

INDIA

FEBRUARY 9TH – MARCH 10TH 2020

A REPORT ON OUR FIRST VISIT TO THIS WONDERFUL COUNTRY



SPOTTED DEER (CHITAL) *Axis axis*, Kanha. N.P.

This was our first trip to India so we were both looking forward to adding several new species to our 'Mammals Observed in the Wild' list, in particular we were very keen to observe some new species of the Felidae, which has become an area of great interest to us. Our itinerary in order included the following wildlife viewing locations: Gir Forest N.P (Sasan Gir) 2 nights, Blackbuck N.P. (Velavadar) 2, Bera Safari Lodge 3, Kaziranga N.P. 4, Tadoba N.P. 4, Kanha N.P. 3, Satpura N.P. 3. The itinerary would involve using Delhi as a hub for 3 nights with one night in Ahmedabad and Nagpur. We also spent a night in Agra but that was purely to enjoy the cultural aspects of the city. We had 6 internal flights, one rail trip and 12 extended road trips. (not entirely a satisfactory carbon footprint although some was offset, we will certainly try to do better in the future). All elements of the trip ran very smoothly. A detailed species list is included in this report. For each location I will report on some areas of possible interest.

GIR FOREST N.P. GUJARAT.



LION (ASIATIC?) *Panthera l. leo*

Your first safari drive in an Indian park comes very much as a shock, it was one I was prepared for having spoken to several people before the trip, the main issue tends to be noise and crowding around sightings particularly of the Big Cats or other key species. The use of park wardens to flush out Lions is a controversial practice and was observed during this visit. If you

are able to accept that drives in the more popular parks in India are let's say more chaotic than elsewhere you will enjoy the experience, otherwise you may well find your trip is less enjoyable than you had hoped. Fortunately, we were able to adapt, that isn't to say we wouldn't have preferred a bit more peace and quiet. Our target species here was the Asiatic Lion as it is referred to in the region. I am not too sure that many of the guides were familiar with the concept that under the recent Felidae taxonomic (2017) review 'their' Lions were no longer a subspecies in their own right (ex. *Panthera l. persica*) and were now classified as *Panthera leo leo* along with their cousins in West and Central Africa. It seemed strange to me that this disjunct, relict population of Lions, was the one I had previously recorded two years earlier in Zakouma N.P. Chad. It was interesting to see them but they would not be a new subspecies for our list. In all we saw only 4 Lions, one mature male and three adult Lionesses. They tend to form small prides in Gir which is a characteristic of the Lions I observed in Chad. On our first game drive within 30 minutes of entering the park a Leopard with a juvenile was briefly observed vanishing into the forest as we approached. Shortly after that we had a good sighting of a Striped Hyena but once again from distance, although it stayed in view for quite a while. Our guide was quite excited with the Hyena sighting as he had never seen one in the park in broad daylight, although I was aware, they were found in the park, I was not expecting to record one here.



STRIPED HYENA. *Hyaena hyaena*, Gir Forest N.P.

We did 3 drives in the park on routes 2, 10 and 1, Lions were seen on routes 2 and 10, Leopard and Hyena on 2. As we were very happy with our guide Hitesh we retained him for the other 2 drives, this cost IR500 per drive extra I was particularly impressed with his bird ID skills which we found useful, also he had a great image of a Rusty Spotted Cat on his phone which he had taken on route 1 quite recently, and he seemed confident he knew where it's territory was, so our last drive was spent in zone 1 (not good for Lion sightings) searching for the tiny Cat without any luck apart from a brief sighting of a small mammal which crossed the track in virtual darkness and could have been anything. So, our chance of more Lion sightings had also gone, we had nobody to blame but ourselves, but we had enjoyed Gir, a good start to our trip. Accommodation: Gateway Hotel, Sasan Gir. Not sure if lodge type accommodation is available in the area, most seen was standard hotel accommodation. The Gateway was good in all

aspects. Gujarat is a dry state, you can buy an alcohol permit at this hotel and sales are available to drink in your own room. The hotel provided a driver and a vehicle, a guide was picked up at the park HQ, around 06.30. You need to be out of the park by 09.45, a second morning drive begins at 08.30 until 11.30 and the afternoon drive is from 15.00 to 18.00. 10 cars are allocated to each of 10 routes, some of the routes overlap so it is always busy, this is unavoidable. It amazed me that so much wildlife was observed. The early morning drive tends to be the most productive with regard to sightings. In hindsight I feel we should have stayed here for 3 nights which would have given us an additional 2 drives. A very busy park.

