't have to be from Dhaka to realise that this level of traffic is not normal anywhere; taking over 3 hours to get 18km from the hotel to the Pink Palace (Ahsan Manzil) is not normal by any stretch of the imagination. We theorised that the increased traffic could be a result of the recent hartal (last 82 hours) that occurred last week and had stopped people from getting general business done and so more people than usual were in the city and with

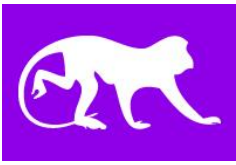


the possibility of another hartal looming for the next couple of days it seemed like everyone in Dhaka was out on the roads whilst they could. It also didn't help that the opposite side of the road was cleared and closed as the Prime Minister's motorcade drove past; which increased traffic at every junction and slowed the whole procession of vehicles heading in our direction. However we did make it eventually and entered the relative peace and quiet of the Pink Palace's grounds. The palace was constructed in the 1860's and was used as the official residence and seat of the Dhaka Nawab and his family; located on the banks of the busy Buriganga River and surrounded by lush gardens there were a few species of birds flying around. As we walked around palace the British and Mughal architectural influences were clear to see. In the surrounding bushes and trees we saw red-vented bulbuls, common mynahs, Asian pied starlings, feral pigeons, house crows, house sparrows, a solitary black drongo picking off insects from the mowed lawn and returning to his fence post perch as well as some graceful black kites. One black kite gave us a brief demonstration of their aerial acrobatic skills as it was chased and mobbed by a couple of house crows. From here we travelled to the Lalbagh Fort, this large Mughal fort and grounds were constructed in 1678 by the son (Subahdar) of the last of the great Mughal emperors Aurangzeb. Built using the same pink sandstone as the Pink Palace the fort cut an impressive figure standing in the green and well-tended gardens. As we all walked around the grounds (posing for various pictures with some of the residents of Dhaka as they do not see many foreigners here) the usual collection of Subcontinental urban birds flew and fluttered around (black kites and house crows dominated the skies, with pigeons and common mynahs around the gardens); Andrew also spotted an Irrawaddy squirrel at quite close quarters. These squirrels are not uncommon to see in the parks and recreational areas of Dhaka and marked the first wild mammal of the trip. Unfortunately with developments later than evening it was going to be the only wild mammal for a little while after.

When we returned to the hotel and had dinner there was no announcement from the government about the election schedule for next year and so there was no announcement of a hartal. With the leader of the BNP (the largest opposition party, currently the spokesman for the 18 party alliance that has formed in opposition to the government) declaring yesterday that as soon as the Prime Minister announces the election schedule he would organise strikes and hartals to disrupt the country. The opposition's argument being that the government were turning their back on the constitution and not allowing a fair election. In Bangladeshi politics when the government announce the date of the next election an interim government comes in and takes over the day to day running of the country as well as overseeing a fair election. This was being avoided by the current government as they have lost favour in the general population and if they allowed that to happen and a fair election to occur they would most likely not win. Their official argument being that why should they hand over the country to unelected individuals for any amount of time (a 90 day period being the maximum from when the election is announced and the election would be held). Whenever the election was to be announced the country would be thrown into a little turmoil with the imposing of a hartal, however this is quite common in Bangladesh and Martin and John has previous made alternative arrangements to use the trains as opposed to private cars. During a hartal private cars and some buses are targeted and heavily disrupted but trains run as normal and are only very rarely ever affected. So by the time we had finished dinner and were heading to the rooms the plan was to be ready to leave at 07:30am and head to Srimangal; then at 08:00pm the Prime Minister announced the election date of the 5<sup>th</sup> January and that no interim government would be called in during this period. So in response at 09:00pm the opposition party declared a 48 hour countrywide transport blockade; this blockade is different to the usual hartal and they were focused on cutting off Dhaka and other major towns and cities from the rest of the country by blocking all highways, removing train tracks on major lines and also disrupting river transport. Effectively paralysing the country and for us meaning that we could not drive or catch a train to Srimangal from 06:00am the next day to at least 06:00am on day 4. However further to this they announced that unless the attitude of the government was not such that they were happy with proceedings and changes to the election schedule they would impose a 24 hartal on Thursday and after their weekend (Friday, Saturday (days 5 & 6) a possible 5 day hartal. This would mean serious disruption to the rest of the tour if this came to pass (especially as the train lines were so badly damaged and there had been derailments that we couldn't use trains to get around in hartal). We now relied on a compromise and after the 48 blockade no further hartals. This we would only know and be able to plan for when announcements were made and the next one was most likely to occur on Wednesday (day 3) afternoon. So with alternative accommodation booked in Dhaka for the next 2 nights we prepared for our stay here until the situation changed and we would be able to carry on with the tour.

