

India - Asiatic Lions, Blackbuck and Wild Asses

Naturetrek Tour Report

21 November - 2 December 2011



Wild Asses



Indian Wolf



Blackbuck



Asiatic Lion

Report and images compiled by Manisha Rajput



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Introduction:

The State of Gujarat; situated on the western coast of India; is mainly arid and semi arid, and its vast coastal areas are saline. Diverse geo-physical and eco-climatic features of the maritime state of Gujarat include a long coastline, and merging of major mountain systems of India. The Aravali, Vindhya, Satpuda and Sahyandri (Western Ghats) have given rise to diverse ecosystems including various types of forests, grasslands, mangroves, water bodies, wetlands, arid deserts, saline deserts, etc. giving rise to the rich biological diversity.

Gujarat has saved many known endangered and threatened species from extinction such as Asiatic Lion, Leopard, Indian Crocodile, Wild Ass, Indian Wolf, Black-buck, Chinkara, Great Indian Bustard, Lesser Florican, etc. populations of many species particularly Tiger and some bird and plant species in south and eastern Gujarat, are declining. In order to minimize such loss, the state is participating in global and national pursuits in favour of wildlife and conservation.

Day 1

Monday 21st November

We met the clients at Bhavnagar Airport and moved to Blackbuck Lodge doing some birding on the way. We then had some time free for relaxation. When we reached the hotel, Robert Tizard was already waiting for us. We had lunch where I showed a slide show about Velavadar biodiversity and then we relaxed for a few hours.

We proceeded to Velavadar Blackbuck Sanctuary after lunch. A herd of Blackbuck, Harriers, Drongos, Common Kestrel, and Larks were found there. We searched for Hyena and got a glimpse in the evening. At dusk we started our journey back to the hotel, had an early dinner, and did a short session of writing up the species list at the end of a successful day. A good sighting of Jungle Cat and Sykes's Lark was bonus of the day.

Day 2

Tuesday 22nd November

After having a good sleep and some tea with biscuits, we went again to Velavadar National Park at 06:30 hrs to look for Hyena and Wolf. We saw Wolf and studied behaviour of Blackbuck in the morning session. Unfortunately this year the number of Harriers has reduced in Velavadar. At 10:00, we went back to the lodge and while returning we saw a Trinket Snake on the road and a Checkard Keel Back near the pond at the lodge.

After good breakfast and then lunch, we started our evening session at 3:00 pm. In the afternoon session, the same Wolf, sighted in the morning, sat at the Watch Tower for half an hour, right in front of our car. It was unusual for a Wolf to be sighted so early in the evening at 4:00 pm, we were lucky.

Day 3

Wednesday 23rd November

We had early breakfast today and entered the park at 7:00 am. We had good sighting of Painted Partridge, Bonelli's Eagle, Indian Spotted Eagle, Imperial Eagle and some other raptors. While coming out of the park gate we saw the flock of Chestnut Bellied Sand Grouse, which was my first sighting of them in Velavadar!

After lunch we started our journey towards Sasan Gir. We reached there at around 7:00 pm after spending some time at Malanka Lake near Sasan Gir.

Day 4- 6

Wednesday 24th to Friday 26th November

Our days started at 5:30 A.M. with tea and biscuits. Here, in Sasan Gir, I had shown a slide show about the flora and fauna of the area, before we split into two groups in two Jeeps whilst I was shifting between both the groups. On these five safaris, we saw different groups of Asiatic Lions including a pride of male, female and cubs. We also saw some very good birds in this dry deciduous forest.

On the 6th day, after the morning safari and lunch, we started our road journey towards Jamnagar. On the way, we enjoyed our tea and picnic, munching light snacks throughout the day.

Day 7

Saturday 27th November

We started early morning towards Narara with packed breakfast and a local marine guide. As we were nearing the site at Narara, we had started seeing some shore birds like Rudy Turnstone, Sanderling, Dunlin and some others. As it was low tide, we explored while waiting for the high tide, and we were blessed with a fantastic sighting of Oystercatcher.

We went for lunch at the hotel and after lunch we went to explore the Bedi and Rosy Bandar area where we saw good numbers of Ruff and here the bonus for us was the Pied Crested Cuckoo. We ended our day with a very delicious dinner.

