

Trip report India: Ladakh, Gujarat, Madja Pradesh & Assam

9 February 2013 – 16 march 2013

Since I completed most of my big cat list in South America end 2011 with Puma and Jaguar (see trip report Brasil and trip report Chile) I had only one big cat left to find... The mysterious ghost of the high Himalayas, 'the Shan' better known as snow leopard (*Uncia uncia*). The last days of my South America trip I visited the zoo of Buenos Aires. There I saw this special cat with its heavy fur laying on a rock. It was then I knew that this cat would become my next project!

So that's why I planned a trip to India of which I found and read some good reports from www.mammalwatching.com. Since I wanted to do things right and be efficient with travel time I combined a trip for snow leopard in Ladakh with some other parts of India to visit national parks for Lion, Tiger and One horned Rhinoceros. Here fore I had to visit parks in Gujarat (Gir), Madja Pradesh (Kanha and Bandhavgarh) and Assam (Kaziranga). All would depend also of costs obviously. So I first planned a tour for two weeks to Ladakh which is the standard time most tour companies offer and three weeks for the other parks, this would promise to be a great trip!

For the trip to Ladakh I contacted some organisations for an offer. Most of them have the same trip of two weeks to Ladakh of which you will be 8 days in the field looking for snow leopard. All the prices were more or less the same and not cheap, around 2000 euro pp for the 14 days. Quite a lot of money. But then I got contacted with two Dutch guys who already had booked a tour with www.mountaininitiatives.com They were happy with us (me and three friends) to join. Mountain initiatives works with group size discount! So we would be with 6 persons which gave a good discount! Eventually an Indian woman also joined so we even got a bigger discount. The contact with Stanzin Gurmat the contact of 'mountain initiatives' was good an everything carried out well. I would recommend this tour operator.

The final part and extra three weeks of this trip we travelled with three of us. We booked this at www.asianadventures.com They made a flexible program to all parks we planned to visit and connected it with efficient transportation. They are also a company I would recommend for good service.

So I will split this report in three sections:

- 1) arrival Delhi and day visit Sultanpur & Bhindawas
- 2) Ladakh for snow leopard
- 3) All other parks of India.

Since photography is my passion I always try as best to make a good picture of any mammal I see during the trip.

I hope you will enjoy this report and feel free to commend or ask questions!

Specially I want to thank www.mammalwatching.com for presenting such worth full trip reports. For me it was of great use and guidance and more or less I followed advice from previous trip reports.

Best regards,

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Places visited for wildlife:

Ladakh

- River around Leh
- Hemis NP
- Ullay

Gujarat

- Velavadar/ Blackbuck NP
- Gir sanctuary NP
- Little Rann of Kutch

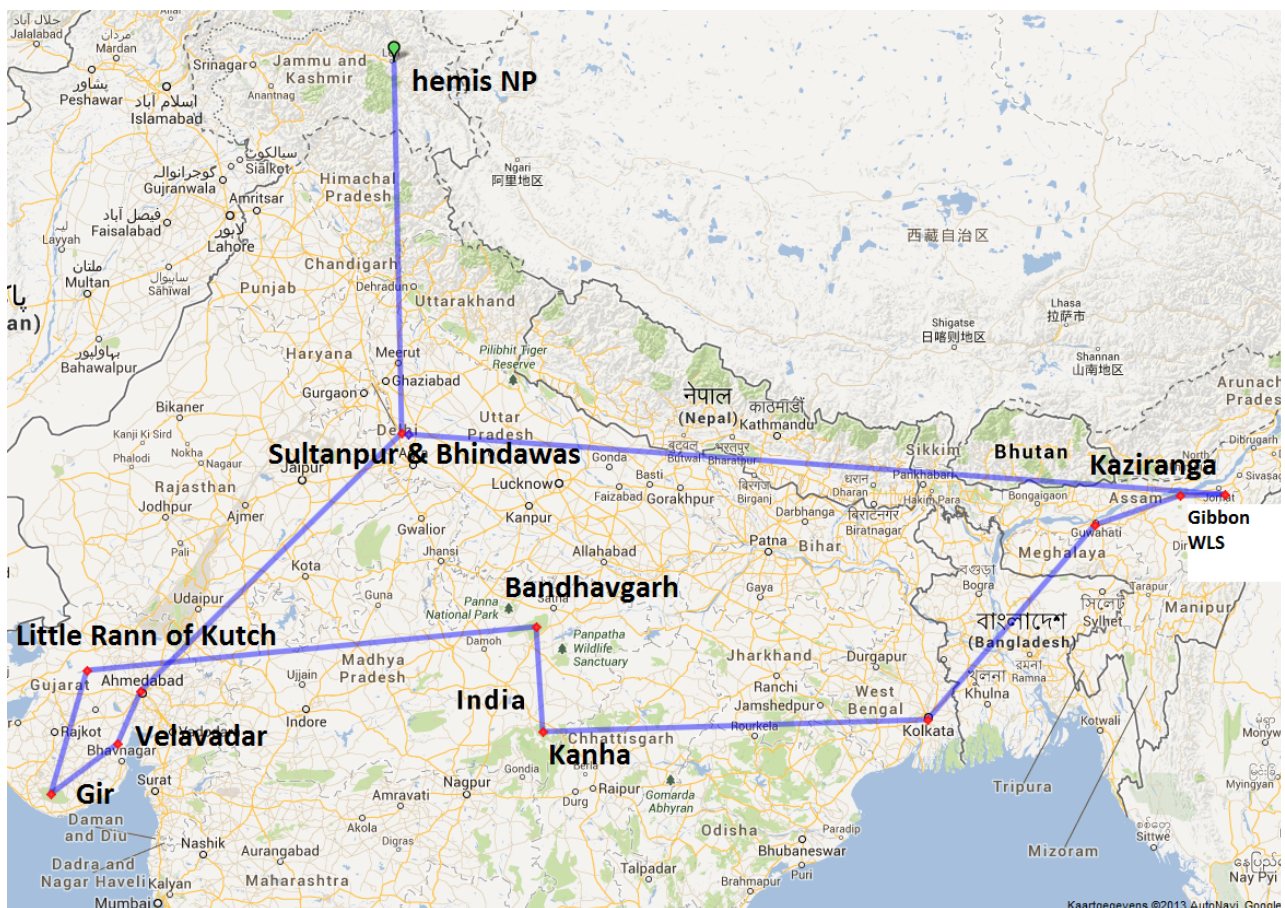
Madhya Pradesh

- Bandhavgarh NP
- Kanha NP

Assam

- Kaziranga NP
- Gibbon wildlife sanctuary

Map of the trip route



Part one DELHI and around

Day 1 and 2 Delhi, we were met in time around midnight with our tour operator at the airport. We would stay one day here and then leave next early morning to Leh. So we booked a day tour with (asianadventures). We planned this extra day at Delhi and choose for a day excursion to Sultanpur and Bhindawas. This is a good start of your trip and the parks are pretty nice to hang out for a day. It also gave an extra security in case of delay.

In the parks we saw our first mammals of which black buck was a good one. The morning in Sultanpur was very beautiful with foggy atmospheres. It is a very good park for birds and we saw some **Nilgai**, a **black naped hare** and one of us got a **jungle cat (which I missed...)** you can spend here some good hours.

On the way to Bhindawas we saw a few **black buck** in de fields wherefore we made a special detour through agricultural land. The black buck were rather shy, no good photo opportunity.

Bhindawas is similar to Sultanpur bird wise, but it is all a bit more distant. You stay on the edge of the lake. We saw our first group of **rhesus macaque** here. After the excursion we went back to the hotel for a short sleep after we would go straight to the airport for our morning flight to Leh in Ladakh.



Rhesus Macaque (Bhindawas)



Five striped Palm Squirrel



Black naped hare

Part two LADAKH

Leh & Hemis National Park

Day 3 arrive Leh in morning. After a beautiful flight over snowy Himalayas we landed in Leh. This city is situated on the side of a large valley surrounded by high mountains. It has a great views. Our nice hotel was just outside of the City centre. Because of deep cold in February water pipes were frozen. So we had to deal with buckets of water... . In the morning warm water was also provided. So 'the camping' started already a bit in the hotel. In the camp we experienced that the comfort of heating wasn't very well in Hemis NP, so camping would still be far more primitive...

Anyway we didn't felt the altitude that much on our arrival, so in the afternoon we walked a bit in town, which might have been too much....

Day 4 Next morning I felt like having drunk two bottles of wine, woke up with an extremely dry mouth and a mild headache. Drinking enough water and taking some painkiller made it possible to make a visit to Thikse monastery and some bird watching at the river looking for solitary snipe and ibisbill. The Thikse monastery is really beautiful. Being the only visitors made it a private and exclusive experience. The friendly monks invited us for some thee. After this we went to the river looking for solitary snipe, ibisbill and white winged redstart. *The white winged redstart* beautiful and abundant.

We did also find the *solitary snipe* but could not spot an ibisbill. I would certainly recommend a visit to both on your day of acclimatization.

Day 5 The start of our snow leopard quest! After breakfast we were driven to Husing Valley. Along the way we stopped for some bird watching and before driving in the valley we stopped at some points to look for *Urial* on the mountainsides along the river valley. We couldn't find any but saw our first *Lammergeyer* and *golden eagle*. We would see these more during our stay. After a while driving the valley narrows and the road becomes a gravel road. In a small village we passed we saw our first *chuccars*. 20 minutes later or so the road more or less ends, even for four wheel cars. From here the luggage is put on pony's and we walked on foot further into the valley. Now you enter 'snow leopard area'. The walk to the Husing camp takes about an hour or so. The river was frozen and you have to cross it a view times to get to the camp. This crossing was a tricky thing. During our stay we crossed the river a view times while on walks almost all of our group had a slippery fall on the ice. It is really dangerous and beside serious hurting yourself you also can easily break your camera. Luckily none of us had serious injuries and all cameras worked well, but bruises were abundant.

Along the walk we saw our first female **blue sheep** on a rocky slope.

At the camp which is in a rather narrow part of the valley the tents are on the sides of river bed between rocks. We installed in the camp and drunk our first cup of nice warm the.

There were two other groups who had their own camp just in a separate part of the riverbed side. All camps have their own dining tent. Obviously we asked about sightings and the other groups had been lucky with different sightings in previous days. Just after we installed there was a shout '**snow leopard!!**'. ..We all went quickly 200 meters up the road to a viewpoint where a lot off scopes were out. After pointing and trying to find we saw a grayish dot on the rocks at 300 meters more high. After a while it moved! Everybody was obviously excited. So we were in the camp and had a sighting within three hours!?

After a while the snow leopard started moving and we lost sight. So we tried to go to another side of the valley and walk up the snowy hill to find it again. It was quite a struggle to get there but after 15 minutes the guides spotted the snow leopard again. Now it was more up mountain and even more hard to find. Since it was walking it was also more difficult to find the point. Eventually everybody got a more or less glimpse of it again but no good pictures. All satisfied with such a success on the first day we went for our first dinner in the dining tent and a first sleep cold sleep in the camp.

Day 6 We started with our first walk to the viewpoints in Husing valley. It was still pretty strengthening going up but we all managed to do so each in different tempo. The weather was nice and we saw a faraway blue sheep. Lammergeyer passed once in a while, but no signs of snow leopard. At noon warm lunch was brought by the excellent helpers of the camp, these guys do a wonderful job every day! And even more nice was that they told another group spotted a snow leopard just a bit further in the valley! Almost at the same spot as the day before.

If we would walk quiet we could come to see. Since we were a bit separated on viewpoints everyone would come in their own pace. The snow leopard viewpoint was not far, maybe half a mile walk but the last bit was a climb of 150 meters high to a hidden viewpoint... I can tell you that it was my most hardest walk ever! Trying to go as quickly up as possible not to miss the animal *and* not wanting to faint... Finally I got there, it took me 20-30 minutes over 200 meters or so... running at 3800 meters altitude is not advised. But the **snow leopard** was visible through scope at about 200-300 meters away. I had to adjust before being able to take photos. All the hurry wasn't necessary since the leopard slept almost all afternoon, so everybody made it to the spot and saw it well.