This disappointing and frustrating situation was made worse by the fact that no insurance company would accept a claim based on this kind of action with it being unforeseen and unavoidable (force majeure); during the next couple of days Martin would meet with and speak to John and Azim numerous as well as constantly checking the internet, TV news channels and reading the newspapers for any changes in the situation. The official stance of Martin and Royle Safaris stood that they would provide the accommodation and food in Dhaka for the duration of the time we were forced to stay in the city (due to the continued road blocks, hartals (where we cannot use private vehicles) and damage to train lines, rendering rail transport very unsafe and realistically impossible); however due to the nature of the situation (being force majeure) there would be no refunds or compensation and as we were safe in the hotel in Dhaka there was no need to have repatriation for any of the clients. It seemed like the worst case scenario for everyone involved and one that we monitored continually.





Today Martin broke the news to the group over breakfast, that over the night the Prime Minister had declared the election schedule and that a 48 hour blockade was enforced. This meant that we would be unable to safely travel by road, rail or river for the next two days (from 06:00am this morning to 06:00am on day 4) or possibly longer (if the opposite party are not satisfied with the actions of the government. Due to the political situation and the 48 hour blockade Royle Safaris and Martin were unable to take the group out of the hotel to complete any activities. However the guests did independently leave the hotel for a walk around some of the nearby streets. During the day in Dhaka we viewed some of the more common urban birds around here, from the restaurant windows. This included common mynahs, house crows, a black drongo, house sparrows, circling black kites, a lone Indian magpie robin and a pair of plain prinias around a few plants planted outside of the restaurant window. As for any news concerning the political situation we had no new news (other than continuing stories of disruption from up and down the country); until later in the evening when 6 ex-government advisors met with the president to remind him of his duties to enforce the constitution. News of 5 of the Prime Ministers staff (advisors etc) resigning today also buoyed our confidence of the roads being opened soon. These were both steps in the right direction as far as we were concerned and the first steps towards the reopening of the roads; (what this would mean for the long term future of Bangladesh was another issue, but not one that we were concerned with at present). So as night fell and we returned to our rooms after dinner the plan for tomorrow was the same as today.

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### **Day 3 Dhaka**

### ***Change of Plan due to Political Situation***

Today was very much the same as yesterday to our dismay, at some point today we would hope for an announcement by the Prime Minister and a compromise to be struck and the roads to be opened up from tomorrow. So we were once again confined to the safety of the hotel, however once again the guests (against the advice of Martin and Royle Safaris) decided to have an excursion into town and they visited the botanical gardens. On their return to the hotel for lunch Martin helped identify some of the many bird species they saw (among them brahminy kites, various woodpeckers including a fulvous-breasted woodpecker and lesser goldenback, green bee-eater and red-vented bulbuls. They also saw an Indian garden lizard, many Irrawaddy squirrels and an Indian flying fox roosting and inside the nearby city zoo Andrew spotted an Indian grey mongoose wandering between the enclosures. So the second day of the blockade continued with some further news from the two political rivals, firstly the opposition parties stating that they would remain hard-line in their fight for 'fair and open' elections and then the Prime Minister making a statement saying that the government would not back down (condemning the ongoing blockade) and that the opposition party only wanted to have another military coup (similar to the one that occurred on the 1<sup>st</sup> November 2007. Then at around 05:00pm the opposition party declared an extension of the blockade until 05:00am on Day 5. So once again we would be confined to the hotel but with a Muslim festival on Friday and Saturday and many people expected to travel from all over the country to get to Dhaka (if they can navigate the old blockades) it would be safe (if not busy) for us to take our vehicle and visit some sites in Dhaka for wildlife and some of the historical sites that we didn't get around to visiting on the first day.