VELAVADAR - BLACKBUCK N.P. GUJARAT.

When Blackbuck N.P. appeared on our itinerary I must admit I was not familiar with the park at all, I very much regarded it just as somewhere to visit en route to Ahmedabad as we proceeded to Bera Lodge, for some Leopard spotting. However, it proved to be a fascinating small park which produced some quite rare sightings. Several reports have appeared recently on this site featuring Blackbuck N.P. so I can only re-echo their findings. The park is bisected by a reasonably busy road, at one side you have wetlands, which are very good for birds and this was also where we saw a Striped Hyena. (Blackbuck also.) The opposite side of the road is flat grassland and it was here that most of our mammals were sighted. The park also hosts the 'World's Largest Communal Roosting Site of Harriers'. The evening we were there around 60 Harriers were observed together in trees and in a field. (Montagu's, Pallid and Eurasian). In December 1997 2,500 were counted in the area. (R. Clarke et.al. 1998 Forktail 14). Ten medium to large mammals are recorded for the park and all were sighted during this visit, some from a considerable distance (Blackbuck, Nilgai, Wild Boar, Indian Hare, Grey Mongoose, Indian Wolf, Striped Hyena, Indian Fox and Jungle Cat) the only one not seen was the Indian Jackal. In the grassland we witnessed a failed Wolf (3) hunt on a Blackbuck, significant numbers of Blackbuck, 6 Jungle Cats including a mother and large kitten and a lone Indian / Bengal Fox.



RAJPUTAN BLACKBUCK. *Antelope cervicapra rajputanae*, possibly with female (right) and young male (left). Captain J. Forsyth 1871 described this species "Suffice it to say that not even in Africa - the land of antelopes - is there any species which surpasses the "black buck" in loveliness or grace." I would tend to agree.



One of several JUNGLE CAT(S) Felis chaus, seen in a 30-minute period, at around 17.00 they seemed to appear from everywhere. They have their own territories which are well known by the guides. The Cats appeared quite bold and were unphased by our attention.

The Indian Hares found here and at Gir Forest were much lighter in colour than those I saw later in eastern and central India; hence I have recorded them as a desert phase ssp. dayanus

Accommodation: Blackbuck Lodge. Velavadar. An outstanding lodge in every aspect, comparable to top end lodges in Africa. Sited virtually at the park gate. Chalet 4 had its own resident Jungle Cat and herd of Blackbuck. Two nights is ample to secure the key species here, although I do know of a visitor who saw no Jungle Cat or Hyena at the same time of year, last year. A very good birding location, lots of Raptors. We did 3 drives visiting both sectors. My only criticism would be that we found the drives rather short (07.00-09.30 and 15.30-18.00), downtime was too long, however it did give me time to walk into one of the local villages.

When I talked to the management about this, they said the drives could have been extended. This is probably a location for the keen/specialist mammal watcher, if you want the 'sexy' Indian species this is not the place for you, simply because they are not found here. The park is small, possibly the smallest in India. (34.08 sq.km). A very quiet park.

BERA SAFARI LODGE. KOTHAR. RAJASTHAN.

We arrived here at midday having spent a night in Ahmedabad. For those unfamiliar with this area in Rajasthan, briefly the story centres around one man, Shatrunjay Pratap. As a youngster visiting the family farm in the area, he became very conscious of the significant number of Leopards that existed in the area and that somehow, they managed to co-exist with the local shepherds. When granite mining began in the area, he fought a successful legal battle with the Indian Government to have it stopped. Since then he has developed a small lodge in the area which attracts film crews (Nat. Geo, BBC) and Big Cat fans from around the world. Our 3 nights here allowed us to enjoy 4 drives, which secured the sighting of 5 individual Leopards across 6 separate sightings. This included watching a mating pair for 45 minutes and having 2 walk in front of our 'Gypsy' as we returned to the lodge on our first evening. This is Leopard Central, you are unlikely to see many other mammals; the whole operation is simply geared up to locating and observing the Indian Leopard. The guides are very good at this, when I was talking to Shatrunjay, tongue in cheek he said "If anyone on a 2-night stay does not see a

Leopard they will get their money back". The lodge has a 100% sighting success rate on all 2(+) night stays.