Around four o' clock the cat got active, washed itself and rolled around a bit. We all expected it would go of the other side of the mountain. But to our surprise it started to walk down our (view)side of the hill! So we could follow it for a whole track. It looked out over the valley just 200 meters away from us. Then it walked away to the other direction in last daylight.

Now our trip was fully successful already on our second day! We were happy with the sighting and we now got pictures! A very pleasant feeling and another good sleep.

Day 7 We tried the Tarbung Valley just the other side of the camp. Going there is a nice walk and not too steep. We saw **blue sheep** and a (probably) **royal's pika**. One of our group saw a **red fox**. Also we saw *mountain finch*. We didn't see a snow leopard only saw tracks. Back in the camp in the evening we heard others had seen a snow leopard with a kill in Husing... So we would try to go there next morning since they seem to stay with their kill for a few days.

Day 8 Early walk into Husing Valley to look for the kill. Quite a far walk, about two hours going up through deep snow in a narrow valley. We arrived at the spot where it was found the day before... and yes there we saw the **snow leopard** at 150 meter distant beside the kill. It walked into the rocks but came quickly back and sat down at the kill. It was very cold this morning and the valley was in the shade. This was also the day I got frostbite in my big toes. My shoes were too tight and standing still in snow is just not good for so long. I would serious recommend to use good shoes and keep moving if possible. Just only after three weeks this weird feeling of tingling in my toes got less... Luckily it all recovered but I was definitely warned! (The doctor told me later this was a serious warning!)

We could watch the snow leopard for quiet some hours. According to our guide this was a special observation of snow leopard since this happens not too often.

Day 9 We decided to follow the initial program and go further to Rumbak. A nice and not too steep walk further along the river through the valley brings you to Rumbak. Along the way you pass 'a natural porch' and then the Valley widens. Views in Rumbak are wide and open. We saw some **blue sheep** and a lone *domestic Yak* and more *Zool*. Rumbak is a nice and rather primitive village we were warmly welcomed and everyone got a homestay for the two nights we planned to stay. From the village we had excellent sighting of two juvenile *lammergeyer* and a **red fox** on the hills behind the houses.

Day 10 This day we made a hike to Urrutze which is more high in a side valley. With very nice blue skies the walk was nice and we had good views of the mountains. Along the way we *found fresh snow leopard tracks* in deep snow. We tried to follow them but after half an hour we found out it was impossible. So we went further on to Urrutze. A bit further we saw tracks of a lone *wolf*. Urrutze is just one big house where we got some nice the and an old local man was reading prayer rolls. I think I saw *lynx* tracks here but couldn't make it sure. Also here were tracks of *woolly hare* but no living one. We did see some nice big male **blue sheep** with very nice circled horns.

Day 11 Back to Husing camp, nothing special and no sighting. Our group split up since two Dutch friends stayed shorter. They went for Ullay which is in another area a few hours by car away.

Day 12 Three of us going for Ullay, one of us decided to stay in hope for more snow leopard. A quit long drive to Ullay (5-6 ours instead of the supposed 2-3) with great wide views of the rough landscape. On the way we spotted **Urrial** which was one of the list! Also saw *Mongolian finches*. In the evening arrive at Ullay homestay. In last light we saw **ibex** far up on the mountain hills through scopes.

Day 13 Hiking up the hill hoping for closer looks of **ibex** and trying for pictures. This was not easy with the rather steep and snowy hillside in front of you. But I managed to get higher up the hill, luckily the **ibex** were on

the run for something, and they came down a bit in my direction so I could make some pictures of these impressive animals at 100 meter distant.

In the lower valley was a zool killed by wolves, we were focused if they were around or would come back. In the afternoon a very good spotter of our group spotted a **wolf** in his scope on the hills further back in de valley behind the dead Zool. Because of its camouflage the wolf was difficult to see. There were more we find out at least two. I decided that this was my only chance to get pictures if I tried to get closer. Although it was already rather late in the afternoon. I took the chance and ran off towards the hill which was almost a mile away and for which I had to cross the valley. So going down and up. It took me 20 minutes or so to get closer. I was so out of breath that I thought I had made so much noise breathing loud that the wolves would possible already be gone. I walked a bit slower to try if I would be able to see them maybe from distant. While walking the hill I suddenly saw a wolf walking on the ridge of the hill. While looking I found out that there were **five wolves** and they all walked away over the ridge. Since it started to get really late I had to go back and the wolves were quickly out of sight. I was very happy with this great sighting of a wild wolf pack!

Day 14 In the morning on our way back to Leh we had just left the homestay and I was looking from the car over the rocks... From short range about 30 meters I suddenly looked straight into a wolf, amazing! There were three wolves and they instantly started running and in the rush I could just make only a few photos. It is incredible how quickly such big animals can so easily disappear in such open but very rocky terrain.

Return to Leh at lunchtime at the hotel. Our friend who stayed in Husing was also there so we told our great wolf experience. And he told us about another great snow leopard sighting in Tarbung Valley... He just came back of that one! I was in doubt, but thought I want to go back there this is another chance. Luckily Stanzin could arrange a taxi. So I went alone back to the park, made the hike towards the point, and there it was... a **snow leopard** at a nearly eaten kill... I only got half an hour or so before having to go back. But this was a great experience and I made some more good pictures.



First snow leopard sighting +- 250 meter distance



Walking down mountainside



snow leopard looking over the valley



Second snow leopard sighting near fresh kill



Second snow leopard sighting near fresh kill



Second snow leopard sighting, looking from the rocks



Third snow leopard sighting, at fresh kill





Blue sheep





Probably Royal's Pika



Red fox



Golden eagle



White winged redstart



Hill Pigeon



Lammer Geyer



Ladakh Urial



Tibetan wolf





Asiatic Ibex

Day 15 our last day in Leh we visited Mato Monastery where 'the festival of the oracles' was happening.

