

# Bandhavgarh National Park

## India

In April 2008 I visited Bandhavgarh National park with primary objective of seeing a wild tiger. This was an 8 day Naturetrek group tour spending most time in Bandhavgarh and some time in Delhi at the Yamuna river barrage.



Bandhavgarh is probably the best place on earth to see a wild tiger. The Tala range in the core area of the park has a very high tiger density, and the animal's movements are well known, increasing the chances of finding one on a game drive. There is also the possibility of a ride on elephant back to see one if the mahouts have found a suitable individual. Wherever top predators persist there is plenty of other wildlife and the numbers of chital, sambar and wild boar are very high. Golden jackals, langurs, macaques and ruddy mongoose should be found with ease. Other species such as Indian grey and small mongooses, civets, tree shrews, hares, jungle cats and Indian foxes are occasionally seen. Sloth bears and leopards are rare sightings, but there are few leopard territories on the edge of the Tala range, as they avoid the areas dominated by tigers. Dhole and wolf are no longer present in the core area and their populations are very low in the National Park. Guar has recently been reintroduced but as the population remains low they are difficult to find.

### Mammals

**Bengal tiger:** A total of 5 were seen extremely well, from both elephant back and jeeps. We were able to watch some hunting behaviour but mostly we observed animals resting up during the day. The area known as the Tala range is easily accessible from the main entrance into the national park and this is where the

highest density of tigers is found. During the morning mahouts monitor the tigers' movements on elephant back and if they find a tiger resting then tourists can use an elephant to go in search of the animal. Alternatively you have a good chance of seeing a tiger by spending time in the sal forest edge habitats during early morning and late in the day. The alarm calls of chital, langurs and sambar are key giveaway of tigers and any commotion from rufous treepies can also reveal predators.

**Chital:** Seen daily within Bandhavgarh and surrounding forest areas.

**Sambar:** Seen most days particularly in deep forest and at higher elevations.

**Nilgai:** Seen on 2 occasions in Bandhavgarh, where they still remain uncommon but the open grasslands of the Tala range are the best location. Several were also seen from the train back to Delhi.

**Eurasian wild boar:** Seen most days in Bandhavgarh, they could turn up almost anywhere but the sounders were most common in the mature forest areas, lone males tended to occur at higher elevations in the forest.

**Golden jackal:** 7 seen on 4-5 days in Bandhavgarh, close observations were quite easy as they appeared habituated to the vehicles.

**Jungle cat:** One was seen well for 2 minutes in an area of long grass on the edge of the forest, the smaller areas of grassland are probably better than bigger expanses for this species.

**Northern plains grey langur:** Seen daily in Bandhavgarh where they are found in highest density around the lowland grasslands.

**Rhesus macaque:** Seen most days, often in large troops and seemed to be resident around the stream at the main entrance to the park.

**Ruddy mongoose:** 2 seen in the bamboo scrub on the edge of the Tala range.

**Indian hare:** 1 seen at close range in bamboo scrub at the entrance to the park.

**Five-striped palm squirrel:** 10 seen well in and around Bandhavgarh and in the hotel grounds in Delhi.

**Intermediate horseshoe bats:** well over 100 were present in the main cave system in the centre of Tala range.

**Theobald's tomb bat:** 50 were present in a cave on the track up to the Sesh Saya Hindu monument.

**Indian flying fox:** 15+ were seen around the woodland and roosting in large trees in the grounds of our accommodation at Tiger Trails.

**Indian pipestrelle:** several were identified around the grounds of the Tiger Trails accommodation.

## **Birds**

- Great crested grebe
- Little cormorant
- Grey heron
- Purple heron
- Great egret
- Intermediate egret
- Little egret
- Indian pond heron
- Cattle egret
- Little heron
- Painted stork
- Woolly-necked stork
- Lesser adjutant stork
- Black-headed ibis
- Red-naped ibis
- Greater flamingo
- Lesser whistling duck
- Spot billed duck
- Garganey
- Northern shoveler
- Common pochard
- Tufted duck
- Oriental honey buzzard
- Black eared kite
- Egyptian vulture
- Long-billed vulture
- Red-headed vulture
- Crested serpent eagle
- Eurasian marsh harrier
- Shikra
- White eyed buzzard
- Changeable hawk eagle
- Common kestrel
- Painted spurfowl
- Purple swamphen
- Common coot
- Common moorhen
- Black winged stilt
- Stone curlew
- River lapwing

- Yellow wattled lapwing
- Red wattled lapwing
- Common redshank
- Greenshank
- Common sandpiper
- Green sandpiper
- Wood sandpiper
- Temminck's stint
- Ruff
- Brown-headed gull
- Oriental turtle dove
- Eurasian collared dove
- Spotted dove
- Laughing dove
- Yellow-footed green pigeon
- Alexandrine parakeet
- Rose-ringed parakeet
- Plum-headed parakeet
- Common hawk cuckoo
- Asian koel
- Greater coucal
- Mottled wood owl
- Jungle owlet
- Spotted owlet
- Brown fish owl
- Asian palm swift
- Asian house swift
- Crested tree swift
- Common kingfisher
- White-throated kingfisher
- Green bee-eater
- Indian roller
- Eurasian hoopoe
- Indian grey hornbill
- Brown-headed babbler
- Coppersmith barbet
- Brown-capped pygmy woodpecker
- Yellow-crowned woodpecker
- Rufous woodpecker
- Black-rumped flameback
- White-naped woodpecker

- Plain martin
- Dusky crag martin
- Wire-tailed swallow
- Red-rumped swallow
- Grey wagtail
- Paddyfield pipit
- Large cuckoo shrike
- Small minivits
- Red-vented bulbul
- Golden-fronted leafbird
- Common iroa
- Orange-headed thrush
- Plain prinia
- Blyth's reed warbler
- Common tailorbird
- Common chiffchaff
- Hume's leaf warbler
- Greenish warbler
- Tickell's blue flycatcher
- Oriental magpie robin
- Indian robin
- Black-naped monarch
- Asian paradise flycatcher
- Puff-throated babbler
- Jungle babbler
- Great tit
- Chestnut-bellied nuthatch
- Purple sunbird
- Pale-billed flowerpecker
- Oriental white-eye
- Black-hooded oriole
- Long-tailed shrike
- Common woodshrike
- Black drongo
- White-bellied drongo
- Greater racket-tailed drongo
- Rufous treepie
- House crow
- Large-billed crow
- Common myna
- Black myna

- Asian pied starling
- Brahminy starling
- Common starling
- House sparrow
- Chestnut-shouldered petronia
- Common rosefinch
- Red junglefowl
- Indian peafowl

### **Reptiles**

**Indian garden lizard:** 30+ Species was seen daily.

**Northern house gecko:** 15+ Species was seen daily around buildings at night.

**Buff-striped keelback:** 1 seen swimming across a pond in the grounds of Tiger Trails.

**Bengal monitor lizard:** 2 seen on the ground and another lying up in the snag of a tree.