

Occasional Amateur Wildlife Observations

(travel report)

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Introduction

This document contains some amateur observations of wildlife performed by me in my trips in different years. My travel budget and opportunities are very limited, but I hope to update the document once per 1-4 years, or so. In comparison to previously published summary for 2011th - 2023rd years, this document does not contain and will not contain any complex conclusions, ideas etc. Only observations, no more. Moreover, only the most peculiar observations. So, if safari in some national park is mentioned here, you should not expect to see the full list of watched fauna. No photo/video cameras, no optic devices, no night vision devices, and no catalogs of species are used by me. That's why descriptions of some even well known species may look ridiculous for professional biologists or experienced amateurs. However, I hope this document may be useful for some scientists, wildlife watchers, and wildlife photographers. Many observations listed here are completely random and lasted for no more than several seconds.

2024th year

Kyrgyzstan

Southern suburbs of Osh city

- Boisterous reaction of a starling bird (probably, *Common myna*) on death of another bird from the same flock, it was struck by car; the bird screamed and jumped with pushing dead body in attempts to revive it.
- Boisterous reaction of a starling bird (probably, *Common myna*) on death of another bird from the same flock, it was caught by a raptor bird that flied quickly to another part of the city; the starling bird followed the raptor with noisy screams. It was the first time in my life when I observed a scene of raptor hunting.

Center of Karakol town

In the center of Karakol town there is a little park, and every evening a giant flock of several thousands crows is coming there for spending night. It is first time in my life when I have seen such giant flock on regular basis. Probably, the birds are feeding on neighbor fields, wastelands, or cattle factories.

Uzbekistan

Water reservoir near railroad between Andijon and Tashkent

There is a couple of large birds of prey (probably, piscivorous). To highlight importance of this observation I need to say that it was the only place in the world where I have observed piscivorous birds of prey flying above the water.

Tajikistan

Road from Panj to Gissar (near entrance to Gissar after descending from mountains)

There is a large colony of little green birds, probably Asian green bee-eaters (several hundreds birds). The most peculiar aspect of the colony is that they nest in burrows under ground that look almost vertical, in spite of the fact that heavy rains are not uncommon in this region. It is first time in my life when I have seen such large colony of attractive little birds, and it is very important that it is located in proximity to human settlements. Probably, in other parts of the world such colonies were destroyed for food or for sale, and only location at border lands in gradually abandoned agricultural area has preserved this colony.

On the road through Gissar in several kilometers from the previous location I have seen few birds of this species too. So, probably they are rather widespread in the area.

2025th year

India

Coastal area between Morjim and Arambol villages, in Goa

This area is heavily used by local population and tourists. That's why observing such diverse community of species was very surprising.

Beaches:

- thousands of little crabs living in burrows;
- 1m-length yellowish/greenish snake (found dead);
- up to several hundreds birds of up to 5 species feeding at littoral;
- about several tens black/brown birds of prey nesting in trees (close to Morjim only).

Forested areas near beaches:

- group of langurs (about 5 animals);
- 1m-length monitor lizard;
- kingfisher;
- white egrets;
- bright yellow sparrow-like birds;
- brahminy kite;
- also, there are 2-3 species of birds with easily recognizable voices, but seeing them in tree crowns was impossible.

Karwar city beach

Birds living on the beach are feeding with remainings of catch of local fishermen. (The fishermen look not too friendly, so you should be careful if you are walking with a costly camera there.) The total list of species includes the following:

- about several tens black/brown birds of prey;
- about 10 birds of littoral feeding species (2 species of egrets and about 2 species of the same birds as in Goa).

Costly residential beach area close to Malpe beach near Udupi city

It is also one of the most diverse coastal wildlife communities ever observed by me (there is a lagoon at another side of the area, but I was too tired to walk there, I guess you may find there the same or much more):

- about several tens black/brown birds of prey;
- about several tens brahminy kites;
- about 10 large black/white storks;
- about 100+ birds of up to 5 species feeding at littoral (almost the same as in Goa);
- crab burrows are not so numerous as in Goa, just several hundreds probably.

Nagarahole, Bandipur, and Mudumalai parks

The most interesting biological and photographic aspect of these parks (besides facts that you may find in travel guides and tours advertisements) is a possibility to observe communities of feeding animals of different species, for example deers with langurs and peacocks, or elephants with boars.