This is a very big festival in the square of the monastery. It is absolutely a beautiful experience since there are so many local people and only a few tourists. A lot of dances were shown by the monks. Each time they were dressed up in very colourful traditional clothes and wearing special masks. The whole thing is just stunning. On our way back to Leh we tried a last time to look for ibisbill near the river just before dark, but again with no success.

So we ended our trip in Ladakh with great success of snow leopard sightings. We could have only dreamed of this. But I will bring better shoes next time ;-)

Part three GUJARAT

Day 16 flying to Delhi and on to Ahmedabad arrive in the evening

Day 17 early drive to Velavadar/ blackbuck national park. The last part before the park entrance the road has on both sides already yellow grass fields of the park. But since it was still dark we spotlighted and saw first **blackbuck, nilgai, black naped hare** and a **jungle cat**. Around 7.00 the park opens and we entered the park. This is rather late since it is already light at 6.00, but park rules it is... Anyway we were just 100 meters inside or our guide pointed wolves! **Two wolves** came running from the yellow grass field 300 meters in front of the car. They kept running and were gone quickly in the bush, but a nice enter it was!

In the park herds of blackbuck were plenty and also a few mature 'black' black buck. Also a few groups of Nilgai. Also saw a few harriers but not many. In the far end of the park a **jungle cat** walked into grassland after being spotted it ran off with high jumps and disappeared in thick grasses. In the little houses that are behind the park entrance we saw a **ruddy mongoose**. We made a round trip and also visited the opposite part of the park on the other side of the main road. Besides birds like pallid harrier, spoonbill and hoopoe nothing new was seen.

Around noon we drove to a nearby town for lunch. In the afternoon made de same drive in the park looking for hyena. Our guide looked at a certain place in open field almost 100 meters away of the track and indeed there were ear of a **striped Hyena**! Sometimes it lifted up its head so we had good sight. Some parts of the park the grasses are short or mowed so you can easily sea animals. Although the dens of hyena are not visible so you need to know the spots otherwise you can only wait for them to walk around which is around sunset. Our guide was very quiet and a rather young local guy not to speak much English, short after we saw the hyena he said he wanted to go back to the entrance since he had to 'help his brother'. Since we were happy with our hyena we were pleased to help him. We knew the place of the hyena and could drive back with our driver. After dropping him off and giving a nice tip we went back to the place of the hyena. While waiting there came another car to this spot and to our surprise our guide was sitting next to the driver!?! Then we knew we were just fooled... Tricky and smart people in India...

After waiting for half an hour the hyena came out of the den in the late afternoon and walked away in high grasses not to be seen.



Blackbuck



Indian wolf



Striped Hyena



Wild Boar



Nilgai



Jungle cat

Day 18 Gir early drive to Gir sanctuary a quit long drive but nice drive. Only problem was the driver sometimes gave the idea of not knowing where to go, in the end it seemed that he did know but there are simply a lot of options. Just before the park we saw two **Chinkara** a mother and fawn in small bushy land. Thinking of making pictures we wanted to see them a bit more close. But they ran off and we didn't see more of them..

We arrived in our Gir birding lodge which is a very comfortable and nice place just next to an official park entrance. Afternoon drive in the park. It was a rather dry time when we were there. So all trees had no leaves so you could see quit far but the park wasn't full of life. **Spotted deer** are around and once in a while **sambar** and **wild boar** but no lions. You get distinguished driving routes of which there are 8 in the park, they partly overlap. So your chances also depend on luck of the route you get from the office. During our trip no signs of lion or leopard... as time passed we thought it would become a hard job to find them. Just before dark when we crossed a dry riverbed one of my travel mates shouted **lion!** And there it was a female lioness laying relaxed at 50 meters away in the riverbed. We stopped for pictures but the lioness wasn't willing to cooperate so only shots from here back just when we were back to the entrance there were **two other female lions**. There were to park rangers with sticks who 'guided' them. This is quit weird that the lions are more or less guided to some places. It is a procedure to make that there are no jams of cars but also gives a bit unnatural experience. But we were happy with our sighting since most of the park is quit. In the evening we spotlighted in the mango orchard around the lodge and found a **palm civet** running off.

Day 19 Gir today two drives in the park morning and afternoon, during the morning we did see first a **lioness** running in the woods quit far away. After that we had a jam since there **were lions a female and a male**. It seemed a couple in love. At a distant was another male we couldn't see very well. Since there were many cars you are only allowed a certain time to watch so we unlucky had to go on...

Further we saw **hanuman langurs** and missed a leopard at just a few 10 minutes... (another jeep behind could see it for a while...).

During lunch time I walked to the village and along the river which is nice for birds. The visitor info in town of Gir is also interesting. There were **hanuman langurs** around in the gardens.

In the afternoon we tried again and this time our drive went to the lake. We stopped for some alarm calls of sambar and after waiting a while we could, only very briefly, see a **leopard** 200 meters inside the forest walking away and quickly disappearing in the forest. A bit further we saw 4 lions (mother and 3 grown cubs) with a fresh kill of wild boar it was more in the forest and not very good to watch.

In the wood I spotted a four horned antelope, a nice specialty! According to the guide rather uneasy to find.

At the lake we saw a *mugger crocodile* and some birds on the way back we were lucky with another two lions a mother with grown male cub and even a bit further on the dam another two fully grown cubs brother and sister. We could watch them very well. But time ran out so we had to drive back.

So in the end we saw **15 different lions** in three drives, a good score since we heard not all drives are successful.



Spotted deer



Ruddy mongoose



Asiatic Lion





Asiatic Lion

Day 20 a long drive to Little Rann of Kutch. At our lunch stop we saw a **house mouse** on the ground. The Rann Riders lodge was again very comfortable. Since it was very hot here staying in the shade was best. But I walked a bit around the lodge in the agricultural fields and a (probably) **jungle cat** ran off in a quiet corner of a field but disappeared too quick for sure sighting. Apparently they are around.

In the afternoon we went to the Rann a drive of half an hour. The agricultural land slowly changes to wild land. Here you see a lot of demoiselle cranes, common cranes and flamingo's. Our first **Asiatic wild ass** also showed up, but not easy to approach. We went on looking for foxes and our guide found two **desert fox** and **indian fox**. Also **nilgai** here.

