

Nepal - Terai Mammals

Chitwan NP & Bardia NP

26/04/2013 to 04/05/2013 (9 days)

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Introduction

I have been keen to do a trip to the Himalayas in Nepal since I first heard stories of exciting scenery and birds back in 1980. As the years progressed I heard tales of possibilities of seeing monals and tragopans further east in Bhutan. My interests have broadened over the 30 years that I have had to plan this trip and I now enjoy all forms of wildlife. I have been lucky to join Richard Webb and Nigel Goodgame on some very special mammal-watching trips and my enthusiasm to write this report came from those experiences. I settled for a high altitude trip to Bhutan and a low altitude trip to the Terai in Nepal. I have produced a report for each trip. The timing of this trip was at the end of my visit to Bhutan. It was a little late in the year as the average daytime temperatures were beginning to rise above 40°C. The Elephant Grass was also beginning to grow and so I would suggest that the end of April is about the cut-off date for this trip. At this time of year, many of the rice-paddies were being burnt in preparation for the new growing season and that created a white haze most of the time. This made less favourable conditions for photography.



Indian Rhinoceros *Rhinoceros unicornis* - Chitwan NP - 28/04/13

Logistics

Flights

I used Air India from London Heathrow to Delhi and then Delhi to Kathmandu, Nepal. The only abnormal feature was that I was still expected to confirm my flights - something that I thought had long gone.

Travel and accommodation

I booked the trip by looking for a company in previous trip reports and contacting them by email. I booked a fully inclusive tour. I booked with Rajendra Suwal at nepalnaturetv@gmail.com. He turned out to be an excellent guide for both birds and mammals with a great deal of background experience in conservation and guiding. I cannot fault him and he would be suitable for organising and running any kind of wildlife tour in Nepal. I stayed in lodges and hotels of very good standard.

Money

This trip could be done cheaply. It could be organised by shopping around in Kathmandu and selecting one of the many operators that cater for tourist. I wanted to do my own thing and did not want to spend time planning while I was there. It cost more because I wanted to travel alone. I did not want to spend time looking for tigers as other visitors to the national parks would want to do.

Itinerary

The whole trip was organised before-hand by email and I followed an itinerary suggested by Rajendra. I asked not to spend all of my time looking for tigers. I wanted to visit the national parks and spend my time looking for the less easily seen mammals. It was a balance. I could have seen a tiger if I had stayed by the river at Bardia. I had seen

tigers well and in good numbers in India in 2007 and wanted to see the other wildlife. I was pleased with my approach.

Accommodation

A complete range of quality of accommodation are available in all of the main tourist areas. I stayed in lodges and hotels of very good standard. Bardia was a little less developed than Chitwan.

Food

Every day there was good quality food made available three times a day. Rajendra has much experience in running tours and was careful to accommodate me with the requirements of any western tourist. The tour was of an excellent standard and was not what I am used to.

Itinerary

26/04/13	Drive from Kathmandu to Chitwan. Afternoon walking by the river at Chitwan.	Overnight Chitwan
27/04/13	Early Elephant ride. Walking safari at Chitwan.	Chitwan
28/04/13	Driving safari at Chitwan.	Chitwan
29/04/13	Walk in the riverine forest then canoe trip. Drive to Lumbini. Visit the Sarus Crane Project and then spotlighting.	Lumbini
30/04/13	Early morning at Lumbini then drive to Bardia. Late afternoon at Babai Dam.	Bardia
01/05/13	Walking safari at Bardia.	Bardia
02/05/13	Driving Safari at Bardia.	Bardia
03/05/13	Drive to Chisapani. Return spotlighting on the main East-West Highway that runs through the park.	Bardia
04/05/13	Drive to Khairapur Blackbuck Sanctuary. Flight from Nepalgunj to Kathmandu.	