A lot of macaques may be observed near road at Mudumalai park, so passing cars must close the windows to avoid thefts and attacks.

Thekkady city

A lot of macaques may be observed exactly in the city. I had a chance to see a conflict between two groups of animals.

Puducherry city

I have been bitten by mosquitoes in many parts of the world (Russia, Amazonia, East Africa etc), but local population of mosquitoes living in the city (which is divided by many channels) has two very interesting particularities: a) they bite hands primarily, b) muscles of one of my thumbs after being bitten several times have inflamed and were painful for a day or two. I never met anything similar anywhere.

Beach near Kambalakonda park at north of Visakhapatnam

About several tens black/brown birds of prey can be observed there resting near edge of ocean waves.

Vietnam

Krong Kmar park

I have observed there

- the largest and the most diverse population of butterflies ever seen by me in the world (several tens species with flocks of several hundreds insects),
- the largest and the most noisy population of tree frogs ever heard by me in the world (screaming for 24 hours on the whole territory of the park),
- and the largest population of bats ever seen by me in the world (thousands) that flied around me when I descended to village from park at night by the road through the forest.

The last tiger and leopard have been killed there by a local poacher about 20 years ago by information from a local villager. Although the villager insisted that tigers are still present in the area.

Cambodia

Angkor Wat ruins

I have seen there 30cm-length scolopendra in bushes around the ruins. It is the largest intervebrate ever seen by me in the world.

Center of Siem Reap

At early morning in the center of the city I have observed a couple of large hornbill birds resting at roof of a house.

Laos

Gorge of Kong Lor cave

I have observed there the largest population of dragonflies in the world (several hundreds insects flying at early morning around the village hotel only, without counting at other locations). Probably caused by lack of insecticides in local rice farms.

Nakai-Nam Theun park

I have observed there 2 species of large butterflies (birdwing butterfly, and another light blue one feeding on a dead lizard), the largest butterflies ever seen by me in the world.

Large trucks are passing through the park on high speed and strike some of these amazing large butterflies flying with low speed just in several meters above the ground. I have seen one such damaged butterfly on the road. It may be recommended to limit speed strictly for vehicles moving through the park roads.

Risky and unpleasant situations encountered in the trips

- Mountain roads in Tajikistan and driving style of some local intercity taxi drivers may be unsafe.
- Generic version of Omnic medicine (tamsulosin, for treating benign prostate hyperplasia symptoms) produced in Kazakhstan has extremely strong blood pressure lowering effect: I fell down couple of times after taking it, and slept all day (such effect never was observed on other versions of this medicine that I took sometimes).
- Udupi city in India is one of the centers of development of Hinduism and vegetarian cuisine. I guess, it is partially explained by local temperature/humidity spikes or equilibriums which are more harsh than in other parts of India (although I did not search any scientific data on the topic). In 2025th year I came to India being 10kg more overweight than earlier, but I travelled to Kerala in the past, and lived in Goa for a week before coming to Udupi. So, I did not expect anything wrong. However, at first night in Udupi about 23:00 I started feeling myself somewhat bad due to overheating in a hotel room without air conditioning. I went to local hospital immediately, they measured all cardio parameters, and told me that all is 100% fine and it was probably caused by panic attack. In any case, I never stayed anymore in hotels without air conditioning in my Indian trip.

- At the top of sacred mountain near Phuoc Long, Vietnam there is either power station or water pumping station protected by watch dogs. Fortunately, they only barked at me, and did not come out of the fence.
- Trek to the top of Phan Xi Pang mountain in Vietnam must be performed with the help of local guide. My guide set fast walking pace from the very beginning, and that's why when we came to one herd of cattle we moved much more quickly than I usually do and we did not pass it around as I usually do. Several calves were frightened and have run away quickly. Suddenly, a large bull jumped out of the bushes behind us and attacked the guide who followed me in several meters. Fortunately the guide was brave enough and reacted by throwing stones into the bull when the distance was just several meters between them, and fortunately the bull was coward and ran away immediately. I guess, it was just luck as for the guide as for me.
- Roads between towns and villages in Southern Laos are extremely bumpy, and in rainy season may be absolutely non-passable.
- Some intercity routes in provincial Thailand are serviced by old mini-buses rebuilt for compressed gas fuel in a somewhat unsafe way.

To be continued...