Next morning we went to a lake were there were many flamingos and ducks. A nice sight. After an hour we went to another part and found the wild ass in open area. These ones were more used to people and so we stopped for pictures. Afternoon drive to Ahmedabad to get the overnight train to Jaipur.



Asiatic Wild Ass



Desert fox



Indian fox

day 21 Bandhavgarh, We stayed in Monsoon forest lodge a very pleasant resort. We had planned 4 game drives in the park but since Wednesdays parks are closed in the afternoon we missed a game drive. The park is nice and has a combination of forest and fields and also rocky slopes around the hills. We tried obviously for tiger here but we heard from previous guests that chances were different. This season park rules changed because of protest and so areas to visit were limited and also elephant rides were band so also chances were less. Anyway we tried hard and found tracks on the road but no tiger showed up during first 2 drives. We did see **hanuman langur, spotted deer, sambar and wild boar**.

Also saw one **jackal**, the first this trip. *Tracks of sloth bear* were seen but not the animal.

day 22 On our last drive we were a bit disappointed since it felt chances were slim, a lot of driving and no signs or alarm calls. We saw a male **Chinkara** a nice species it was shy and ran of.

At a certain point our guide said we would wait here to listen for alarm calls, other cars were further away to check another area.

It was already quite late 9.30 in the morning so we thought we would miss the tiger in this park... and all hope went on Kanha our next stop.

But than a car came from the side of the others cars to tell 'tiger'!

We followed the car quickly and drove into a little jam of 4-6 jeeps all looking in the forest.

After a moment we could see a **tiger** walking about 80 meters away in the dense bushes.

Luckily it wanted to cross the road so it came more close to the cars. We watched it only for a minute or so, because it crossed quickly to disappear on the other side.

It all felt like a rush, but also as a relief because we now had seen this majestic big cat!

In the afternoon we drove to Kanha lodge.



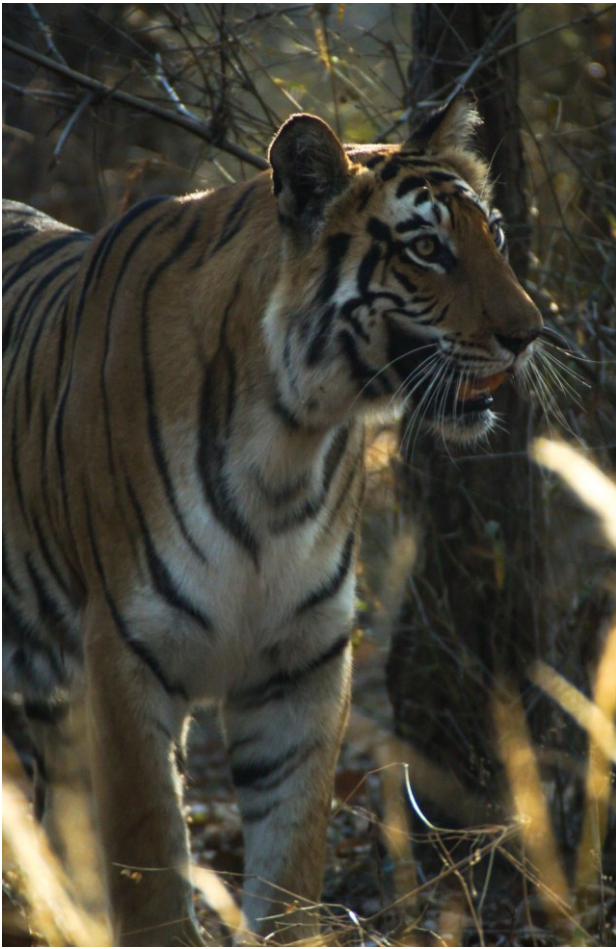
Jackal



Tiger Bhandhavgarh



Pea fowl strike



Barking deer



Chinkara

day 23 Our first drive in Kanha a park I visited in 2009 also. there was a little change in park entrance but further the park was the same.

The views are quite similar to Bandhavgarh but the wildlife is a bit more differs.

During the drives we saw a group of gaur, barasingha, spotted deer, sambar and hanuman langurs and also a view rhesus macaque.

But no tiger, again we found that chances were quite slim... here we had four drives.

Luckily we ran into a car that had spotted a leopard resting on a rock on an open place in the forest about 250 meter distance.

A 'good catch' and good spotting of the other car since it was hard to see with bare eyes. After 20 minutes it walked of in the forest.

No tiger showed up this day although in the afternoon safari we had a nice show of alarmed barasingha deer.

They all were focussed on one point but after 20 minutes waiting everything went back to normal without a tiger showing up.

day 24 again going for tiger and again difficult you begin to know where you are in the park since tracks are not so wide spread here also the new regulations made the possibilities smaller.

Anyway at a certain point there were a lot of cars and a tiger should be around as we were told. There was an old kill that was clear to notice because of a very bad smell...

We all looked hard in the dense bushes where it should be and will taking a photo I could see on the camera screen a tiger pattern in the leaves to my surprise.

So there was a tiger, but invisible... After a while a jungle cat walked just before the place of the tiger through the bushes it laid down on a fallen tree trunk.

That was filled with thick branches and also very difficult to see.

After half an hour we decided to go on since we felt nothing would happen here. the tripped ended with no specialties

day 25 We got the same feeling that finding a tiger would again be quit frustrating. The morning didn't showed much and we had one afternoon drive left and our expectations were a bit higher before. Anyway we were already again driving back in direction of park entrance around 11.00 as our guide shouted tiger!!

In front of us a big male tiger walked towards us in our direction about 100 meters away on the road. Our driver said no worries, it will walk on.

So from than we just drove backwards for about 1 mile stopping a few times and the tiger walking on. It sometimes marked the road and the trees on the roadsides.

After a certain moment we waited for it to come but it walked of the road in to a little dry stream.

The road has quit a lot of those little bridges here in the park. To our surprise the tiger disappeared... so we knew a tiger was around but we couldn't see it!