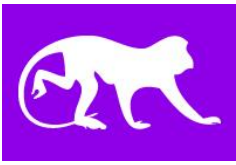
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### **Day 4 Dhaka**

### ***Change of Plan due to Political Situation***

This morning was once again curtailed due to the extended blockades up and down the country; so whilst the guests left the hotel on their own for various walks and another visit to the botanical gardens; Martin stayed at the hotel and assessed the ongoing situation. After a meeting with the group at breakfast we decided that as Friday and Saturday (day 5 & 6) would remain free from blockades and hartals (due to these days being the Muslim weekend here as well as a local festival due to occur over this weekend), we would leave Dhaka at 05:30am and head to Srimangal. In theory we would not face any problems but only time would tell as the blockades may still be physically in place even if they are not officially manned. However having been stuck in Dhaka for the last few days any chance to get out and possibly reach Srimangal and therefore get to any of the forested national parks around and search for some wildlife was far too good a chance to pass up. So tomorrow it would seem that the tour would finally get up and running. As for today the usual array of birds were visible from the restaurant window and a visit to the botanical gardens and city zoo (the same as yesterday) yielded more red-vented bulbuls, as well as a flock of feeding Alexandrine parakeets, a rufous treepie, black kites, Irrawaddy squirrels and a breeding pair of Indian grey mongooses in the same place that Andrew had spotted one yesterday. All in all the wildlife watching in Dhaka city centre was producing more species than we perhaps expected, but at the same time this is a fraction of what is available to a wildlife watcher in Bangladesh and we all couldn't wait to get going tomorrow morning. During the afternoon Martin showed a BBC Natural World documentary that showed the conflict occurring in the Sundarbans with man-eating tigers and the innovative project of training local street dogs to be tiger hounds to warn of and drive tigers away.