Mammal Checklist

Species	Records
Rhesus Macaque <i>Macaca mulatta</i>	28/04/13 - 1 in Chitwan NP. 29/04/13 - 2 in Chitwan NP. 30/04/13 - 51 in the eastern sections of Bardia NP and on the banks of the river near the Babai Dam. 02/05/13 - 73 in Bardia NP. 03/05/13 - 12 in Bardia NP.
Terai Grey Langur <i>Semnopithecus hector</i>	27/04/13 - 12 in Chitwan NP. 28/04/13 - 9 in Chitwan NP. 01/05/13 - 9 in Bardia NP. 02/05/13 - 30 in Bardia NP. 03/05/13 - 14 in Bardia NP.
Golden Jackal <i>Canus aureus</i>	27/04/13 - 1 in the community forest at Kasara. Seen during an elephant ride. The jackal's attention was taken by something else in the forest, it ignored the elephant. 03/05/13 - 1 walking along the road at dusk 2 km east of Chisapani.
Bengal Fox <i>Vulpes bengalensis</i>	29/04/13 - 1 at Lumbini whilst spotlighting.
Sloth Bear <i>Melursus ursinus</i>	27/04/13 - 3 near Kasara, Chitwan NP. An adult with two young. 28/04/13 - 1 near Kasara, Chitwan NP.
Smooth-coated Otter <i>Lutra perspicillata</i>	01/05/13 - 8 Bardia NP. A family party.
Small Indian Civet <i>Viverricula indica</i>	29/04/13 - 1 west of Lumbini in farmland whilst spotlighting.
Indian Grey Mongoose <i>Herpestes edwardsi</i>	02/05/13 - 1 crossing the track in front of the jeep, near Kasara, Chitwan NP.
Jungle Cat <i>Felis chaus</i>	27/04/13 - 1 in the community forest at Kasara. Seen during an elephant ride. It ignored the elephant and washed itself in the early morning light. 29/04/13 - 3 west of Lumbini in farmland whilst spotlighting.

	03/05/13 - 2 in farmland east of Thakurdwara whilst spotlighting.
Indian Elephant <i>Elephas maximus</i>	01/05/13 - 28 walking in line, late in the evening near the Chitwan NP entrance. It took over twenty minutes for the heard to pass and made us late leaving the park. 02/05/13 - 1 young male hiding behind a tree in Bardia NP near the Karnali River.
Indian Rhinoceros <i>Rhinoceros unicornis</i>	28/04/13 - 10 in Chitwan NP. 5 of these were associating with or in water during this hot time of year. 01/05/13 - 3 in Bardia NP near the Karnali River.
Wild Boar <i>Sus scrofa</i>	27/04/13 - 7 in Chitwan NP. 28/04/13 - 12 in Chitwan NP. 02/05/13 - 5 in Bardia NP.
Indian Muntjac <i>Muntiacus muntjak</i>	27/04/13 - 2 in Chitwan NP. 28/04/13 - 3 in Chitwan NP. 02/05/13 - 3 in Bardia NP.
Chital/Spotted Deer <i>Cervus axis</i>	27/04/13 - 18 in Chitwan NP. 28/04/13 - 86 in Chitwan NP. Most of these were in the community forest which is presumably safer from tiger attack. 01/05/13 - 31 in Bardia NP. 02/05/13 - 214+ in Bardia NP. One heard of about a hundred was estimated. 03/05/13 - 300+ whilst spotlighting along the East-West highway through Bardia NP. Presumably this is a bit safer from tiger attack.
Swamp Deer <i>Cervus duvaucelii</i>	01/05/13 - 14 in Bardia NP. 02/05/13 - 5 in Bardia NP.
Hog Deer <i>Cervus porcinus</i>	28/04/13 - 2 in Chitwan NP. 01/05/13 - 7 in Bardia NP. 02/05/13 - 5 in Bardia NP.
Sambar <i>Cervus unicolor</i>	27/04/13 - 1 in Chitwan NP. 02/05/13 - 6 in Bardia NP.
Nilgai <i>Boselaphus tragocamelus</i>	29/04/13 - 18 in Lumbini Park. 6 of these whilst spotlighting.
Gaur <i>Bos gaurus</i>	27/04/13 - 1 in Chitwan NP. 28/04/13 - 1 in Chitwan NP.
Blackbuck <i>Antelope cervicapra</i>	04/05/13 - 32 near the main gate at Khairapur Sanctuary.
Rufous-tailed Hare <i>Lepus nigricollis</i>	29/04/13 - 1 at Lumbini whilst spotlighting.
Northern (Five-striped) Palm Squirrel <i>Funambulus pennantii</i>	25/04/13 - 2 in the Garden of Dreams, Kathmandu. 28/04/13 - 1 in Chitwan NP.
22 species	

Selected other mammal possibilities

Tiger *Panthera tigris* - is difficult in Chitwan, but a possibility in Bardia. Although still present in good numbers at Chitwan, Tiger is rarely seen by tourists. A concerted effort to see Tiger in Bardia would have been successful whilst I was there.

Leopard *Panthera pardus* - was seen in Chitwan near Tiger Tops and in Bardia near the entrance whilst I was there.

Gangetic Dolphin *Platanista gangetica* - the last viable population of River dolphin in Nepal is in the Karnali River at the western end of Bardia NP. The numbers are dwindling as more and more pressure is placed on the river for farming and power. The water levels have gone down and the dolphins are being seen less and less by tourists visiting Bardia. They still survive in the western channels of the Karnali River in Nepal, but for how long?