Day 8

Sunday 28th November

Our day started early as we went to Khijadia Bird Sanctuary with a packed breakfast. Khijadia offers huge numbers of wetland birds including Crested Grebe. After Khijadia we went in search of Indian Skimmers at Sachana and surrounding areas, but to our bad luck, we couldn't find any sign of Indian Skimmers there - but we had a boon of Crab Plovers in large numbers, around 300-400! Later, we went back to the hotel for lunch, and after lunch we started our journey towards Dasada. On the way, we went again to check at the same place to try our luck for Indian Skimmers but our luck failed us.

We reached Dasada at around 7:00 pm. After dinner we were discussing our next day's schedule when the hotel owner received a phonecall from the nearby village called Gavana that a python was sighted there. We rushed to the spot and saw an Indian Rock Python of around 20 Kg and 14 Ft long! I rescued the python with the help of Kayyumbhai from Dasada and we took the reptile to our resort where we enjoyed taking photos before releasing it in a safe area. Thus, we ended the day full of excitement!

Day 9

Monday 29th November

After breakfast, we started our day in search of Houbara Bustard, Indian Fox, Desert Fox and areas in which Wild Ass was the prime attraction. In the whole day we were able to spot many birds and animals. In the evening, we enjoyed the local Mir Tribal Dance called Garba.

Day 10

Tuesday 30th November

After breakfast at the hotel, in the morning game drive we visited a wetland area to look for Pelicans, Flamingos, Pratincoles and for Stolczka's Bushchat. In the evening session, some wanted to rest at the lodge and we went in search of Indian Coursers and Sociable Lapwings but, after spending whole evening, we could not find either of them - though we had good sighting of raptors.

Day 11

Wednesday 1st December

We had our morning desert safari to take home sweet memories and good photos of Wild Ass and some other birds. After lunch, we started our journey for Rajkot to catch the flight. We reached Rajkot earlier than expected and so we went to the hotel restaurant for relaxation and refreshments. After that we ended the tour with goodbyes at the airport...

Day 12

Thursday 2nd December

UK arrival

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Species List

Birds (✓ = recorded but not counted; H = heard only)

	Common name	Scientific name	November / December											
			21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	1	
1	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	✓	✓							✓			✓
2	Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>									✓			
3	Great White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>									✓			
4	Spot-billed Pelican	<i>Pelecanus philippensis</i>												✓
5	Dalmatian Pelican	<i>Pelecanus crispus</i>		✓							✓			
6	Indian Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax fuscicollis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
7	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>							✓	✓	✓			
8	Little Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax niger</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
9	Oriental Darter	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>		✓					✓	✓	✓			
10	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓	✓							✓	✓		
11	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>		✓										
12	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>		✓							✓			
13	Intermediate Egret	<i>Egretta intermedia</i>	✓	✓							✓	✓		
14	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	✓	✓							✓	✓	✓	✓
15	Western Reef Egret	<i>Egretta gularis</i>									✓	✓		
16	Indian Pond-heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
17	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
18	Painted Stork	<i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
19	Asian Openbill	<i>Anastomus oscitans</i>										✓	✓	✓
20	Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>										✓		
21	Woolly-necked Stork	<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓					
22	Black-necked Stork	<i>Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus</i>									✓			
23	Black-headed Ibis	<i>Threskiornis melanocephalus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
24	Red-naped Ibis	<i>Pseudibis papillosa</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
25	Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>									✓			
26	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
27	Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>		✓							✓			
28	Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>			✓						✓	✓	✓	✓
29	Comb Duck	<i>Sarkidiornis melanotos</i>		✓							✓	✓	✓	✓
30	Cotton Pygmy-goose	<i>Nettapus coromandelianus</i>		✓										
31	Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>									✓			
32	Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>		✓							✓			
33	Spot-billed Duck	<i>Anas poecilorhyncha</i>		✓							✓	✓	✓	✓
34	Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>									✓			✓
35	Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>		✓							✓			
36	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>									✓			
37	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>							✓		✓			
38	Black-shouldered Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
39	Black-eared Kite	<i>Milvus migrans lineatus</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
40	Brahminy Kite	<i>Haliastur indus</i>							✓					
41	Short-toed Eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>		✓										
42	Eurasian Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	✓	✓						✓	✓	✓		
43	Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus cyaneus</i>	✓	✓										
44	Pallid Harrier	<i>Circus macrourus</i>	✓	✓							✓	✓		
45	Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>	✓	✓								✓		
46	Shikra	<i>Accipiter badius</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓					
47	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓											