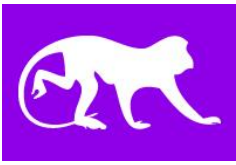




## Day 5 Srimangal

## Travelling & Wildlife Watching

This morning we left the hotel in Dhaka at 05:30am to head to Srimangal; the blockade ended at 05:00am but we were unsure on what the road situations would be like. In terms of traffic or possible residue from the blockades. As it was we arrived in very good time at Srimangal (with the journey taking 4.5 hours – the normal amount of time without any traffic); the really frustrating thing being that there were no signs of the disruption that had hampered our tour so far. Along the way we passed many rice mills, power stations, brick factories and saw rural Bangladesh for the first time, along the way we crossed the Brahmaputra River and passed by many wheat fields and rice paddies; accompanying the roadside and often perched on the telegraph wires was the usual plethora of rural Subcontinent birds. Including common mynahs, spotted doves, house sparrows, red-vented bulbuls, cattle, little and intermediate egrets, Indian pond heron, house crows and then as we left Dhaka a shift towards the eastern jungle crow. Rarer sightings along the roadside included a black-winged kite, white-throated kingfisher, dollarbird, great egret and Eurasian collared doves. We arrived at 10:15am at the Bangladesh Tea Institute Resort on the outskirts of Srimangal and after quickly checking into the rooms we met our local guide Shamol and headed straight out into Lawacharra National Park. Our main aim was to try and see the western hoolock gibbon however we wanted to see as much as possible as we were unsure how long we would be able to have in the forest. With us having to leave tomorrow at around 11:00am at the earliest (in order to get back Dhaka before dark of the night before the blockade was likely to start again). So we headed towards a couple of the hills in the forest where the gibbons like to spend their time, they prefer being on tall trees positioned on hills so that they can see further and have their territorial calls travel further. Before we had really started in the park we found a female rhesus macaque sitting on a fallen tree positioned over the pathway. The macaque was very cooperative and posed nicely for photographs, later when having a break and some refreshments at a nearby shop we realised that this macaque was very used to be around people as it begged for food and water and was probably more comfortable with us than her natal troop that we struggled to find in the forest. So after great views of the female rhesus macaque we carried on and headed up the hills. Along the pathways were numerous spiders including many huge golden and red-legged orb spiders and equally impressive blue horned spiders, with large horn like protrusions for their abdomen. Alongside the many spiders were a good range of butterflies, Lawacharra is well known for its diversity of butterflies with over 400 recorded from these forests; most of what we found fluttering around the pathways were the common tiger (*Danaus genutia*), Common pierrot (*Castalius rosimon*) and the grey pansy (*Junonia atlites*). After scaling one of the hills and not finding any evidence of the gibbons we descended towards a dry stream bed on the other side and once we arrived in the stream we found a troop of northern pig-tailed macaques foraging in a number of trees in the distance (maybe 30-50m away), we had sporadic views of this large macaque species as they moved around the trees feeding on various parts of the tree. They manage to live alongside the rhesus macaques and other primate species here by dividing the forest habitat up and preferring to feed on different food. For example the macaques (rhesus and northern pig-tailed) both have very similar and rather catholic diets but avoid competition by spending the majority of their time at different levels in the forest. A study based on Lawacharra found that rhesus macaques spend most of their time (90%+) on the ground or up to 5m high; whilst northern pig-tailed macaques spend 88% of their time in the middle canopy (10 – 20m up) and only 1% of their time on the ground. The western hoolock gibbon lives higher still and has a large overlap in food with the macaque species and the langurs (capped and Phraye's leaf monkeys) avoid competition with the macaques and gibbons by eating mostly leaves and very little fruit matter. They avoid competing with each other in the same way that the two macaque species avoid competition with the capped langurs foraging lower down (5-15m on average) and the Phraye's leaf monkey spending most of their time higher up in the canopy (15m plus). As we watched the northern pig-tailed macaques weaving in and out of the foliage we heard further movement in the trees and kept on searching the trees for more macaques; whilst doing this we have nice views (albeit brief) of a Malayan giant squirrel as it quickly climbed up the trunk of a tree with a couple of macaques, also close to here were a pair of lesser racket-tailed drongos. Flying quickly among the canopy as they picked off insects and seemed to dance with each other above the trees before disappearing into the forest. We then continued and followed a dry stream back towards the main path and eventually to another hill. Along the dry stream there were many more orb and horned spiders clinging to their webs and also wild boar and Indian muntjac (barking deer) prints in the sand. However it was not until we arrived back on the main pathway that Martin spotted the most interesting tracks of all, fishing cat tracks and very clear prints at that. We then explored the second hill and a small clearing with tall fig trees that is a favourite haunt of one particular group of western hoolock gibbons; but all we found were many species of butterfly and lots of thorny plants, the lack of visitors to the park evident by the lack of well-worn trails. We then walked along the train track that dissects the park and had a stop for a snack and drink before heading over the main road (that also cuts the park in half) to the lesser visited side of the forest. Quickly after entering this forest the loud croaking calls of the tokay gecko were heard as was the shrill call of a female greater goldenback woodpecker. Martin set his camera trap up along a well-used stream bed, the large number of wild boar and muntjac tracks hopefully going to result in some activity when the camera is collected tomorrow. This side of the park contains more streams and is dominated more by large stands of bamboo than the other side and when walking between the huge bamboo stalks the forest took on a unique and wonderful character. A little further on most of the group had gone ahead when Martin heard rustling and movement close to the pathway and called by Sarah and Tom (who were the only ones to hear him) as a mother Phraye's leaf monkey came bounding out of the bush and jumped over a log and away from us (no more than 5m away), she was quickly followed by a baby (already the typical grey colouration and indicating an age of over 3 months; as they are orange