Sites Visited

Chitwan NP

Chitwan National Park is a large lowland reserve in south-central Nepal. The park covers 932 sq km and is

surrounded by conservation areas, and other reserves. It is a mix of grassland, riverine forest and deciduous forest. It is good for birds and has a healthy population of many mammals species, particularly Indian Rhinoceros. The wildlife is protected by a series of army bases and we saw several foot patrols as well. I stayed at the Jungle Villa Resort on the north bank of the Rapti River near the Kasara Bridge. A rhino entered the compound one night while I was there. This resort allows access to a quiet part of Chitwan NP about 20km west of the main tourist centre at Sauraha. Spotlighting was not allowed in the park.

Lumbini

Lumbini is a Bhuddist pilgrimage site where Bhudda lived in his early years. It is situated in south-central Nepal, four hours drive west of Chitwan NP. Bhudda's birthplace is surrounded by a park which offers refuge for wildlife in a large area of Terai farmland. Nilgai can be found here. There are persecuted for eating crops in the surrounding farmland and survive in small numbers. The park area where the Nilgai find shelter is only 3 sq km.

Bardia NP

Bardia National Park is a large lowland reserve in south-west Nepal. The park covers 968 sq km and is a mix of grassland, riverine forest and deciduous forest. It has a healthy population of many mammals species, particularly Tigers. Rhinoceroses have been re-introduced here from Chitwan, but they are not doing as well here. The surviving Rhinoceroses are in the west of the park near the army presence and I did see three of them. This is the best opportunity in Nepal to see Tigers and Indian Elephants. I stayed at the Nepal Wildlife Resort in Thakurdwara the main tourist village. Spotlighting was not allowed in the park.

Khairapur Sanctuary

The Blackbuck Conservation Area is south of Bardia Nation Park. It covers 16 sq km and was setup in 2009. The reserve has been setup to protect Blackbucks because their feeding areas have become fragmented and they have much pressure from farmers. The grassland in the reserve has been specifically prepared for them.

Other Wildlife

Chitwan NP

Greater Painted-snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*

Indian Pitta *Pitta brachyura*

Orange-headed Thrush *Zoothera citrina*

Mugger Crocodile *Crocodylus palustris*

Gharial *Gavialis gangeticus*

Indian Monitor *Varanus bengalensis*

Lumbini

Sarus Crane *Grus antigone*

Pheasant-tailed Jacana *Hydrophasianus chirurgus*

Bardia NP

Brown Fish-owl *Ketupa zeylonensis*

Great Slaty Woodpecker *Mulleripicus pulverulentus*

Mugger Crocodile *Crocodylus palustris*

Gharial *Gavialis gangeticus*

Gangetic Soft-shelled Turtle *Nilssonina gangetica*

References

A guide to the Mammals of China, (2008), Andrew Smith, Yan Xie and Frederico Gemma.

Field guide to the Mammals of the Indian Subcontinent, K K Gurung and Raj Singh

Birds of Nepal, (2000), Richard Grimmett, Carol Inskipp and Tim Inskipp

Acknowledgements

Thanks go to Richard Webb and Nigel Goodgame for background knowledge and advice.

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Photographs



Rapti River on the northern edge of Chitwan NP



Riverine Forest - Chitwan NP



Jeep track - Chitwan NP



Sal Forest - Chitwan NP



Lumbini parkland



Lumbini farmland. Good for Sarus Crane and Jungle Cat.



Babai Dam - Bardia NP. Good for Mugger and Gharial.



Eastern channel of the River Karnali in Bardia NP. An area where tiger was being seen regularly.



