

Mammals in West Bali National Park, Indonesia

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For most people a trip to Bali is not about the wild mammals, with the average tourist's experiences limited to trying to retrieve their camera from the long-tailed macaques in the Monkey Forest or watching the occasional plantain squirrel in trees around the hotel pool. Earlier this month I was in Bali partly to look at the situation with Bali mynas and so took my first ever trip to the western end of the island and the West Bali National Park. I travelled with my wife, a friend and our long-term driver and friend. We travelled the northern route away from the truck-laden southern route and very much enjoyed the scenic and largely truck-free trip.

We stayed for 4 nights and 3 ½ days at the Bagjal Eco-lodge, which is part of the Platarin Menjancan resort complex within the eastern coastal region of the park. While the eco-lodge accommodation is more basic (but perfectly adequate) than the rest of the resort, it shares access to facilities such as pool, restaurants, and the beach club.

Each section of the resort occupies only its building footprint within the National Park, meaning step out of the front door and across the road and you are in "jungle". All the sections of the park are connected by a road network which in itself consists of narrow tracks and so minimally impacts on the environment as well. In addition, the resort has put in a number of water points for animals and engaged in a revegetation project. All this combined with the security the resort provides means that wildlife is abundant in the resort area.

On arrival we were shown the resort transport, small trucks with seats in the back and on the roof. We were told the trucks had spotlights down the side and could be taken for night drives looking for mammals. When I asked "what mammals" I was told mongooses, which was a little confusing, but later found they were talking about civets. I did try to get a tour on one later but was told no guide was available, but in the end, I don't think I missed anything. But it is interesting they have a such a facility available.

First day we saw not only both the Critically Endangered starlings in the wild, but also long-tailed macaque, plantain squirrel, black giant squirrel, Indian muntjac and rusa. None of the mammals was at all difficult to see. The deer were sighted as we drove around, the giant black squirrel was located where we were told they would be, and troops of the macaques constantly moving through the bush. We saw all these species again at other points during our stay.

In the afternoon of the second day we went to the Park HQ at Gilimanuk to arrange a guide to see the Javan lutung. As it happened a guide was available on the spot. He took us up the west side of Prapat Agung Peninsula, explaining there were about 10 groups to be found on that road. We actually did not see any lutungs until we got to a temple site near the top of the peninsula where we saw a group of about 6 animals about 50 metres away which retreated further into the bush as we approached. After following them for a little way we returned to the car to notice a group of three adults a short distance away across the road. We watched them move through some trees then into some bush. Driving the car away through some bush they reappeared almost on top of us, giving us more amazing views. Also, on this trip we saw wild boar, Indian muntjar and rusa.

On the third day we discovered that in fact there was a large habituated group of lutung behind the National Parks headquarters, less than 100 metres from where we picked up the guide. Nothing else till that evening when having dinner at the beachside restaurant we saw, and got great views of an Asian palm civet on the beach.

Lastly on my final bird walk I took a closer look at the smaller squirrels and noticed some of them were different. I identified them as black-striped, although the only distribution map I found for them does not include Bali. However, it does include west Java and I could not see how they could be anything else. The rest of our time was spent investigating the starlings, birdwatching and snorkelling, and enjoying some excellent meals.

What did we miss? Talking to the guide he mentioned porcupines and pangolins, but was quick to admit we were most unlikely to see pangolins. He did say the best time for mammal watching was the dry season (he called it summer) from April to October, as this forces animals down towards the coast. However, this year the start of the dry season had been delayed by a very wet April. Otherwise leopard cats were in the area but obviously difficult to see. No doubt there were a variety of shrews, rats etc, and of course bats were everywhere. I only had a small flashlight with me, and in any case had no real way of identifying them, so did not bother pursuing any of these.

One final note re Google Maps, which shows the National Park as only containing the Prapat Argong Peninsula. In fact, this peninsula contains less than 1/3 of the national park with the remainder being the mountainous rainforests directly south, as well as some of the adjacent coastal areas.

Mammals

1. Long-tailed macaque *Macaca fasciculari*
- 2. Javan lutung** *Trachypithecus auratus*
- 3. Black-striped squirrel** *Callosciurus nigrovittatus*
4. Plantain squirrel *Callosciurus notatus*
- 5. Black giant squirrel** *Ratufa bicolor*
- 6. Asian palm civet** *Paradoxurus hermaphroditus*
7. Wild boar *Sus scrofa*
- 8. Indian muntjac** *Muntiacus muntjac*
9. Rusa *Rusa timorensis*

Birds

- 1. Striated heron** *Butorides striata*
2. Eastern reef heron *Egretta sacra*
3. Black eagle *Ictinaetus malaiensis*
- 4. Crested serpent eagle** *Spilornis cheela*
- 5.. Green junglefowl *Gallus varius*
- 6. Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus*
7. Zebra dove *Geopelia striata*

8. Spotted turtle-dove *Spilopelia chinensis*
- 9. Orange-breasted green pigeon** *Treron bicinctus*
10. Grey-cheeked green pigeon *Treron griseicauda*
11. Pink-necked green pigeon *Treron vernans*
12. Edible nest swiftlet *Aerodramus fuciphagus*
13. Mossy nest swiftlet *Aerodramus salangana*
- 14. Asian palm swift** *Cypsiurus belasiensis*
15. Asian koel *Eudynamys scolopaceus*
- 16. Chestnut-headed bee-eater** *Merops leschenaultia*
- 17. Black-capped kingfisher** *Halcyon pileate*
18. Collared kingfisher *Todiramphus chloris*
- 19. Coppersmith barbet** *Psilopogon haemacephalus*
- 20. White-breasted woodswallow** *Artamus leucorhynchus*
21. Common iora *Aegithina tiphia*
- 22. Long-tailed shrike** *Lanius schach*
23. Sunda pied fantail *Rhipidura javanica*
- 24. Black drongo** *Dicrurus macrocercus*
25. Sunda yellow-vented bulbul *Pycnonotus analis*
- 26. Pallas's grasshopper warbler** *Helopsaltes certhiola*
- 27. Sunda white-eye** *Zosterops melanurus*
28. Oriental magpie-robin *Copsychus saularis*
- 29. Black-winged starling** *Acridotheres melanopterus*
- 30. Bali myna** *Leucopsar rothschildi*
- 31. Scarlet-headed flowerpecker** *Dicaeum trochileum*
32. Ornate sunbird *Cinnyris ornatus*
33. Javan munia *Lonchura leucogastroides*
34. Scaly breasted munia *Lonchura punctulate*