

Sri Lanka

Naturetrek Tour Report

4 - 20 February 2006



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Day 1

Sunday 5th February

Arriving at Colombo pretty well on time at 3am after a comfortable direct flight with Sri Lankan Airlines, we quickly passed through the arrival formalities and emerged from the Terminal to be greeted by the representative from our ground agents and Dammi Samarasinghe who was to be our tour escort. A diversion to the Airport Garden Hotel gave us the chance to freshen up then we began the long drive to Anuradhapura. Sunil, our driver quickly earned our confidence as he carefully steered around pot-holes and the sundry other obstacles encountered on Sri Lankan roads, and throughout the following two weeks both Sunil and his assistant Arjit, never failed to be polite and helpful whatever uncivilised hour we asked them to be on duty whilst Preyanth looked after our luggage in a separate vehicle with similar good humour and dedication. We headed north in darkness with more than a few heads nodding on the coach but soon the sky was began to show the first streaks of daylight outlining the fronds of the coconut palms which grow in abundance along this coastal strip.

Before stopping for breakfast at Puttalam Rest House we turned off the main road to pay a brief visit to an excellent wetland area known by several names locally but for our purposes called Annawillundawa Tank. Senses dulled by sitting in an aeroplane all night were subjected to overload by the sights and sounds of the Sri Lankan countryside waking up as Ring-necked Parakeets screeched overhead, Blue-tailed Bee-eaters sallied after insects from telephone wires and chevrons of waterbirds winged overhead. With new species appearing at every side it was hard to keep up with each discovery but conscious of the fact that many of the birds, such as swamphens, jacanas and Pond Herons, would be regularly encountered during the tour we tried to concentrate on the less predictable species. Foremost among these was a small flock of Cotton Pygmy Geese, always a difficult duck to guarantee, a raucous Stork-billed Kingfisher and a Large Cuckoo-Shrike which unfortunately was only seen by a few of the group. On the far side of the tank we could see trees laden with nesting Openbill Storks and masses of egrets but shortage of time precluded more than a cursory scan through telescopes. Having successfully avoided being run down by the constant stream of motor bikes and cycles constituting the morning rush-hour, we boarded the coach and reluctantly dragged ourselves away from this wonderful tank to go and enjoy the delights of eggs, fruit and toast at the Rest House.

Replete after the more than adequate meal we continued on our journey to Anuradhapura chalking up more new birds by the roadside as we passed through a lush agricultural landscape dotted with 'tanks' of varying sizes, their

surfaces often covered with flowering water-lilies. Within a very short time the group came to appreciate that the birds on roadside telephone wires were more than likely to be Common Mynas, House Crows, Spotted Doves, White-breasted Kingfishers, Bee-eaters or Indian Rollers, depending upon size, and that egrets, herons and Whiskered Terns occur in Sri Lanka with an abundance that we can scarcely imagine possible in impoverished Europe! Black Drongos were duly observed in the one small area that we usually expect to find this essentially northern Sri Lankan species, and not far from Anuradhapura we saw a fine Changeable Hawk Eagle sitting in a tree near the road. Other bird sightings included two Crested Serpent Eagles soaring over a forest, several Rufous-winged Bushlarks scampering along the road verge and a group of Ashy Woodswallows viewed in silhouette as they sat on roadside wires directly into the sun! Another interesting find at a random stop was a super little Fan-throated Lizard sporting an enormously long tail.

A buffet lunch at the Meridiya Hotel re-charged our batteries for an afternoon walk to the edge of the huge tank beside which the hotel is situated. This was an opportunity to see more of the characteristic birds of the Dry Zone and to be impressed once again by the sheer numbers of waterbirds. A huge White-bellied Fish Eagle sailed over the water, dwarfing the dozens of Brahminy Kites which were constantly circling overhead, Blue-tailed Bee-eaters sallied after insects from lakeside perches whilst countless Whiskered Terns swooped and dipped after prey on the surface of the tank. Various egrets and Pond Herons fished around the shores but there was no refuge for their prey in deeper water where Little Cormorants waited for their share of the harvest along with numerous fishing boats! Moving on to an area of scrubby bushes near the shore we found a nice selection of birds to watch including an elusive Pied Cuckoo, Common Coucal, White-breasted Waterhen, Little Green Bee-eater, Purple Sunbird, Tailorbird, Paradise Flycatcher and the ubiquitous Yellow-billed Babbler. A particular highlight was the presence of large numbers of colourful butterflies including masses of Blue Tigers, Jezebels, Common Grass Yellows and the huge Blue Mormon, one of the most impressive Sri Lankan species. Not far from the hotel we witnessed several male Koels so engaged in some sort of territorial dispute that they completely ignored our presence just a few metres away. Eventually a female appeared and two males finally became locked in combat, falling onto the ground beneath with a loud crash!