	Common name	Scientific name	November / December											
			21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	1	
48	Black Eagle	<i>Ictinaetus malayensis</i>						✓						
49	Indian Spotted Eagle	<i>Aquila hastata</i>	✓	✓	✓							✓		
50	Greater Spotted Eagle	<i>Aquila clanga</i>		✓										
51	Tawny Eagle	<i>Aquila rapax</i>		✓										
52	Steppe Eagle	<i>Aquila nipalensis</i>	✓	✓								✓		
53	Bonelli's Eagle	<i>Aquila fasciatus</i>						✓						
54	Changeable Hawk-eagle	<i>Spizaetus cirrhatous</i>						✓	✓					
55	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	✓	✓							✓	✓	✓	✓
56	Painted Francolin	<i>Francolinus pictus</i>	✓	✓										
57	Grey Francolin	<i>Francolinus pondicerianus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
58	Common Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>		✓										
59	Rain Quail	<i>Coturnix coromandelica</i>		✓										
60	Indian Peafowl	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
61	Demoiselle Crane	<i>Anthropoides virgo</i>									✓			
62	Sarus Crane	<i>Grus antigone</i>									✓			
63	Common Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>	✓	✓							✓	✓	✓	✓
64	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
65	Common Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	✓	✓						✓	✓		✓	
66	Macqueen's Bustard	<i>Chlamydotis macqueenii</i>											✓	
67	Pheasant-tailed Jacana	<i>Hydrophasianus chirurgus</i>												✓
68	Crab Plover	<i>Dromas ardeola</i>									✓			
69	Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>									✓			
70	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
71	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>								✓	✓		✓	✓
72	Stone-curlew	<i>Burhinus oedicnemus</i>					✓	✓						
73	Small Pratincole	<i>Glareola lactea</i>										✓	✓	
74	Yellow-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus malabaricus</i>						✓						
75	Red-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
76	White-tailed Lapwing	<i>Vanellus leucurus</i>											✓	
77	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>									✓			
78	Little Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>									✓			
79	Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus alexandrinus</i>									✓			
80	Lesser Sand Plover	<i>Charadrius mongolus</i>									✓			
81	Greater Sand Plover	<i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>									✓			
82	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>									✓			
83	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>									✓			
84	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>									✓			
85	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>		✓							✓			
86	Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓				
87	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓				
88	Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
89	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>		✓				✓	✓	✓	✓			
90	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>		✓						✓				
91	Terek Sandpiper	<i>Xenus cinereus</i>									✓			
92	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>		✓							✓			
93	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>									✓			
94	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>									✓			
95	Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>									✓			
96	Temminck's Stint	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>									✓			
97	Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>									✓			
98	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>									✓			