INDIAN LEOPARD. *Panthera pardus fusca*, this is a male. There are actually 2 Leopards in the image, the female is just visible (far right) in the cave. We are possibly 200 metres from the cave, at the opposite side of a narrow valley. There were 3 other vehicles present.



The female approaches the male prior to mating. We had been watching the cave for 2 hours before the Leopards appeared, it made the wait very worthwhile.



Copulation taking place it lasted about 20 seconds. The male left the immediate area and was seen later sitting on a boulder quite a distance from the female.

Most Leopard sightings at Bera are seen from distance, but obviously some people do fall lucky and get sightings at close range. These shots were taken handheld at 400mm, with a 1.4 extender, hence 560mm, this is a location for the big lens boys.

45+ Leopards live in the area around the lodge, amongst the outstanding desert granite boulder scenery, this prime habitat is about 23 sq. km, thus this area per sq. km. probably has the highest density of Leopards in the world. They breed quickly and die young due to infighting. Despite relying heavily on the local farmer's livestock for food, the Leopards are not persecuted and no human-wildlife incidents have occurred which I find amazing when one considers the problems in other areas of India.

Accommodation: Bera Safari Lodge. Our type of lodge, homely with good food. Shatrunjay has set up his spotting scope in the outdoor social area and Leopards are frequently sighted on the large granite boulders behind the lodge. The lodge is situated right in the heart of the action. The guides are great but specialise mainly on Leopard sightings, the other local lodge vehicles regularly shadow the Bera vehicles. This is the lodge to stay at and part of the draw is being able to talk to Shatrunjay, 'The Leopard Man of Jawai', what he doesn't know about Indian Leopards is not worth knowing. I really enjoyed it here but a few found the down time too long, drives 06.30-09.00 and 16.30-19.00 and some clients were disappointed that they did not have closer sightings. I spent the downtime walking to two local villages and birding in the lodge grounds. Jawai Dam was briefly visited for birds during the visit. The Rusty Spotted Cat and Indian Desert Cat are also found in the area but are very rarely seen. The area is not a National Park, and I am unsure about the status of spotlighting. Generally a quiet location.

In closing this section, a quote from Shatrunjay "The battle for Leopard conservation in Jawai has been won, but the war is yet to arrive".

From Bera we returned to Delhi via Jodhpur and drove down to Agra to enjoy the delights of that city, it was pretty special and ate up 3 more nights. We then flew from Delhi to Guwahati