Returning to the Meridiya Hotel garden towards dusk we waited in vain for an Indian Pitta to appear among the shrubbery but were compensated by wonderful views of the second Stork-billed Kingfisher for the day and impressive numbers of waterbirds flying over the lake on their way to roosts. Tired but satisfied with our introduction to the island avi-fauna we did not keep late hours after the evening meal, retiring to our rooms as bats glided up and down the balconies and teams of geckos harvested any luckless insect attracted by the wall lights.

Day 2

Monday 6th February

Dawn in the Meridiya garden was again pitta-less but a flock of 50+ Rose-coloured Starlings created an impressive, albeit brief, sight with the morning sun enhancing the pink of their plumage as they hurtled over the Tank. Hundreds of dragonflies were beginning their morning patrol over the water and the constant traffic of the awakening birdlife kept us entertained before breakfast as Openbill Storks, egrets and herons arrived to begin fishing the shallows.

After breakfast we set off for a morning touring the archaeological sites of the former capital which are situated a few kilometres from the present city. First established around the 3rd. century BC, Anuradhapura remained the

capital of the Sinhalese kingdom until AD993 when invaders from India captured the region and transferred the capital to Polonnaruwa. Today, the great brick burial mounds, called dagobas (or stupas in Sanskrit) of the ancient city dominate the area and stand amid acres of pleasant parkland which by a happy coincidence are also excellent habitat for birds. With one eye on the buildings and the other on the birdlife we began a tour of the major sites, pausing frequently for photography and birding. A local guide named Ranjit accompanied us for the morning and was happy to provide the historical background at each location beginning at the famous Rock Temple then progressing to the Sacred Bo Tree and Elephant Dagoba.

While most of the group toured the Rock Temple, a few of us perused the small pond by the entrance where several noisy Red-wattled Lapwings shrieked their annoyance at our intrusion. Although bordered by a busy road, the pond contained several Pond Herons, beautiful Pheasant-tailed Jacanas in breeding plumage and best of all, a tiny Yellow Bittern which posed nicely after spending much time concealed beneath lily leaves. An Oriental Honey Buzzard soaring over the temple completed a surprisingly busy ornithological interlude and fortunately the group emerged from the building in time to enjoy the bittern.

Other highlights of the morning birdwatching included Crested Serpent Eagles, Brown Shrikes, Black-hooded Orioles, Pale-billed Flowerpeckers, Purple-rumped Sunbirds and the two barbets which create the characteristic background noise to lowland birding in Sri Lanka, the dapper Coppersmith and the very common Brown-headed.

Already, groups of Yellow-billed Babblers were becoming a familiar sight. These soberly plumaged but charismatic birds occur throughout Sri Lanka and are full of character never missing the opportunity to investigate any potential source of food or to noisily mob any likely predator. Equally noisy and widespread are the feisty Palm-Squirrels, constantly chasing each other around or scolding the world with peevish chattering cries. There was always plenty to look at with lots of colourful plumages to excite comment, perhaps none was more striking than the pattern of blue displayed in the wings of an Indian Roller or the deep blue upperparts of the numerous White-breasted Kingfishers. Troupes of Grey Langurs and Troupe Macaques typically loitered around near the ruins waiting for hand outs from tourists and watched our progress with hopeful gazes. A border dispute between two rival troupes of langurs provided some entertainment as the macho posturing of the males brought to mind two gangs of football fans hurling abuse at each other before a charge by one army caused an undignified retreat by their opponents.