to buff-brown for the first 3 months or so). We then moved forward to the rest of the group as the small troop of leaf monkeys (7-10 strong) were now positioned high in a couple of trees overlooking a small clearing. Luckily the rest of the group had seen the leaf monkeys too and we all met up and watched the group of leaf monkeys as they climbed about the tree tops. They were not particularly happy with us as they loudly alarm called at us continuously. A few of the monkeys then carried on moving and came lower down (maybe 10m above us) and over our pathway and in doing so allowed for fantastic unobstructed views. This is an exceptional sighting here, the Phayre's leaf monkey is by far the rarest of the diurnal primates in Lawacharra and Royle Safaris has never had a sighting so long and so clear of this elusive species before. A study of the primates here and their abundance densities revealed that rhesus macaques are the most common species with a density of 17.1/km<sup>2</sup>; northern pig-tailed macaques 3.8/km<sup>2</sup>; western hoolock gibbons 1.2/km<sup>2</sup>; capped langurs 2.6/km<sup>2</sup> and the Phayre's leaf monkey being considerably the least abundant at around 0.41/km<sup>2</sup>. After the leaf monkeys has disappeared from view we continued on, but other than a glimpse of an Irrawaddy squirrel the rest of the hike through Lawacharra was quiet. When we got back to the car we decided to visit the nearby (but hard to get to, because of poor road conditions) wetland of Baikka Beel, this large lake is home to many migratory birds as well as resident water fowl. It is also a nice place to go for sunset so we drove the 22km to Baikka Beel and on the way saw many egrets (great, intermediate, little and cattle) as well as Indian pond herons, huge numbers of Asian pied starlings and black drongos in the paddy fields. Close to the Beel Martin spotted a large raptor feeding on a fish in the middle of a manmade water tank (the name for the manmade pools that collect water year around to be used for agriculture, drinking and washing); through the binoculars this turned out to be a very impressive Pallas's fish eagle. We watched as it finished its meal and took to the skies and so we carried on towards the Beel. Further along with fading light Martin spotted a snake in the roadside tank, we stopped once again and watched a very relaxed yellow-spotted keelback hunting among the aquatic vegetation. The 40cm long neatly patterned snake was searching out for frogs among the lotus flowers and introduced water hyacinth. Carrying on we arrived at the Beel as the sun was setting and it was a little too late to see many of the bird species but we were able to make out hundreds of fulvous and lesser whistling ducks as they began to roost on floating rafts of aquatic vegetation, Indian cormorants flying away to tall tree roosts in the distance, Indian pond herons roosting on the nearby small trees and a pair of purple swampheens collecting nesting materials close to the shore. All of this was enjoyed with the loud calls of a huge roost (many hundreds) of Asian pied starlings in a nearby stand of trees. Just before we left this area Cheryl spotted a large rodent swimming towards the shore and then scampering away into the undergrowth, later identified as a large bandicoot rat this completed an impressive day of wildlife watching. Considering we only had an afternoon the forests of Lawacharra and the agricultural areas around Srimangal did not disappoint. We then went back to the accommodation before heading to Srimangal for dinner. On our return to the resort after dinner we headed for bed and planned an early start for the gibbons in the morning. However the BNP would have other ideas!

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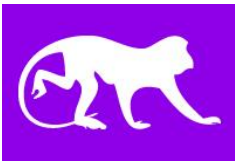
## Day 6 Dhaka

## *Change of Plan due to Political Situation*

During the night the BNP and opposition alliance had announced that they would go back on their agreement to leave Friday and Saturday free and declared a 72 hour countrywide blockade once again, from 06:00am. This news was broken to Martin by Azim at 00:55am and with only 5 hours to get the 4.5 hours back to Dhaka before the highways were all blocked and we would be stuck outside of Dhaka and potentially unable to get to the airport for our departure if they extended this blockade. So the decision was made to wake everyone up and get moving back to the capital. In order to have a problem free journey (in case we didn't make it in time) our van was transformed into an ambulance (as ambulances are less likely to experience problems in a blockade) complete with flashing light and siren. Everyone got up very quickly in a little over 20 minutes we were ready to leave and in deed on the road. With it being so early in the morning the roads were quite quiet and we were able to make good time, the only delay coming where a truck had blown a tyre and crashed on the side of the road just after a bridge and the police were guiding people through. However this only took around 15 minutes and the rest of the journey was traffic and blockade free. We arrived back in Dhaka 20 minutes before the blockade was due to start; and as the news showed later that morning the highway we travelled in upon was indeed blocked. We managed to get early check in to the rooms and decided to meet up for dinner at 13:00pm, giving everyone time to rest and catch up on sleep. When we did meet up, the realisation that this ridiculous situation was not getting any better. Firstly the idea to have these blockades as opposed to the regular hartal was unprecedented and then to go back on their original plan and blockade during a Saturday; these two very unusual events had conspired to decrease our wildlife viewing to one afternoon and evening so far, and at present the situation didn't look like getting better any time soon. In fact at lunch everyone had begun preparations for early flights home if there was not a dramatic U-turn in the next 48 hours. We could only hope and keep an eye on the news; and so our disappointing day ended as depressing as it started.







