

India

14 Feb – 06 Mar 2020

Introduction

This was my second time in India and this time I spent three weeks in three different areas which is very different from each other and could be different countries almost.

I visited the remote state **Arunachal Pradesh in Northeast , Western Ghats in Southwest and Gujarat in Western India**. All with different fauna, landscape and people. Very interesting in many ways!

In Arunachal Pradesh I used <https://www.wildworldindia.com/> and as always it was a pleasure to “work” with Vikram and Abhisek and they arranged this remote part very very good which included to bring in a safari vehicle for spotlighting from Kaziranga some 200km away. My guide name was Jinto and he has a good knowledge about the area and been here many times.

In Western Ghats and Gujarat I used <http://www.ficuswildlife.net/> and Ravi Kailas as a guide. He is quite well known from mammalwatching.com and a very nice and funny guy. A real pleasant to travel with. Can truly recommend both of this companies!

First some words about those places I visited.

Eaglenest and Pakke NP – Arunachal Pradesh, Northeast India.

Almost unexplored area among mammalwatchers. Target species here for me was Asiatic Golden cat. A lot of camera traps records in Pakke and some great sightings and photos from Eaglenest made me unable to resist going here in search of this elusive cat. My dream was a sighting like this from eaglenest some years ago:

<https://www.mammalsofindia.org/sp/351/Catopuma-temminckii>

WildWorldIndia had a great sighting of a Golden cat for 30 seconds last year when they did a similar tour to Eaglenest. Researchers in the area also told me that this is a “great place for Golden cats”. This was the background why I went here. Also the possibility to do spotlighting how much you want , which is a real rarity in India and the overall experience to explore a new area for almost everyone. Only very few people have done mammalwatching here.

Pakke NP have some great camera trap records from Golden cats, Clouded Leopards and Marbled cats. Unfortunately it was not possible to spotlight inside Pakke. In fact it was harder to get inside this park than to get into India itself... I made some efforts to spotlight in the surrounding areas where there is some forest left.

What I found you can see down below.

Western Ghats

Primarily for all the endemics who lives here. It is also possible to do spotlighting in certain areas around Lodges and in some forest patches but most areas are restricted.

I visited Sethumadai and Valparai but also the now well known Kabini Tiger reserve and Bandipur for the chance of Black Panther.

Gujarat

Little Rann of Kutch and Velavadar NP with targets Indian Fox, Indian wolf, Nilgai, Wild ass and the most important – Striped hyena.

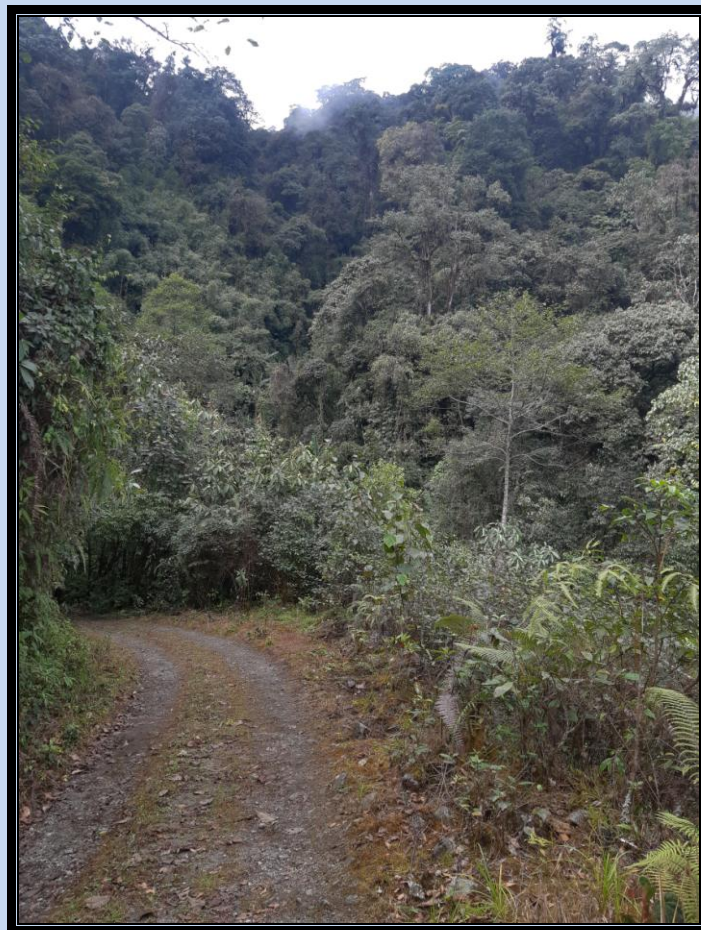
Possible to do some spotlighting in Rann of kutch but not in Velavadar.