Forest pool - Bardia NP



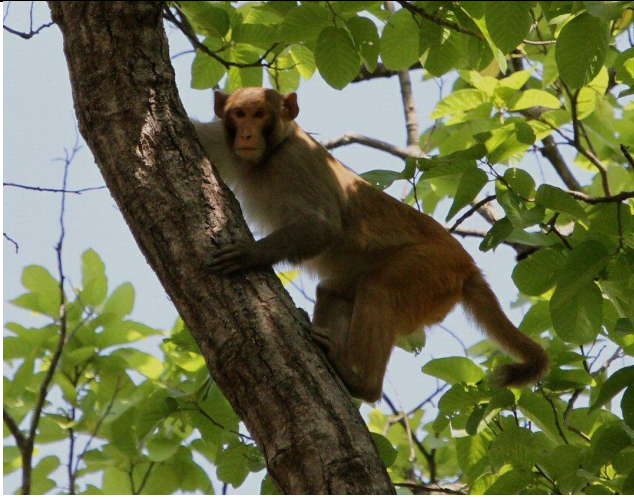
Open grassland in Bardia NP



River Karnali at Chisapani



Khairapur Blackbuck Sanctuary



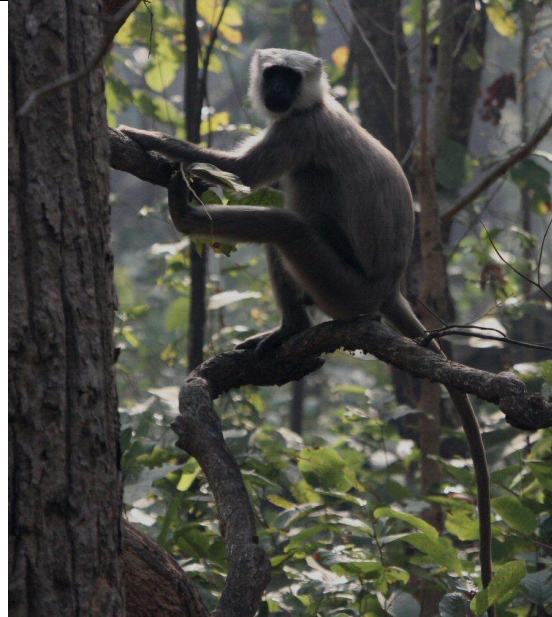
Rhesus Macaque *Macaca mulatta* - Bardia NP



Sloth Bear *Melursus ursinus* - Chitwan NP



Terai Grey Langur *Semnopithecus hector* - Bardia NP



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Terai Grey Langur *Semnopithecus hector* - Bardia NP



Golden Jackal *Canus aureus* - Chitwan NP



Golden Jackal *Canus aureus* - Chitwan NP



Golden Jackal *Canus aureus* - Chitwan NP



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Golden Jackal *Canus aureus* - Chitwan NP



Smooth-coated Otter *Lutra perspicillata* - Bardia NP



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Jungle Cat *Felis chaus* - Chitwan NP



Jungle Cat *Felis chaus* - Chitwan NP



Jungle Cat *Felis chaus* - Chitwan NP



Indian Elephant *Elephas maximus* - Bardia NP



Indian Elephant *Elephas maximus* - Bardia NP. Part of a 28-strong herd that walked by in single file.



Indian Rhinoceros *Rhinoceros unicornis* - Chitwan NP



Indian Rhinoceros *Rhinoceros unicornis* - Chitwan NP



Wild Boar *Sus scrofa* - Bardia NP



Wild Boar *Sus scrofa* - Bardia NP



Chital/Spotted Deer *Cervus axis* - Chitwan NP



Chital/Spotted Deer *Cervus axis* - Chitwan NP



Swamp Deer *Cervus duvaucelii* - Bardia NP



Swamp Deer *Cervus duvaucelii* - Bardia NP



Hog Deer *Cervus porcinus* - Bardia NP



Sambar *Cervus unicolor* - Bardia NP



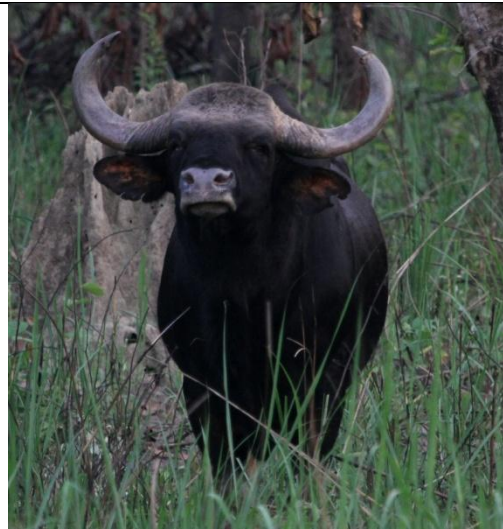
Nilgai *Boselaphus tragocamelus* - Lumbini



Nilgai *Boselaphus tragocamelus* - Lumbini



Gaur *Bos gaurus* - Chitwan NP



Gaur *Bos gaurus* - Chitwan NP



Blackbuck *Antelope cervicapra* - Khairapur Sanctuary



Blackbuck *Antelope cervicapra* - Khairapur Sanctuary



Blackbuck *Antelope cervicapra* - Khairapur Blackbuck Sanctuary



Northern (Five-striped) Palm Squirrel *Funambulus pennantii* - Kathmandu