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**Day 7 Dhaka*****Change of Plan due to Political Situation***

Today was unfortunately the same as the other days we had spent in Dhaka during the blockade and the group was officially confined to the hotel for safety reasons; however they did leave to visit the botanical gardens again and when they returned Martin helped them identify some of the birds they saw. Among the black drongos, Asian pied starlings, house crows, house sparrows, rufous treepies, common mynahs and Irrawaddy squirrels they spotted mixed forage flocks surrounding the busy jungle babblers. These noisy and very active birds stir up lots of insects as they hop and flutter around the vegetation searching for food. Surrounding these flocks of jungle babblers were many other species including spangled drongos (of which Marie got some exceptional photographs), rufous-tailed starlings as well as a Himalayan goldenback and an Irrawaddy squirrel. Many of the birds were the same as they had been seeing around the botanical gardens but the rufous-tailed starlings were a nice new species for the trip. Once again we hoped for a change to the political deadlock and a withdrawal of the blockades tomorrow, however this look very unlikely and people began to explore changing their flights as it looked like we would not be able to get to the Sundarbans or back to Srimangal for the end of the tour. At this point Cheryl and Sarah booked return flights home for Monday (day 8) in the afternoon and Andrew had made preparations to leave early on Tuesday (day 9) morning if the situation had not changed.

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**Day 8 Dhaka*****Change of Plan due to Political Situation***

Today Sarah and Cheryl decided to spend most of the morning packing and resting before a long journey home, Andrew, Marie and Tom visited the General Assembly buildings and then met with Sarah for a little bit of souvenir shopping before they had to leave the hotel. At 14:30 Martin had arranged a private vehicle / ambulance for the airport transfer and we travelled there together with Azim in time to catch the return flight home. During the afternoon we learned that the leader of the BNP had been killed in a gun battle with rival parties and this resulted in increased security being issued around the cities and also an extension of the blockade until 17:00pm on Thursday (day 11).

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**Day 9 Dhaka*****Change of Plan due to Political Situation***

Today Andrew was met by Martin and Azim at 05:30am in the reception of the hotel and Azim escorted him to the airport in an ambulance. The rest of the day was pretty much the same as always in Dhaka without much to report. The situation was escalating a little today with news that one of the BNP leaders had been shot and we also noticed and heard a couple of protests in the nearby streets; they were not violent but it seemed like the chance to get this situation sorted amicably was well and truly over and it was now as much a battle of wills between the two parties as anything political, with neither willing to budge on their demands.

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**Day 10 Dhaka*****Change of Plan due to Political Situation***

Today was the last full day on the tour and once again we current political situation dictated that we couldn't leave the hotel and so the only wildlife we saw were the common urban birds that we were regularly seeing from the windows on the reception. Tomorrow Martin's flight was early in the morning and Tom and Marie were not leaving until later in the day, so we had our last evening meal together at the hotel before saying our good byes. Hoping that the next time we met up the tour would be more successful and to be honest it would be very hard to have a tour more distributed than this one.

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**Day 11 Home*****Departure***

This morning Martin had to catch his flight to India (for a following tour) in the morning whilst Azim came to the hotel to collect Tom and Marie in the afternoon in time for them to catch their return home.

# Species List

King of the Swingers / November & December 2013

## Mammals (\* = heard or signs only)

	Common Name	Binominal Name
1	Large bandicoot rat	<i>Bandicota indica</i>
2	Irrawaddy Squirrel	<i>Callosciurus pygerythus</i>
3	Indian grey Mongoose	<i>Herpestes edwardsii</i>
4	Northern pig-tailed macaque	<i>Macaca leonina</i>
5	Rhesus Macaque	<i>Macaca mulatta</i>
6	Indian muntjac	<i>Muntiacus muntjak</i>
7	Fishing cat	<i>Prionailurus viverrinus</i>
8	Indian Flying Fox	<i>Pteropus giganteus</i>
9	Malayan giant squirrel	<i>Ratufa bicolor</i>
10	Wild boar	<i>Sus scofra</i>
11	Phayre's leaf monkey	<i>Trachypithecus phayrei</i>

October						November				
25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	5
				1						
1		~5	~5	1		~5				
		1	2							
				~10						
				3						
				*						
				*						
		1		1						
				1						
				*						
				~8						