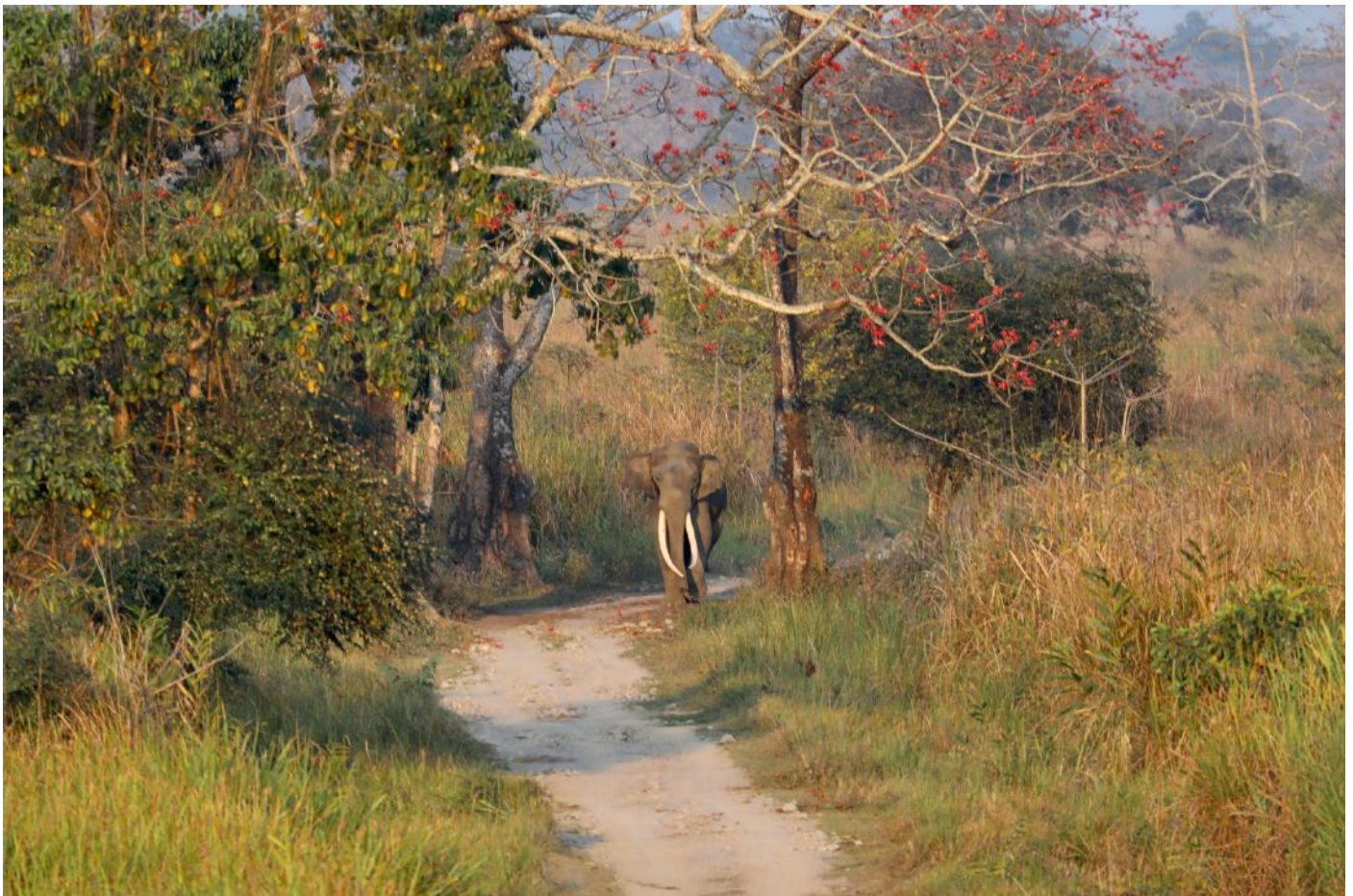
**in Assam to spend 4 nights just outside Kaziranga N.P.
KAZIRANGA N.P. ASSAM.**



GREATER ONE-HORNED RHINOCEROS. *Rhinoceros unicornis*, most people visit Kaziranga to view this vulnerable species. As of 2018 the park was home to 90% of the total population with around 2450 individuals in the park. They are easily spotted throughout the park often in water, this particular individual was quite aggressive and chased our vehicle down the track.



WILD WATER BUFFALO. *Bubalus arnee* another endangered species, these are pure bred wild Buffalo, only about 4,000 remain, I found them fascinating.



ASIAN (INDIAN) ELEPHANT. *Elephas maximus indicus*, before I went to India I hadn't quite appreciated that the Indian Elephant was endangered, on our travels we saw quite a number of 'domesticated' Elephants, and they were also used in the park to take tourists on rides, not a practice we were comfortable with. This male wild Elephant was an impressive specimen with large tusks, within seconds of taking this image he took a left and vanished into the long grass and was barely visible. Kaziranga provides a wide variety of habitats, a significant proportion of the park however is very tall grasslands which can make wildlife viewing difficult. The park is home to a significant number of Tigers (circa 106), possibly the highest density in Indian but they are very rarely seen. We spent a full day trying but our efforts were not rewarded. During our stay no one staying at our lodge saw a Tiger, but I am aware sightings were occurring.



WESTERN HOOLOCK GIBBON. *Hoolock hoolock*

I was keen to try to find some Hoolock Gibbons, fortunately our guide was fairly confident he could find a family group just outside the park in a section of forest which runs parallel to the main road, this he duly did which saved us a trip out to the Hoolongapar Gibbon Sanctuary. Further down the road he also found a group of Assamese Macaque, these sightings were secured as we drove to the Far West Zone of the park. If Africa is the land of the Antelope then India is certainly the land of Deer, Kaziranga has two specialities the Hog Deer (EN) and the Eastern Swamp Deer (VU), both of which are fairly common in the park.