Lama camp – Eaglenest. Next year they will have permanent electricity and a proper guesthouse here.



Bombu camp - Eaglenest



Typical forest at Eaglenest



Good area and habitat for Golden cat



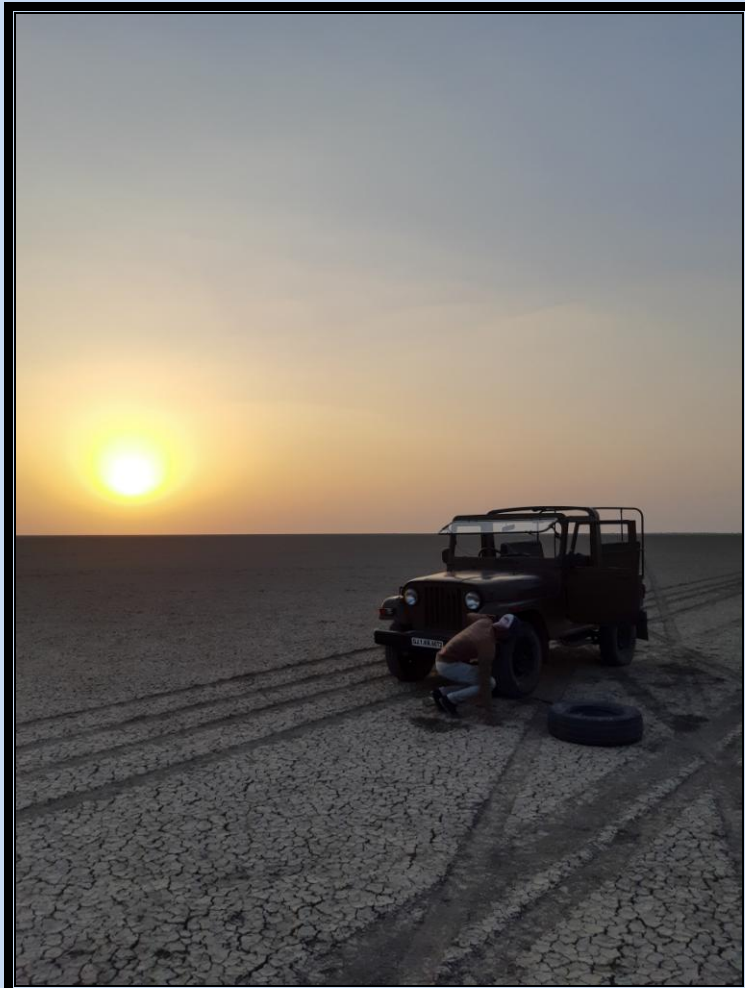
Pakke NP



Homestay outside Pakke NP



Valparai



Little rann of kutch

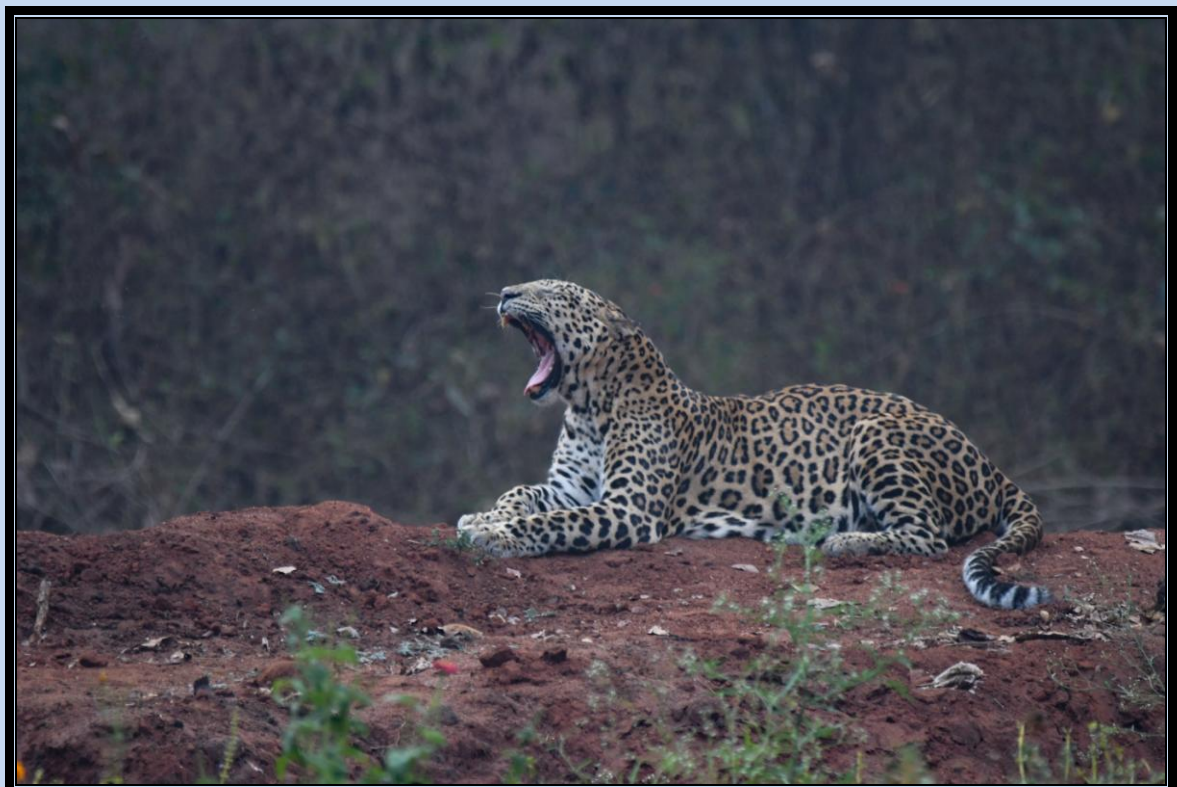
My species list

1. Tiger --- 5 seen in Kabini and 1 very special sighting of a huge male in Pakke. Tigers are very few here. This was the very first Tiger sighting of the year and the first one my ranger had seen for one year... There is more camera trap records of Marbled cats, Clouded Leopards and Golden cats in Pakke than Tigers. Sometimes you are both lucky and unlucky at the same time...



Fantastic male Tiger from Pakke. We followed him for 20 minutes.

2. Leopard --- Totally 3 seen. Two in Kabini and one in Bandipur.



3. Jungle cat --- 6 individuals seen in Velavadar NP or just outside the park. Both night and day. Very common in this area.



4. Gray langur --- Both southwestern and southeastern gray langur was seen in Kabini/Bandipur and on the way to Valparai. I know some split them but I don't...



5. Bonnet macaque --- (*Lifer*) Very common in Kabini/Bandipur