	Common name	Scientific name	November / December											
			21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	1	
99	Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>								✓			✓	
100	Heuglin's Gull	<i>Larus heuglini</i>								✓				
101	Pallas's Gull	<i>Larus ichthyætus</i>								✓				
102	Brown-headed Gull	<i>Larus brunnicephalus</i>								✓				
103	Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>								✓				
104	Slender-billed Gull	<i>Larus genei</i>								✓				
105	Gull-billed Tern	<i>Sterna nilotica</i>								✓				
106	Caspian Tern	<i>Sterna caspia</i>								✓	✓			
107	Lesser Crested Tern	<i>Sterna bengalensis</i>									✓			
108	River Tern	<i>Sterna aurantia</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
109	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>								✓	✓			
110	Little Tern	<i>Sterna albifrons</i>		✓							✓			
111	Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>		✓							✓			
112	Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
113	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
114	Red Collared-dove	<i>Streptopelia tranquebarica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
115	Laughing Dove	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓				✓		
116	Yellow-footed Pigeon	<i>Treron phoenicoptera</i>					✓	✓						
117	Rose-ringed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
118	Plum-headed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula cyanocephala</i>					✓	✓						
119	Jacobin Cuckoo	<i>Clamator jacobinus jacobinus</i>									✓			
120	Greater Coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
121	Spotted Owlet	<i>Athene brama</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	
122	Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>										✓	✓	
123	Sykes' Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus mahrattensis</i>										✓		
124	Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>	✓	✓										
125	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>		✓			✓	✓		✓				
126	White-throated Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
127	Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
128	Green Bee-eater	<i>Merops orientalis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
129	Indian Roller	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
130	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
131	Coppersmith Barbet	<i>Megalaima haemacephala</i>					✓	✓						
132	Singing Bushlark	<i>Mirafra cantillans</i>		✓										
133	Ashy-crowned Sparrow-lark	<i>Eremopterix grisea</i>	✓	✓								✓	✓	✓
134	Rufous-tailed Lark	<i>Ammomanes phoenicurus</i>	✓	✓							✓	✓	✓	✓
135	Greater Hoopoe-lark	<i>Alaemon alaudipes</i>										✓		
136	Greater Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>	✓	✓							✓	✓	✓	✓
137	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	✓	✓							✓	✓	✓	✓
138	Dusky Crag-martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne concolor</i>		✓							✓			
139	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>									✓	✓		
140	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
141	Citrine Wagtail	<i>Motacilla citreola</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
142	Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>				✓	✓	✓				✓		
143	Tawny Pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>	✓	✓							✓	✓	✓	✓
144	Long-billed Pipit	<i>Anthus similis</i>								✓	✓			
145	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	✓	✓			✓	✓				✓		
146	Small Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus cinnamomeus</i>					✓	✓	✓					
147	White-eared Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus leucotis</i>	✓	✓							✓	✓	✓	✓
148	Red-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
149	Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓						

	Common name	Scientific name	November / December											
			21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	1	
150	Jungle Prinia	<i>Prinia sylvatica</i>				✓	✓	✓						
151	Ashy Prinia	<i>Prinia socialis</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓				
152	Plain Prinia	<i>Prinia inornata</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓						
153	Common Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
154	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>								✓	✓			
155	Sulphur-bellied Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus griseolus</i>					✓							
156	Hume's Leaf Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus humei</i>												✓
157	Greenish Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochiloides</i>					✓	✓						
158	Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>	✓	✓						✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
159	Bluethroat	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>		✓									✓	
160	Indian Robin	<i>Saxicoloides fulicata</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
161	Siberian Stonechat	<i>Saxicola maura</i>	✓	✓						✓	✓			
162	Variable Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe picata</i>										✓	✓	✓
163	Desert Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe deserti</i>		✓								✓	✓	✓
164	Isabelline Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>	✓									✓	✓	✓
165	White-browed Fantail	<i>Rhipidura aureola</i>					✓	✓						
166	Common Babbler	<i>Turdoides caudatus</i>	✓	✓						✓	✓	✓		
167	Large Grey Babbler	<i>Turdoides malcolmi</i>					✓	✓	✓					
168	Jungle Babbler	<i>Turdoides striatus</i>					✓	✓	✓					
169	Purple Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris asiaticus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
170	Isabelline Shrike	<i>Lanius isabellinus</i>		✓								✓	✓	✓
171	Bay-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius vittatus</i>	✓	✓					✓	✓				✓
172	Long-tailed Shrike	<i>Lanius schach</i>	✓							✓				✓
173	Southern Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>								✓				✓
174	Common Woodshrike	<i>Tephrodornis pondicerianus</i>								✓				
175	Black Drongo	<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
176	House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
177	Bank Myna	<i>Acridotheres ginginianus</i>	✓							✓	✓	✓		
178	Brahminy Starling	<i>Temenuchus pagodarum</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
179	Rosy Starling	<i>Pastor roseus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
180	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
181	Chestnut-shouldered Petronia	<i>Petronia xanthocollis</i>					✓	✓						
182	Baya Weaver	<i>Ploceus philippinus</i>										✓		
183	Black-headed Bunting	<i>Emberiza melanocephala</i>				✓								
184	Silver Bills	<i>Lonchura malabarica</i>		✓										