HOG DEER. *Axis porcinus*

Accommodation: Diphlu River Lodge. A good lodge in every aspect, good access to all areas of the park. Our guide worked very hard to provide a Tiger sighting and was genuinely very upset not to do so. Had we requested it a visit to the Gibbon Sanctuary would have been arranged. Drive times were 07.00-09.30 and 13.30-15.30, we left the park later on all our drives, I am not entirely sure why, but I wasn't complaining. We visited the East Zone, the Far West Zone and the West Zone, 3 times mainly to accommodate our pursuit of a Tiger. If you are desperate to see Tigers as most wildlife enthusiasts are, Kaziranga is not really your best bet. But if you want to view some diverse and rare species, I recommend including it in an itinerary. Assam was very different geographically to the NW and Central India, our next location. It is very much an area we would like to explore in more detail sometime in the future. A busy park.

We flew from Guwahati to Nagpur via Kolkata, stayed overnight and then drove to Tadoba N.P.

TADOBA ANDHARI N.P. (TIGER RESERVE). MAHARASHTRA.

The main reason for visiting the next 3 parks (reserves) was to see Tigers, and that was realised although our sightings were limited and hence, we left India slightly disappointed with that aspect of our trip. In Tadoba we had 4 sightings of 3 different Tigers. The lack of sightings appears to have been due to two factors. Firstly, the area had experienced a very severe storm a couple of days before we arrived which apparently had pushed a lot of the wildlife into the more densely forested areas of the park. Secondly and possibly more relevant a new male Tiger had driven out the resident male in the core area, thus some of the resident females had moved into the buffer zone, hence the core area at the time of our visit was low in Tigers. Our permit was to visit the core area only which normally would have been fine, but not this year.

Three highly experienced Tiger enthusiasts staying in our lodge who had visited Tadoba on numerous occasions had never known the Tiger sightings so poor.



No trip report on India would be complete without a Tiger image. This is T103 the new dominant male in the core area. He is 5-6 years old and travelled 45km from the Kholsa Range to claim his territory. Those able to visit the buffer zone during our stay had enjoyed excellent sightings of a female with 2 cubs and 2 young males on a Sambar kill, both over several days.



This SLOTH BEAR (*Melursus u. ursinus*) was seen on our first game drive at around 17.30 just before we returned to our lodge, in poor light this male refused to face the camera. Lots of Wild Cat fans are flocking to Kabini (Nagarhole) at the moment, to try for a sighting of the 'Black Panther', but Tadoba has one of its own, which has regularly been sighted in the park over the last couple of years. Our guide managed to secure images of the Leopard some of which are published below with his full permission. Special thanks to Bhautik Desai.



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The rosettes are still very visible on this beautiful and unusually marked melanistic Leopard.



Indian Muntjac (Barking Deer) were seen in Tadoba in small numbers and were very shy, I expected to see more on this trip, it is possibly easier to find them in the UK. Gaur were also sighted on several occasions, but one species I was expecting to see particularly here but which remained elusive throughout the trip was the Indian Wild Dog. (Dhole).

ACCOMODATION: Svasara Jungle Lodge. A very comfortable lodge in all aspects, ideally situated next to the Kolara Gate. They did try to resolve our permit problems but as they are issued well in advance, they were unable to do anything about our concerns. We paid extra for a full day in the park which should have given us open access to all areas but once again we were confined to the core zone. The full day permits are expensive but allow you early entry and late departure from the park and with a packed lunch, you are allowed to stay in the park during the downtime between the am and pm drives, we were the only vehicle in the core zone during this time. However, in terms of sightings very little benefit was enjoyed, so on this occasion it did not represent good value for money. In future I will be more careful to check exactly what areas are covered by our drives when booking. We still enjoyed our time here very much, but it could potentially have been more productive. I don't think anything prepares you for your first Tiger sighting, the experience is just awesome. Drive times during our visit were 06.30-11.00 and 14.00-18.00, which are reasonable, they vary according to the season. Night drives have recently been introduced in the buffer zone; I was not aware of this. Apparently until 2010 motorcycle safaris were on offer in the park for IR75? Photographers, Tadoba is a very dusty park and for those who enjoy a tipple this is another 'dry' state.



COMMON PALM CIVET. *Paradoxurus hermaphroditus*, taken at dusk in the grounds of Svasara Jungle Lodge. A very busy park.