6. Nilgiri langur --- (*Lifer*) One of the endemic targets in Western ghats. Easily seen in Valparai. The hard part is to have them sit still long enough for a proper photo. This one did good.



7. Lion-tailed macaque --- (*Lifer*) Endemic to western ghats. Very charming primate! Easily seen in Valparai where several big troops are present.



8. Capped langur --- (*Lifer*) One troop Seen in Pakke NP just minutes after we left the Tiger (photo above). Nice looking primate.



9. Binturong --- Surprisingly easy to see in Pakke NP. It's totally forbidden to spotlight inside the park but we found a nice patch of forest in the border area and to my surprise we did find two Binturongs in only 20 minutes. They seem very common here.



10. Masked palm civet --- One seen in Eaglenest at the foothills of Himalaya.



11. Common palm civet --- Two seen in Sethumadai while primarily spotlighting for Gray slender loris. Shy and this was the best look I got.



12. Indian fox --- (*Lifer*) 3 individuals seen in Little rann of kutch and 1 distant view in Velavadar. One of the targets in Little rann of kutch and Ravi my guide told me they could be hard sometimes but this time they cooperate very good and it was the very first mammal we saw in “Kutch”.



13. Red fox --- Subspecies name Desert fox. Seen in Little rann of kutch where we stalked an active den. Also one distant sighting.



