

Eaglesnest, India, May 2023

May 10-13, 2023 by Jens@Hauser.se

This report is from a recent trip to Eaglesnest, India in search of Asiatic golden cat, Leopard cat and Marbled cat sightings. It is written with the help (I had to rewrite a lot) of GrammarlyGo, which is an AI tool.

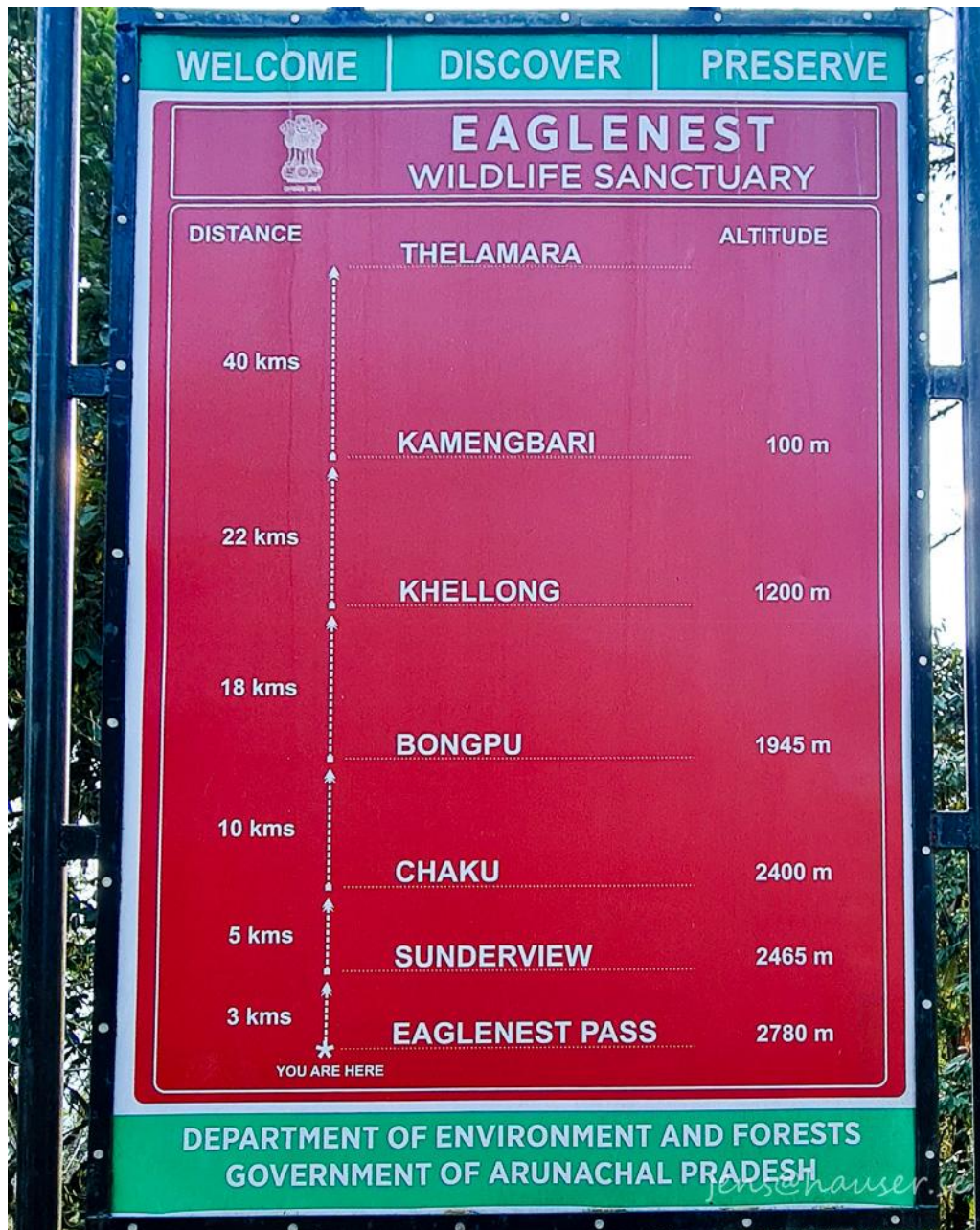
Eaglesnest is in Arunachal Pradesh, which borders China and a special visa is required.