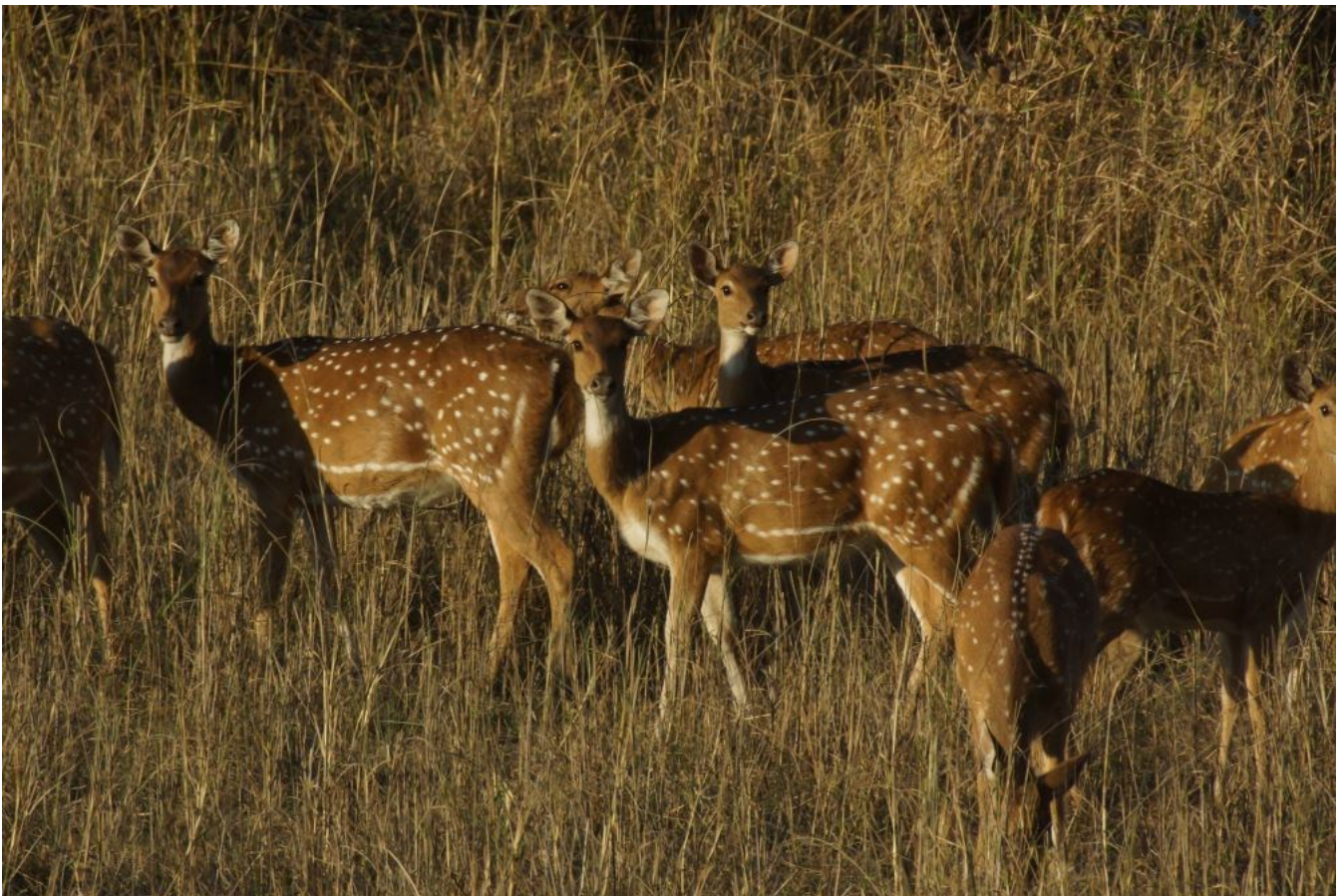
We waited for 10 minutes and then it walked out and laid down under a tree. For another 10 minutes we could see it than it walked into te bamboo bushes.

We now completely thrilled ended this game drive. Unlucky one of our group stayed home this drive because of illness and so missed this great tiger experience.

In the afternoon another try, this time we came into a jam of jeeps who heard alarm calls of sambar. But the tiger it stayed in very thick bushes and after a lot of waiting and moving it ended with a glimpse of a young grown up tiger growling for its mother, it wasn't a great sighting but still our statistics were better. In my opinion chances to see tiger are quite difficult here without elephant rides.