14. Indian wolf --- At least 5 seen in Velavadar. Mostly very far away as they kept their distance but we managed to get a proper view on a couple of them.



15. Golden jackal --- A couple seen in Little rann of kutch while we stalked the Red fox den. A bit of a rarity here.



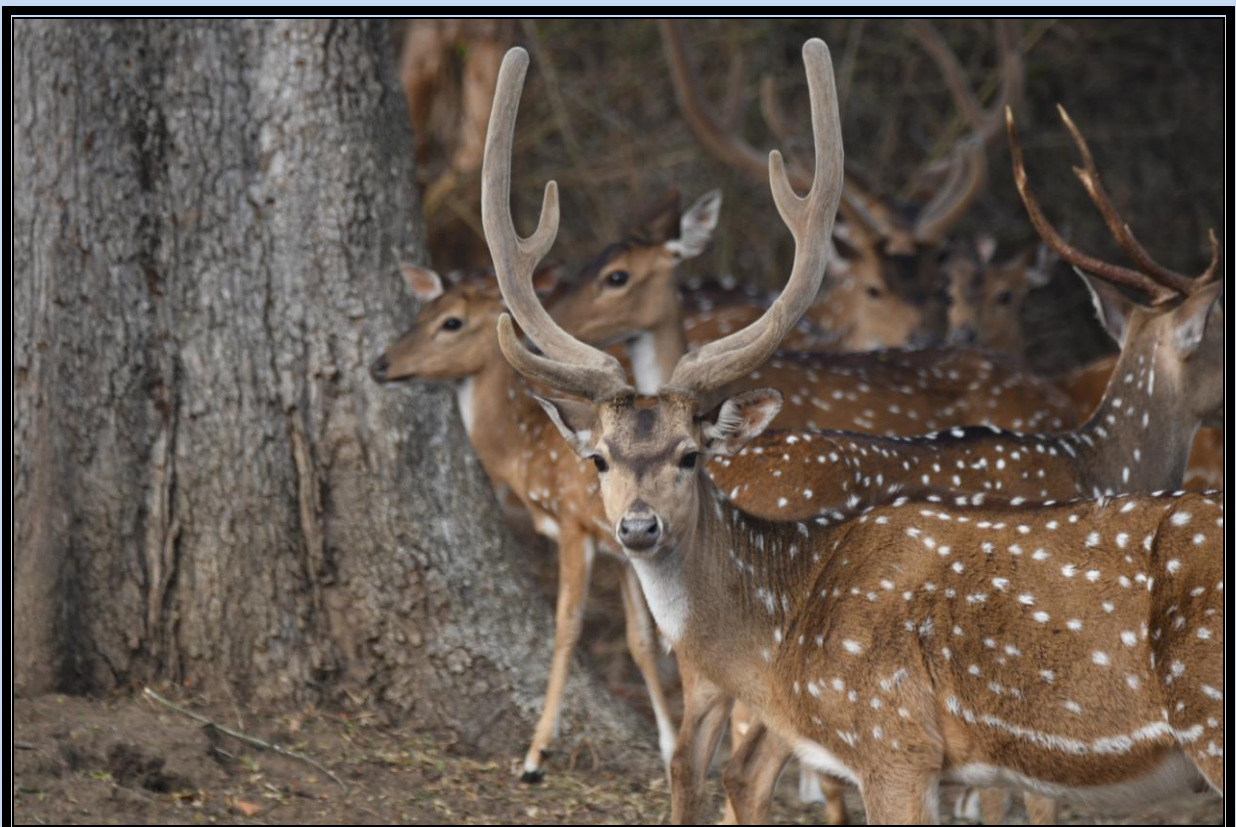
16. Striped hyena --- (Lifer) Big target for me in Velavadar and we were lucky to find an active den with daily but distant view of three cubs. Also one sighting of an adult.