I stayed at two camps - Bongpu and Lama - with most cat sightings near Bhompu. An overnight stay for two people in a tent cost around \$75 and includes all meals and driver accommodation.

My guide was Rohit Rai (+918794548243), and he is an excellent guide, providing local knowledge because he has been spending many hours in the area. We spent our time driving or walking along the track, with the most productive section for Golden cat sightings being between Bhompu and Lama.

Most people go from Lama Camp to Bongpu Camp and from there you could drive back down. Most of the great mammal sightings are between Bhompu and Lama, near Bhompu.

I spent early mornings, late afternoons, early evenings and evenings driving or walking along the track either down the hill from Bongpu to a small research base at Kellong (800m) or up towards the pass as far as a small watchtower at Chaku (2450m) before turning around and heading back down on what is regarded as the section of road that is the most productive in terms of Golden cat sightings.



10 April

I got to the Bongpu Camp in the early afternoon and I saw a **Northern Red Muntjac** (*Muntiacus vaginalis*) and two unidentified grey rodents with a white belly and a short tail really close up. I almost stepped on them.

11 April

I saw nothing in the early morning from 3.30 to 7.00. We drove the car to the first watchtower and walked back and forth.

Between 9-12, I walked to the first watchtower and then returned to Bongpu Camp. I saw a **Yellow-throated marten** (*Martes flavigul*), **Hoary-bellied squirrel** (*Callosciurus pygerythrus*) and **Himalayan striped squirrel** (*Tamiops macclellandi*).

Between 16-18, I took a walk in the forest behind the camp kitchen and then back on Tezpur Road. Saw **Masked palm civet** (*Paguma larvat*), **Orange bellied Himalayan squirrel** (*Dremomys lokriah*) and **Pallas's squirrel** (*Callosciurus erythraeus*).

In the evening, between 19-23, we drove the car up and down the road between the camps, and I only saw a **Northern Red muntjac** (*Muntiacus vaginalis*).



Orange bellied Himalayan squirrel (*Dremomys lokriah*)

12 April

We drove the car to the first watchtower in the early morning from 3.30 to 7.00 and walked back and forth using my thermal imager all the time. It is so much easier to spot mammals of all sizes. Especially when walking, you have time to scan both sides of the road.

I think I saw a Leopard cat (*Prionailurus bengalensis*) because it was a cat running really fast away from me in the dense forest. The size and shape was the right one but I couldn't see it with my eyes at all. I also saw a couple of sleeping **Capped langur** (*Trachypithecus pileatus*).

When the light was strong enough I packed my thermal and was able to get sightings of a **Black Giant Squirrel** (*Ratufa bicolor*), **Northern red muntjac** (*Muntiacus vaginalis*) and a walking **Asian Elephant** (*Elephas maximus*).

After breakfast in the morning, I had the good fortune of spotting a **Spotted giant flying squirrel** (*Petaurista elegans*).

In the afternoon, we drove to Khellong 800 ASL. It is an excellent view while driving, but the spotting was minimum. Down at the Division Forest Office were a couple of troops of **Capped Langur** (*Trachypithecus pileatus*).

We drove the road to Lama camp in the evening and didn't find any mammals at all.



Capped Langur (*Trachypithecus pileatus*)

13 April

I woke up bloody early again at the Bongpu Camp and saw a lot of different types of chicken. Lucky them, I'm a pescetarian ;)

After breakfast, we drove from Bongpu Camp to Lama Camp and saw two very angry **Gaurs** (*Bos gaurus*) that didn't want us to pass. We had to sit in the car and wait for them to calm down a bit and return to the forest again. They are just massive and could easily squash the car like a bug.