Some dagobas are in pristine condition whilst others are being renovated as part of a UNESCO funded programme but all are impressive, and an interesting morning concluded with a visit to view the royal bathing ponds where a pair of endemic Grey Hornbills caused a distraction to Ranjit's commentary by flapping into view.

Following another excellent buffet lunch at the Meridiya, we departed for an afternoon at Mihintale, a very important historical site about 12 kilometres from Anuradhapura. It is here that Buddhism was first introduced to Sri Lanka from India and the spot is marked by a particularly fine dagoba perched on the top of a forested hill. Before investigating the forest at the base of the hill, we paid a customary visit to Mahakanadayawa Wewa, a large reservoir a few kilometres from the town. It was a very hot afternoon producing plenty of heat shimmer but out on the open water we could see large flocks of Little Cormorants and Indian Shags frantically following the progress of a fish shoal across the lake. As usual, many Whiskered Terns were patrolling over the water, a

widespread marsh tern which seems to be present on almost every sizeable expanse of water on the island! A few Gull-billed Terns also obligingly offered a size comparison as they flew over the causeway road.

Mihintale produced the anticipated selection of birds as we made our way along a narrow road leading through forest to the base of the dagoba. The drowsy heat gradually subsided and as it did so, roving flocks of birds began their afternoon spell of activity. We took our time and were rewarded by appearances of Small Minivets, Pale-billed Flowerpeckers, barbets and Black-hooded Oriole but the star was undoubtedly a magnificent Brown Fish Owl, seen first in flight then later admired through telescopes as it glared at us from a perch in the forest.

Reaching the start of the flight of steps leading back to the main car park we paused to see what birds showed in the late afternoon burst of activity. As we did so, the more energetic in the party decided to climb up to the dagoba, which they accomplished in a remarkably short time returning with tales of the magnificent view afforded by the extra altitude. Meanwhile, the forest birds had been providing entertainment and among the species appearing at the forest edge were numerous Brown-headed and Coppersmith Barbets, Common Wood Shrikes (recently recognized as a full species), Brown Flycatchers, Pale-billed Flowerpeckers, Indian Robins and a confiding perched Shikra. Also noted here were several Blue-winged Leafbirds, Common Ioras, more Black-hooded Orioles, Bar-winged Flycatcher-Shrike and a rather elusive Grey Hornbill. Another endemic became audible as a Sri Lankan Junglefowl commenced his evening crowing from the forest but sadly he remained hidden. A Brown Shrike, one of several seen during the day, sat on top of a tree for an amazing length of time, every tiny feather detail visible through the telescopes. Sri Lanka Red-rumped Swallows hawking insects over the forest added further quality to a splendid afternoon of birds and as this stunning hirundine has also recently been elevated to full species status they represented one more endemic for our tally! .

Memories of the British winter were already fading in the tropical heat and as we drove back to Anuradhapura with the sky crimson from the setting sun, dozens of bat were beginning their nights hunting.

Day 3

Tuesday 7th February

Dawn in the Meridiya garden was again pitta-less but early morning birding witnessed another 50+ Rose-coloured Starlings arrowing overhead from their unknown roosting site and our departure was delayed by Arjit's discovery of two Indian Scops Owls snugly roosting in a tree behind the coach park. The crew were proud to have found these charming little owls and Arjit stood beaming as we clustered around telescopes focused on the birds.

Later, travelling through a landscape of paddy fields and scattered forest interspersed with occasional areas of open water, we noted a variety of roadside birds such as the ever-present Pond Herons, Red-wattled Lapwings and egrets. At length we reached Kakirawa Tank, a sizeable area of freshwater that we usually stop at en route to Sigiriya. This roadside lake, covered with water lilies and other aquatic vegetation, provides fine views of many typical wetland birds and we spent an enjoyable hour making the acquaintance of these whilst keeping a wary eye on the traffic thundering past on the road! Two very characteristic marsh dwellers were immediately obvious; handsome Purple Swamphens, brilliant blue in the morning sun, and elegant Pheasant-tailed Jacanas delicately picking their way over the lilly pads. Nearly all the jacanas were in full breeding plumage and several bad-tempered disputes were witnessed, no doubt connected with territorial boundaries. Purple Herons, also resplendent in breeding plumage, competed with masses of egrets fishing the shallows and little flocks of Lesser