## Birds (\* = heard or signs only)

	Common Name	Binominal Name
1	Jungle mynah	<i>Acridotheres fuscus</i>
2	Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>
3	Common sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
4	Mallard & hybrids	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
5	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>
6	Intermediate egret	<i>Ardea intermedia</i>
7	Indian Pond Heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>
8	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
9	Greater goldenback	<i>Chrysocolaptes lucidus</i>
10	Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>
11	Oriental Magpie Robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>
12	Indian Roller	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>

October						November				
25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	5
				1						
~10	1	~100	~100	~100	~50	~100	~50	~50	~50	~10
				~100						
				6						
				~40						
2				~50						
				~30						
				1						
100's	~10	~50	~50	~50	~50	~50	~50	~50	~50	~20
	1	1	2			3	1		1	
				1						



13	Eastern jungle crow	<i>Corvus leuallantii</i>
14	House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>
15	Rufous treepie	<i>Dendrocitta vagabunda</i>
16	Fulvous-breasted woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos macei</i>
17	Fulvous Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna bicolor</i>
18	Lesser Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>
19	Spangled Drongo	<i>Dicrurus bracteatus</i>
20	Black Drongo	<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>
21	Lesser racket-tailed drongo	<i>Dicrurus remifer</i>
22	Lesser goldenback	<i>Dinopium benghalense</i>
23	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
24	Black-winged kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>
25	Dollarbird	<i>Eurystomus orientalis</i>
26	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
27	Asian Pied Starling	<i>Gracupica contra</i>
28	White-throated Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>
29	Pallas's fish eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucoryphus</i>
30	Brahminy Kite	<i>Haliastur indus</i>
31	Long-tailed shrike	<i>Lanius schach</i>
32	Brown-headed barbet	<i>Megalaima zeylanica</i>
33	Green Bee-eater	<i>Merops orientalis</i>
34	Little Cormorant	<i>Microcarbo niger</i>
35	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>
36	Asian brown flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa dauurica</i>
37	Black-hooded oriole	<i>Oriolus xanthornus</i>
38	House sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
39	Indian Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax fuscicollis</i>
40	Purple swamphen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>
41	Plain prinia	<i>Prinia inornata</i>
42	Rose-ringed parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>
43	Red-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>
44	Spotted dove	<i>Spilopelia chinensis</i>
45	Laughing dove	<i>Spilopelia senegalensis</i>
46	Eurasian collared dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>
47	Chestnut-tailed starling	<i>Sturnia malabarica</i>
48	Brahminy starling	<i>Sturnia pagodarum</i>
49	Little grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
50	Large woodshrike	<i>Tephrodornis gularis</i>

				100's						
100's	~20	100's	100's	100's	100's	100's	100's	100's	100's	~50
			1			2				
		1								
				100's						
				100's						
		1				2				
1	1	1	2	~130	1	1	2		1	
				2						
		1				1				
				1						
				2						
3		~20	~20	1,000's		~20				
			1	1						
				1						
1		3	12	8		2				
				1						
				1						
		2								
				2						
6	2	1	4	~20	2	6	3	3	1	3
						1				
			1			2				
~10	~25		~20	22	~20	~30	~10	~20	~20	4
				54						
				2						
	2		2		1		1	2		
		~10				~10				
~10		~10	~10	~55						
				~100						
				~30						
				4						
						3				
				2						
				1						
				1						

51	Spotted redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>
52	Jungle babbler	<i>Turdoides striata</i>

				2						
			~20			~20				

## Reptiles (\* = heard or signs only)

	Common Name	Binominal Name
1	Indian Garden Lizard	<i>Calotes versicolor</i>
2	Topical house gecko	<i>Hemidactylus frenatus</i>
3	Tokay gecko	<i>Gekko gekko</i>
4	Yellow-spotted keelback	<i>Xenochrophis flavipunctatus</i>

October						November				
25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	5
		1								
				2						
				*						
				1						

## Notable Invertebrates (\* = heard or signs only)

	Common Name	Binominal Name
1	Common pierrot	<i>Castralius rosimon</i>
2	Common tiger butterfly	<i>Danaus genutia</i>
3	Long-horned spiny spider	<i>Gasteracantha spp.</i>
4	Leech	<i>Haemadipsa spp.</i>
5	Grey pansy	<i>Junoria atiltes</i>
6	Golden orb-spiders	<i>Nephila spp.</i>

October						November				
25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	5
				~10						
				~20						
				~5						
				>18!						
				~10						
		2		~20		1				