Gaur



Spotted deer

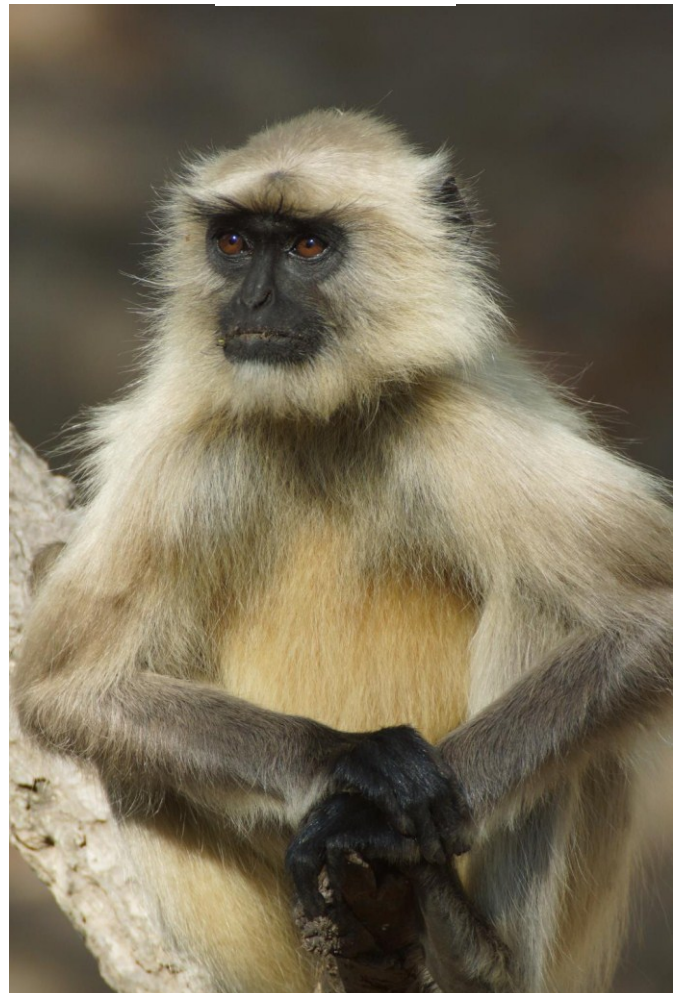


Leopard

Sambar



Hanuman langur





Leopard out side park



Swamp deer or Hard ground Barasingha



Tiger on the road



day 26 transfer and flight to Kolkata

day 27 flight to Guwahati and transfer to Kaziranga. We stopped along the way to look for greater adjutant at the garbage belt. But this was in my opinion a very said visit. I didn't expect to see people living here... There is a sort of village around and people live of searching for things to recycle in the garbage. Also children were walking and picking things. To me this was a real contrast with us coming there to look for an quit ugly bird it gave a controversial feeling.

We arrived at around 15.00 in the comfortable lodge just before you already pass some spots where you can look into Kaziranga. We saw our first **hog deer** and **Rhino**. At the lodge made a quick dress up to start our first drive to Kaziranga. The weather was cloudy and even a bit rainy. Not so nice for a start.. as we drove in to the park we saw many **hog deer** a view **barasingha** and **Asiatic buffalo** and **Rhino** but not very nice and quit far away (except hog deer). As we arrived at the first watch tower a thunderstorm arrived. It was quit frightened with very hard wind and lot of dust, we had to shelter and we knew we had to go back in these circumstances this drive was useless. So it was a short trip this day.

Day 28 Morning drive in de park, it starts rather late at 8.00 due to state regulations.

Kaziranga is nice with big open grass fields combined with elephant grass parts and forest parts.

It definitely gives a feeling of how nature should be, wide and open, with a lot of wildlife.

Everywhere you can look you see wildlife, herds of hog deer, buffalo, rhino and once in a while elephants. And a few wild boar.

In the begin part we also saw a group of rhesus macaque and our guide also told us about Assamese macaque, we could not really distinguish so i don't know if I have seen this species.

Further we saw of birds a *pair of great hornbill, jungle fowl* quit easy to see here, *a couple off koklass pheasant, Pallas's fish eagle, grey headed fish eagle, saddleback stork, monitor lizard,*

In the afternoon we made the second drive with more of the same. We waited in the watch tower to hopefully see a tiger.

But it didn't show up, luckily our guide got a call that a Tiger was seen so we quickly drove there and indeed after 10 minute drive a big male **tiger** was relaxing at 250 meter in an open field just in front of a big elephant grass field.

We could watch for 20 minutes and then had to leave of time lack.

On the way back at a waterfront in de evening we did see short while 8 **smooth coated claw otter** playing in last light also eating fish.



Tiger and Sambar



Asiatic elephant



Indian one horned Rhinoceros



Asiatic wild buffalo



Swamp deer or Soft ground Barasingha



Wild Boar



Smooth coated otter



Hog deer



Great Hornbill



Kaziranga tiger

Day 29 we also planned a trip to Gibbon wild life sanctuary. It was quite a long drive there about 3-4 hours. We hoped to arrive early but it was 8.30 when we got there and it felt already too late. Anyway we started a walk with the guide to look for the primates. We found a single **giant squirrel** but no gibbon. Another group saw a couple of **capped langur** this was a nice start. Since it was quiet we went to another part of the park and tried our luck there but here again no gibbon showed itself. We got nervous and where a bit angry we arrived so late our feeling was we missed it. One guide spotted a **pig-tailed macaque** so that lightened the pain, and we thought no gibbon to see. But luckily while watching the pig-tailed macaque the guide got a phone call gibbon were seen at the begin spot by the other group. So we quickly went back and walked to the same place. And there in an high open tree top was a **gibbon** family eating. Father mother and a small baby. Obviously we were completely happy and we could see them for 15 minutes before they jumped into another tree where we could not see them.