From Tadoba we had a scheduled 7-hour road transfer to Kanha N.P., which in fact took just under 6 hours.

KANHA N.P. (TR). MADHYA PRADESH.

Tigers proved to be just as elusive in Kanha as they had been in Tadoba, we only saw one and that was on our final game drive before leaving for Satpura N.P., it was however a lengthy sighting and was just reward as we had been tracking her for around 90 minutes, it was 'our' sighting but within seconds of her appearing from dense jungle around 30 vehicles had arrived from nowhere. I had decided against Ranthambore, to avoid crowds but have come to the

conclusion that in the more popular reserves it is virtually impossible unless you are very lucky.



T27 (*Panthera t. tigris*) Female. 3-4 years old, does her stuff for the crowds, not the best of sightings but this is how things are in the Tiger Reserves.



T27 exhibits natural behaviour leaving her scent before crossing the road, viewing these magnificent Cats is addictive, the chance of a quiet sighting will take us back to India again.

I was rather surprised to find some Blackbuck in the park, they have been reintroduced from Pench N.P., presently in a boma they will eventually be released into the wider park, this population are recognised by many as a separate subspecies, Southern Blackbuck, *Antelope c. cervicapra*. (Not to be confused with the NW population I saw in Blackbuck N.P.).



SOUTHERN SWAMP DEER (Barasingha), *Rucervud duvaucelii branderi* this ssp.possibly only found in Kanha N.P. appeared to favour the area close to the Mukki Gate. This subspecies apparently has hard hooves which are adapted to hard ground for life in the Sal Forest. However they seemed in Kanha to spend most of their time in an aquatic environment like the Eastern Swamp Deer in Kazirangha.



This was the only park in which we saw the INDIAN JACKAL, *Canis aureus indicus*.



NORTHERN PLAINS LANGUR. *Semnopithecus entellus* were seen in significant numbers here and in Gir, Bera, Tadoba and Satpura. In this image I am assuming they are searching for minerals?

ACCOMODATION: Kanha Jungle Lodge. A great lodge would recommend most highly. We did a night drive here in the buffer zone, nothing really exciting was seen but it was a very pleasant experience, it was great to be the only vehicle out. The quality of guiding was very good Vinay worked very hard to secure a Tiger sighting, here we appeared to have access to at least 3 of the 4 zones, however we spent most of our time in the Mukki Zone. I felt we did at least get the opportunity to maximise the chance of good Tiger sightings. The Hares found here and at Satpura were very different to those seen previously in the desert habitats, they were distinguished with a distinctive dark brown patch on the nape of the neck and a much darker body colouration hence, ssp. *ruficaudatus*. (Menon V. 2014. Indian Mammals). Drive times as for Tadoba. A busy park.

From Kanha we had a 4-hour road trip to Jabalpur and then a 2-hour rail journey to Pipariya followed by a one-hour road transfer to our lodge on the outskirts of Satpura N.P. I don't really think you can say you have travelled in India if you haven't enjoyed the delights of a rail journey!

SATPURA N.P. (TR). MADHYA PRADESH.

Satpura is an absolutely beautiful park with a wide variety of differing habitats, geographically it was our favourite park visited. The lodge was located outside the park and to gain access to the park you need to pick up a ranger, cross the Denwa River and join your vehicle and driver who are based in the park. Once again big cat sightings eluded us but our reason for visiting this park was realised, a sighting of a Rusty Spotted Cat. During our 3 nights here, we enjoyed 2 morning drives, a short boat trip, an extended night drive in the buffer zone and an all-day trip in the park with a midday break at Churna. Satpura is a relatively quiet park and if you do the all-day trip you will venture outside the main tourist zone and not see another vehicle for hours. An overnight stay at Churna can be arranged, although the accommodation is basic.

Tiger and Leopard are regularly seen in the park, most at our lodge had enjoyed a successful sighting. Despite visiting a Wild Dog denning site on several occasions, a Dhole was not recorded. We had a good sighting of a Sloth Bear with a cub on her back, and most of the common Indian wildlife was observed in abundance.



This is the boat ride to gain access to the park, taken from the park side.



A general image of the wonderful and varied scenery that is found in Satpura, on the trip to

Churna you actually drive over the Satpura Range. The interior Sal Forest attracts a very interesting diversity of bird species.