17. Gaur --- Seen in Kabini, Bandipur and Valparai.



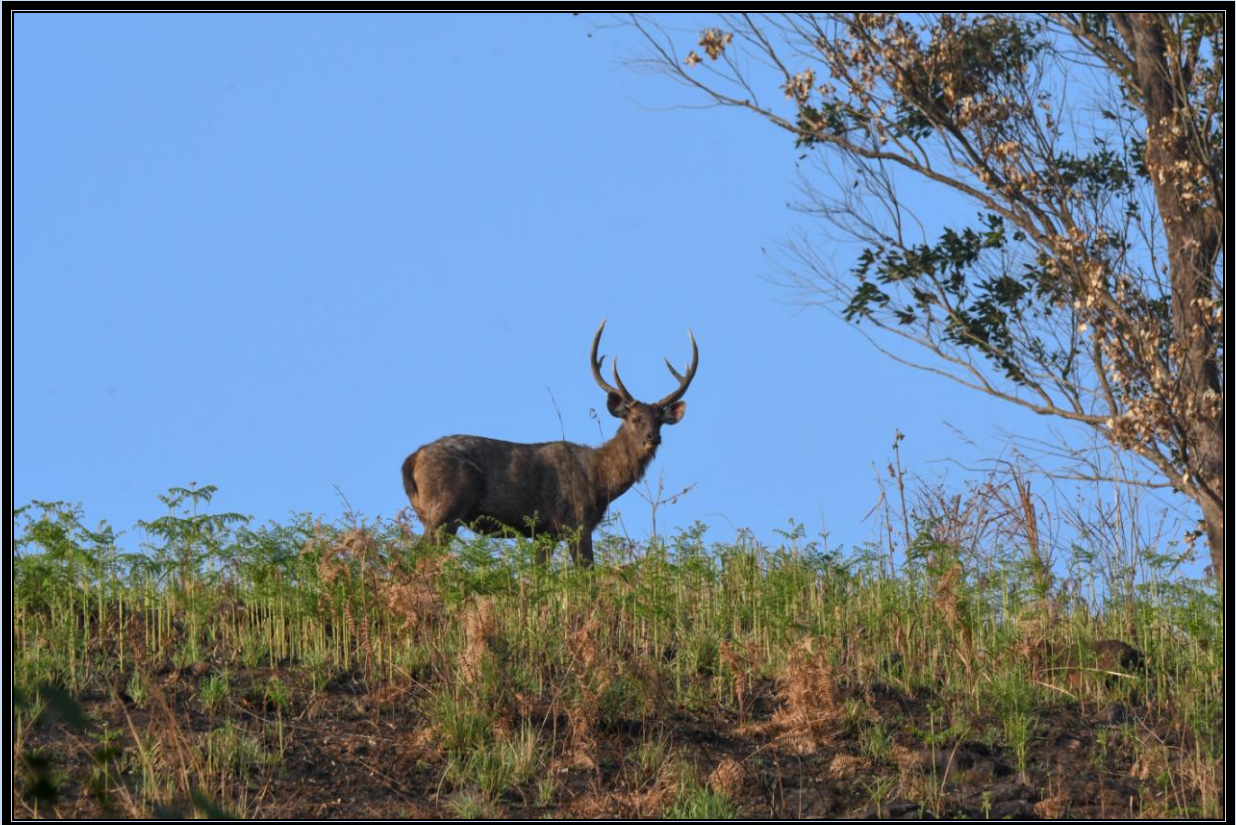
18. Chital --- or Spotted deer. As usual the most numerous mammal in India. Everywhere in Kabini and Bandipur.



19. Indian Muntjac --- 3 seen in Valparai and 1 in Eaglenest.



20. Sambar deer --- Seen in Valparai, Kabini and Bandipur. Very common.



21. Nilgiri Tahr --- (*Lifer*) Endemic to Western ghats. 2 individuals seen along the climbing road to Valparai. They use to hang around close to this road and also on the steep slopes nearby the road.



22. Himalayan brown goral --- (*Lifer*) Easy to see at Eaglenest. On the road between Lama camp and Bombu camp there is some very steep cliffs. A good habitat for them. 4 individuals seen while spotlighting.



23. Asiatic wild ass --- Very common and easy to see in Little rann of kutch.



24. Nilgai --- (*Lifer*) Easy to see in Little rann of kutch and Velavadar NP.



25. Blackbuck --- Everywhere in Velavadar NP who is also called Blackbuck NP...



26. Asian Elephant --- Easy to see in Kabini and Bandipur. Also one seen in Pakke NP.



27. Wild boar --- Seen in west, north and south. Kabini, Bandipur, Velavadar and when spotlighting outside Pakke NP.



28. Black naped hare --- Only 4 seen. 1 in Sethumadai and 3 in Valparai.



29. Striped-necked mongoose --- (*Lifer*) Another endemic to western ghats. Very common and easy to see. At least 10 seen in Kabini, Bandipur and Valparai. Beautiful mongoose!