Hoolock Gibbon



Pig-tailed Macaque



Capped langur



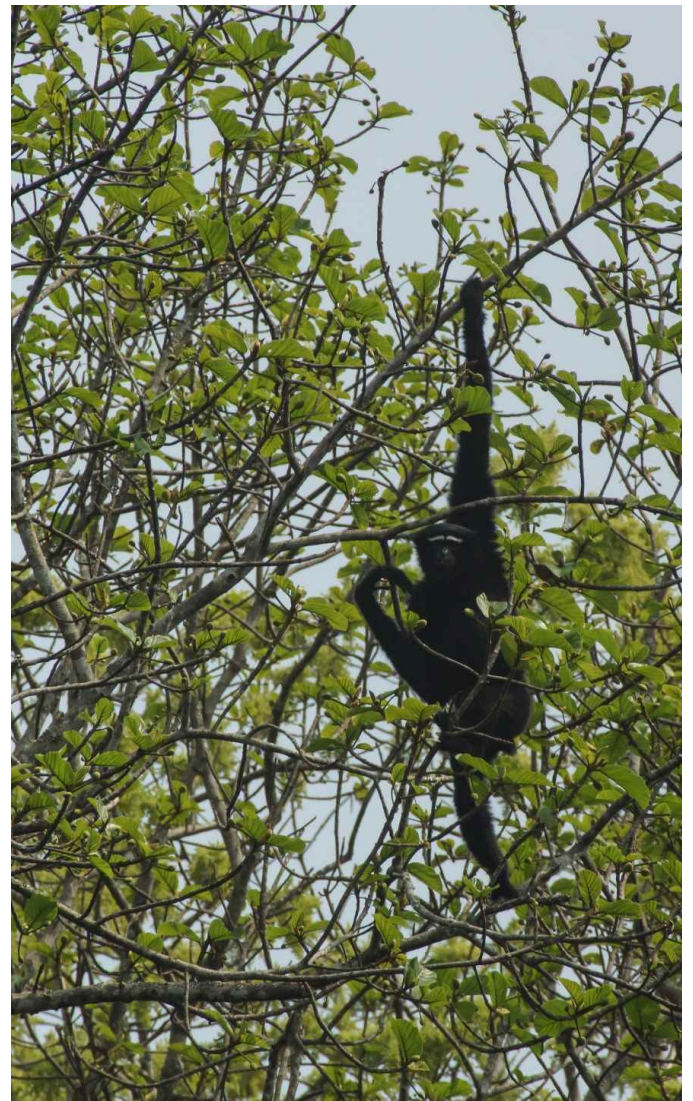
Malabar Giant squirrel



Rhesus macaque



Hoary bellied squirrel



Hoolock Gibbon

Day 30 Kaziranga we made a elephant ride to watch for Rhino from close range. This was a nice experience and it is amazing how close you get to the rhino. I really would recommend this trip. It is not long but fun and different than watching from a jeep.

After the ride we had breakfast and went back for our last morning drive into the park. No new animals were seen but we luckily got another phone call that a tiger was seen, so again we drove to a spot.

This time the tiger was very far away 350 meter it was laying in the river with only its head up. On the bank two sambar were resting a weird sight so close to each other.

Again a lot of cars joined to watch it. But the tiger didn't like this and started to walk away alarming the sambar. It walked to the riverside and disappeared in the bush.

We were surprised to have seen two tigers in Kaziranga a park where they usually don't show so easy.

This was also the end of our trip

Day 31 Delhi – Amsterdam

Utrecht, Netherlands September 2013

Janco van Gelderen

TRIPLIST & Notes on the mammal sightings

HEM = Hemis NP

UL = Ullay

VE = Velavadar/Blackbuck NP

GI = Gir sanctuary

LRK = Little rann of Kutch

BH = Bandhavgarh NP

KNH = Kanha NP

KAZ = Kaziranga NP

GWL = Gibbon wildlife sanctuary

SU = Sultanpur bird sanctuary

BHI = Bhindawas bird sanctuary

Rhesus macaque: BHI) some groups around de lake, BH) at the park borders, KAZ) just after entrance in the forest, GWL) Around visitor info **# easy to see**

Black naped hare: SU) two individuals in low bushy area around the lake, VE) one in the road side
possible to see

Blackbuck: BHI) on the way to some individuals in agricultural fields VE) many **# easy to see in VE**

Gaur: KNH) a group of 12 just after park entrance in the main field and an individual in the forest
possible to see

Chinkara: GI) two mother en young before entrance GIR in bushes just outside park boundaries. BH) 1 male running of a grass field. **# difficult to see**

Hard ground Swamp deer: KNH) several groups in the fields, if you ask guides to watch for them you should find them. **# easy to see**

Soft ground Swamp deer: KAZ) a view large groups at Kaziranga **# easy to see**

Sambar: GIR) BH) KNH) KAZ) several individuals in all parks **# good possibilities to see**

Barking deer: BH) one individual KNH) one individual **# not easy to see**

Jackal: BH) three different individuals in the park. **# possible to see, not easy**

Wolf: UL) being lucky with 5 wolfs in a pack on two days. VE) two animals running from a field. **# difficult to see**

Asiatic Lion: GI) We managed to see 15 different Lions in a total of three jeep safaris. It seems we were quit lucky. But in our opinion it was not easy to see, it's more long driving with nothing. As I heard results are quite different here. **# possible to see**

Leopard: GI) one individual a very short glimpse far away in the forest. KNH) two individuals, one inside the Park a 15 minute view from distance on rock. Second one short seen outside park on the way back to the hotel, laying on a walking track. Excellent seen by our driver in almost dark conditions **# difficult to see**

Tiger: We managed (finally) to see tiger in all three tiger reserves we visited. BHA) one tiger, well seen but 2 minutes KHN) second seen long view on road, third seen brief. KAZ) two seen from distance. **# possible to see if you have time**

Jungle Cat: VE) two seen, BH) 1 in the forest **# possible to see, not easy**

Striped Hyaena: VE) one seen # *difficult to see (depend on guide)*

Smooth Indian Otter: KAZ) A group was seen in a river stream in late afternoon. # *possible to see*

Asiatic Wild Ass: LRK) many seen. # *easy to see*

Asiatic Elephant: KAZ) a few groups and individuals # *possible to see*

One horned Rhinoceros: KAZ) many seen # *easy to see*

Hog deer: KAZ) many seen # *easy to see*

Wild buffalo: KAZ) many seen # *easy to see*

Hoolock gibbon: GWL) one family of male, female and cub. # *difficult to see*

Capped langur: GWL) two individuals # *difficult to see*

Pig tailed macaque: GWL) one male seen # *difficult to see*

Hanuman langur: GIR) many seen but not very common, BH) common, KNH) common # *easy to see*

Giant squirrel: GWL) one individual seen # *difficult to see*

Five striped squirrel: everywhere seen near lodges # *easy to see*

Hoary bellied squirrel: KAZ) one seen, GWL) one seen # *possible to see*

Blue sheep: HEM) several groups and individuals # *easy to see*

Pika: HEM) one individual # *possible to see, not easy*

Ibex: UL) one group # *possible to see*

Snow leopard: HEM) three individuals of which two at with a kill # *possible to see*

Urrial: UL) on the way to Ullay in the roadside a big group # *possible to see*

Red fox: HEM) one individual near Rumbak, UL) two, One near a carcass of a Yak on the way to Ullay. One in the valley around the homestay # *possible to see*

Desert fox: LRK) one seen. # *possible to see (depend on guide)*

Indian fox: LRK) one seen. # *possible to see (depend on guide)*

Flying fox: GIR), BAH), KNH) from the roadside in big threes, ask driver to stop for it # *easy to see*

Palm Civet: GIR) one seen spotlighting mango orchard around lodge. # *possible to see (night)*

Other small bats: undefined (GIR, BH, KNH, KAZ)