RUSTY SPOTTED CAT. *Prionailurus r. rubiginosus*, this sighting was possibly the highlight of the trip for me because we worked so hard to secure success. Saeer our guide really took up the challenge to secure a sighting of this Cat, bringing along an extra guide from the lodge and spotlighting for hours, even going beyond our departure time from the zone. At 20.10 we had what we thought was a sighting of a Cat behind some bamboo, it was eventually identified as an INDIAN CHEVOTRAIN (MOUSE DEER) *Moschiola indica*, which in itself was a very rare sighting for Satpura. 15 minutes later the forest ranger who was very sharp eyed picked up eyeshine in a dip by the side of the road, bingo! the tiny Cat I was desperate to see had been located. It seemed unconcerned; it was clearly hunting but remained in view for around 5 minutes before it decided to vanish into the night. Both guides were of the opinion it was the clearest sighting of a Rusty Spotted Cat they had experienced. On the way back to the lodge we also had a good sighting of a Jungle Cat, also hunting. (Night drive 16.30 - 21.00).



The following day was our full day in the park and started with a large herd of GAUR *Bos g. gaurus*, all females and several were with calves.



Gaur calf.



During the midday break at Churna several INDIAN GIANT SQUIRRELS, *Ratufa indica* were observed in the trees around the lodge. This particular individual was quite bold and possibly was used to being fed by visitors.

ACCOMODATION: Forsyth Lodge, was outstanding in every aspect, facilities, food and service. The quality of guiding was exceptional, Sae apart from delivering a target species was a very accomplished ornithologist which we needed and she made every effort to provide a meaningful experience for us during our stay. At Forsyth your guide actually becomes part of your group which I liked very much to the extent that all meals are taken together. All the guides I talked to had a shared vision to provide their clients with the best possible wildlife viewing experience and they were all very knowledgeable about the park and the diversity of wildlife it supports. It is also worth noting that Big Cat sightings are recorded here regularly. We really enjoyed our time at this lodge. Drive times as per the other Tiger Reserves. Satpura generally is a much quieter reserve than Tadoba or Kanha and possibly is not as popular.

From here it was home to the UK (Scotland) via Bhopal, Delhi. Heathrow and Newcastle.

Having stayed clear of any news for 4 weeks the extent of the Covid-19 pandemic was totally unexpected. Plans to return next January are currently on hold but a draft itinerary has already been formulated mainly to secure sightings of the following target species: Indian Wild Dog (Dhole), Indian Gazelle and Four-Horned Gazelle, plus if possible, some better-quality Tiger sightings. I am presently looking at including some of the following locations Corbett, Panna, 3 central Tiger reserves (2 will be repeat visits from this year), Nagarhole and a Fishing Cat location. (As yet undecided). If anyone can suggest any locations, I have not included for the target species please drop me an email it would be greatly appreciated. I have a list of bird sightings which I have not included with this report, again email me if you are interested and I will send you a copy.

During the trip I visited several rural villages and was astonished at the number of feral dogs and cats that roam the countryside generally, what did interest me was that many of the dogs had a strong resemblance to the Indian Wild Dog (Dhole) and the cats had similar physical characteristics to the Jungle Cat. David Raju and Surya Ramachandran suggest in their book, *Wildlife of Central India (Photographic Field Guide) 2016*, that the Rusty Spotted Cat hybridises readily with domestic Cats around rural villages. From my experience I would suggest the Jungle Cat is the more likely culprit. Incidentally their book is an excellent general field guide to the central region.

In closing I (we) loved every minute of our time in India and will certainly return as soon as possible. There can be little doubt that most travellers find India an unforgettable experience not just for wildlife reasons. This trip staying in some great lodges lasted a month and included lots of transfers but nevertheless cost less than a 10-12 day safari (mid-range lodges) would in Southern / East Africa. A special thanks to Reef & Rainforest Tours (UK) Jonathan Morris in particular who worked on our ideas and delivered a tailormade trip that ran like clockwork.

John Weir April 2020.

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MAMMAL SPECIES / SSP. LIST INDIA 2020.

COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	GIR N.P. GUJARAT 10-12 Feb 2020	BLACKBUCK N.P. GUJARAT 12-14 Feb	BERA RAJASTHAN 15-18 Feb	KAZIRANGHA N.P ASSAM 21-25 Feb	TADOBA N.P. MAHARASHTRA 26 Feb-1 March	KANHA N.P. MADHYA PRADESH 1-4 March	SATPURA N.P. MADHYA PRADESH 4-7 March
Indian Crested Porcupine	<i>Hystrix indica</i>	*						
Indian Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa cristatus</i>	*	*		*	*	*	*
Spotted Deer (Chital)	<i>Axis axis</i>	*				*	*	*
Lion (Asiatic)*	<i>Panthera l. leo</i>	*						
Leopard (Indian)	<i>Panthera p. fusca</i>	*		*				
Striped Hyena	<i>Hyaena hyaena</i>	*	*					
Northern Plains Grey Langur	<i>Semnopithecus entellus</i>	*		*		*	*	*
Sambar	<i>Rusa unicolour</i>	*			*	*	*	*
Indian Hare (Desert morph)	<i>Lepus nigricollis dayanus</i>	*	*	*				
Five-striped (Northern) Palm Squirrel	<i>Funambulus pennantii</i>	*				?	?	?
Ruddy Mongoose	<i>Herpestes smithi</i>	*		*		*	*	*
Nilgai	<i>Boselaphus tragocamelus</i>		*	*		*		*
Jungle Cat	<i>Felis chaus affinis</i>		*					*
Raiputan Blackbuck **	<i>Antilope cervicapra rajputanae</i>		*					
Indian Grey Mongoose ****	<i>Urva edwardsii</i>		*			*		
Indian Wolf ***	<i>Canis lupus pallipes</i>		*					
Indian/Bengal Fox	<i>Vulpes bengalensis</i>		*					
Rhesus Macaque ****	<i>Macaca mulatta</i>				*			*
Indian Pipistrelle ****	<i>Pipistrellus coromandra</i>							

Indian Flying Fox	Pteropus medus leucocephalus				*			
Hog Deer	Axis porcinus				*			
Eastern Swamp Deer	Rucervus duvaucelii ranjitsinhii				*			
Greater One-horned Rhinoceros	Rhinoceros unicornis				*			
Asian Elephant (Indian)	Elephas maximus indicus				*			
Wild Water Buffalo	Bubalus arnee				*			
Smooth-coated Otter	Lutrogale perspicillata				*			
Himalayan Striped Squirrel	Tamiops maclellandi				*			
Hoary-bellied Squirrel	Callosciurus pygerythrus				*			
Western Hoolock Gibbon	Hoolock hoolock				*			
Capped Langur	Trachypithecus pileatus				*			
Assamese Macaque	Macaca a. assamensis				*			
Tiger	Panthera t. tigris					*	*	
Indian Muntjac (Barking Deer)	Muntiacus muntjac aureus					*	*	*
Indian Sloth Bear	Melursus u. ursinus					*		*
Gaur	Bos g. gaurus					*	*	*
Common Palm Civet	Paradoxurus hermaphroditus					*		*
Indian Jackal	Canis aureus indicus					*		
Indian Hare (Rufous-tailed morph)	Lepus n. ruficaudatus						*	*
Southern Swamp Deer (Barasingha)	Rucervus d. branderi						*	
Southern Blackbuck **	Antilope c. cervicapra						*	

Three-striped Palm Squirrel	Funambulus palmarum					?	?	*
Indian Chevotrain (Mouse Deer)	Moschiola indica							*
Rusty Spotted Cat	Prionailurus r. rubiginosus							*
Indian Giant Squirrel	Ratufa indica centralis							*

COMMON NAME NOTES: * using the 2017 IUCN SCG taxonomy, this disjunct population of Lions is now included in the subspecies Panthera l. leo, previously it was Panthera l. persica an independent ssp. It seems very strange that I have previously recorded this ssp in Chad. Central Africa.

** Blackbuck, two ssp generally accepted.

*** Based on recent generic research many now regard the Indian Wolf as a distinct species, Canis indica

**** Seen at Agra during cultural visit.

? Striped Palm Squirrels. The lateral body stripes can cause some confusion when identifying these two species particularly from a distance. So, I have only included the two locations where I feel secure in accurate species identification. However, I am reasonably sure both species are found in Tadoba. Kanha and Satpura national parks.

44 species were recorded, **43** were new to me as this was my first visit to India.