30. Three striped palm squirrel --- Seen along the road between Sethumadai – Valparai.



31. Indian giant squirrel --- (*Lifer*) More than 10 seen in Kabini, Bandipur and Valparai. Gigantic squirrel and very common.



32. Jungle palm squirrel --- (*Lifer*) or Jungle striped squirrel. Endemic to western ghats. Common in tea plantations around Valparai but we struggled a bit before we did see 2 of them.



33. Orange bellied squirrel --- (*Lifer*) Very common at Eaglenest. After some contact with Vivek Menon (author of Indian mammal guidebook) it is as far as he know the only squirrel in this area. Which excludes Pallas squirrel and Hoary bellied squirrel.



34. Northern palm squirrel --- (*Lifer*) or Five striped palm squirrel. Common in urban areas outside Little Rann of kutch.



35. Northern tree shrew --- (*Lifer*) One seen at Eaglenest. I thought it was another Orange bellied squirrel but noticed it was not when I got home...



36. Indian giant flying squirrel --- 6 seen in Valparai when spotlighting. Common and easy to see.



37. Bhutan giant flying squirrel --- (*Lifer*) What a great beast! 2 seen at Eaglenest just above Bombu camp.



38. Spotted giant flying squirrel --- (*Lifer*) One seen at Eaglenest. Just above Bombu camp where the Bhutan giant flying squirrels was seen. Obviously something good for them here... 75% the size of the former.



39. House mouse --- The very first mammal seen on the trip on the way between airport and Kabini on a pitstop. When you are about to die. Which he did...

Photo with mobile camera.



40. Himalayan striped squirrel --- (*Lifer*) 2 seen at Eaglenest. Small and very energetic squirrel which refused to sit still. Always in a hurry on a branch. He managed to escape my camera even though I tried.

41. Black giant squirrel --- (*Lifer*) One seen in Pakke NP and one seen at Eaglenest. The one in Pakke we saw at the same time we stalked the Tiger, In other words, no time for this squirrel...

42. Brown palm civet --- (*Lifer*) Endemic to western ghats. 2 seen in Valparai. Brief but good sighting and they just went away before I got my camera ready.

43. Gray slender loris --- One seen in Sethumudai when spotlighting in a patch of forest close to guesthouse.

44. Indian gray mongoose --- Only 3 seen during my tour in India.

45. House shrew --- (*Lifer*) One running around at our Lodge in Kabini.

46. Fulvous fruit bat --- One flying around at our lodge in Sethumadai.

47. Indian flying fox --- They had a roosting site in a village outside Little rann och kutch.

48. Particolored flying squirrel --- (*Lifer*) 2 seen at Eaglenest. Small and shy squirrel that "flying" away when you put the light on it.

49. Rhesus macaque --- One troop seen at the distance in Pakke NP.

Totally 49 species and 22 lifers.

Stuff I missed

The most notable miss was the **Golden cat**. I had six nights at Eaglenest but two of them was ruined because of a snowstorm who also spoiled some of the best areas for us as the snow was deep.

I point out on this map where WildWorldIndia saw Golden cat last year



The researcher told me that the area between Bompou camp and Sunderview is good for Golden cat.

As it was impossible to do spotlighting inside Pakke NP the chance for **Marbled cat** and **Mainland clouded leopard** was almost gone.

My boogey animal **Yellow throated marten** once again eluded me. At least 5 were seen at Eaglenest amongst birders while I was there and WildWorldIndia saw them last year but for me...as always when it comes to this fellow, nothing. Seems very common though at Eaglenest.

The **Black panther** in Kabini didn't show up. There is one male who is frequently seen.

Nilgiri marten. If I never see it's cousin Yellow throated, why should I see this? ☺ They are very hard to see but every now and then people bump into them in Valparai.

Despite looking for the **Four horned antelope** in Bandipur we didn't succeed.

I don't count dead animals but for curiosity, what is this?? Killed by an Owl. Very big "rat" with body at least 30 cm. Seen at Eaglenest at around 2000mas.



View from Lama camp – Eaglenest at 05:00 in the morning

ANDREAS JONSSON

Andreas_19@hotmail.com