Gaur (*Bos gaurus*)

In the afternoon, we saw a **Five-striped palm squirrel** (*Funambulus pennantii*), **Hoary-bellied squirrel** (*Callosciurus pygerythrus*) and three fighting **Yellow-throated martens** (*Martes flavigul*). It was awesome to watch them run up and down trees chasing each other and then suddenly take a break. At one point, I thought they were hunting together as they moved towards barking Munthjacs, but I think it was a fight.



Five-striped palm squirrel (*Funambulus pennantii*)

In the evening, we drove up and down the road to Bongpu Camp, and it was one of the best sightings of the whole trip to Eaglesnest. We spotted **Red giant flying squirrel** (*Petaurista petaurista*), **Northern red muntjac** (*Muntiacus vaginalis*), **Bhutan giant flying squirrel** (*Petaurista nobilis*) and **Red giant flying squirrel** (*Petaurista petaurista*).

The absolutely best was the sighting of a **Leopard cat** (*Prionailurus bengalensis*) really close-up. I suddenly saw in my thermal images that it was sitting next to the road while driving. We stopped the car so that I could take videos of it, and then we decided to step out of the car and slowly walk toward him while having a spotlight on it. The cat just sat there so we could get closer. After a short while, we turned the spotlight away from its eyes, and it didn't react much. The stunning cat sat there for several minutes in the dark until it took off when we made too much noise while moving to get a better position. The cat definitely saw me in the darkness because it looked at me up and down while I crouched down without reacting.

In the late evening, we had our last mammal sighting and it was a **Bhutan giant flying squirrel** (*Petaurista nobilis*).



Leopard cat (*Prionailurus bengalensis*)

14 April

While driving on the main road to Guwahati, we saw several troops of **Arunachal Macaque** (*Macaca munzala*).

Trip reports from others

“North-East India March - April 2023” by Sophie, Manuel and Sam Baumgartner

https://www.mammalwatching.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Report_India_2023-1.pdf

“Northern India 4-24 March 2023” by Andreas Jonsson

<https://www.mammalwatching.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/India2.pdf>

“Asian Golden Cat in Northeast India March 2022” by Stuart Chapman

<https://www.mammalwatching.com/wp-content/uploads/Asian-golden-cat-in-Northeast-India-March-2022.pdf>

“Trip report: Arunachal Pradesh and Assam, India, August 2019” by Rauno Väisänen

<https://www.mammalwatching.com/wp-content/uploads/RV-Arunachal-Pradesh-2019.pdf>



Yellow-throated marten (*Martes flavigula*)



Red giant flying squirrel (*Petaurista petaurista*)



The road between the camps.

List of mammals seen on the trip

Common name	Scientific name
<i>Bovidae</i>	
Gaur	<i>Bos gaurus</i>
<i>Cercopithecidae</i>	
Arunachal Macaque	<i>Macaca munzala</i>
Capped Langur	<i>Trachypithecus pileatus</i>

<i>Cervidae</i>	
Northern Red Muntjac	Muntiacus vaginalis
<i>Elephantidae</i>	
Asian Elephant	Elephas maximus
<i>Felidae</i>	
Leopard Cat	Prionailurus bengalensis
<i>Mustelidae</i>	
Yellow-throated Marten	Martes flavigul
<i>Sciuridae</i>	
Bhutan Giant Flying Squirrel	Petaurista nobilis
Black Giant Squirrel	Ratufa bicolor
Five-striped Palm Squirrel	Funambulus pennantii
Himalayan Striped Squirrel	Tamiops maclellandii

Hoary-bellied Squirrel	Callosciurus pygerythrus
Orange bellied Himalayan squirrel	Dremomys lokriah
Pallas's Squirrel	Callosciurus erythraeus
Red Giant Flying Squirrel	Petaurista petaurista
Spotted giant flying squirrel	Petaurista elegans
<i>Viverridae</i>	
Masked Palm Civet	Paguma larvat