Whistling Ducks demonstrated the aptness of their name as they circled noisily around in courtship chases. Three Cotton Pygmy-Geese were much more introverted, discreetly slipping through the lilies in such an unobtrusive manner that we initially failed to spot them until Penny drew our attention to these pretty little ducks. Equally eager to avoid detection was a splendid Yellow Bittern clinging to rushes just metres from the bank and a little further along the tank we flushed a second bird from another clump of vegetation. A rewarding visit was completed with views of Paddyfield Pipits, White-breasted Waterhens and a number of Blue-tailed Bee-eaters.

Before reaching our destination at Sigiriya we stopped briefly to look at a flock of 70+ Black-headed Ibis feeding in wet paddies near the village but rather surprisingly not much appeared to be with them other than the inevitable egrets. Arriving at the splendid Sigiriya Hotel soon after midday we enjoyed a protracted lunch break during which full use was made of the hotel swimming pool behind which the famous rock loomed over the forest canopy. Dammi managed to locate a plump Indian Pitta secreted away in the garden shrubbery and a Tickell's Blue Flycatcher was also seen during post-lunch birding.

After lunch we set out to look for birds in the extensive forests surrounding the mighty rock fortress which briefly became the capital after Anuradhapura was abandoned. Following the perimeter road beside the fortress 'moat' we quickly met with a succession of interesting birds beginning with both Small and Flame (Scarlet) Minivets, Gold-fronted Leafbird, Indian Robins, Sri Lanka (Pompadour) Green Pigeons, Common Ioras, Paddyfield Pipits and Black-hooded Orioles. A Thick-billed Flowerpecker paused too briefly for most to see but a pair of magnificent Malabar Pied Hornbills were rather more conspicuous posing for us on a convenient branch. Stork-billed Kingfishers, Brown-eared and Coppersmith Barbets were added to the afternoon list then a troupe of monkeys leaping around the canopy of a tall tree revealed themselves to be the scarce lowland race of Purple-faced Leaf-Monkey, and eventually we had excellent telescope views of these impressive endemic primates sporting their bushy 'mutton-chop' whiskers! Several Alexandrine Parakeets announced their presence with raucous screeches, sunbirds zipped among the foliage and Sri Lanka (Common) Woodshrikes appeared beside the track. As we drew nearer to the rock, clouds of Little Swifts could be seen swirling overhead and a Shaheen Falcon made several appearances, gliding among the birds but with no apparent hostile intent. A startlingly white male Paradise Flycatcher of the Indian form elicited gasps of admiration as it danced from bush to bush in front of us, long white tail flowing behind like an exotic train. Nearby a migrant Forest Wagtail was harder to detect as it swayed and tripped beneath the trees, plumage blending perfectly against the background until betrayed by a movement of the body. More minivets poured into the tree tops, a flock of Oriental White-eyes passed through the canopy, hidden Shamans began tuning up for late afternoon song and a Giant Grizzled Squirrel dwarfed the palm squirrels as it sprinted from branch to branch. With so much wildlife to watch the afternoon soon passed by and we reluctantly made our way back to the hotel at dusk, just in time for another encounter with the Pitta as it hopped around under the bushes near the entrance gates.

As darkness enveloped the garden, scores of Painted (?) Bats emerged from a roost in the maintenance cellar for the swimming pool and began their nocturnal search for insects.

Day 4

Wednesday 8th February

For the first hour after dawn, some of the group searched for birds the hotel garden and amid the tangle of scrub along the edge of the approach road. As we peered into the still dark interior of the bushes several Spotted Deer

stared indignantly at us for disturbing their refuge before dashing away into deeper cover. Star ornithological finds included a white male Paradise Flycatcher, several Forest Wagtails, a shy female Indian Robin and best of all, a superb male Orange-headed Ground Thrush looking for breakfast beside a little muddy ditch flowing through the bushes. Another unexpectedly confiding thrush was a male Shama which for some reason persisted in perching in a low tree close to the hotel entrance lobby! Even our breakfast in the open-sided restaurant was not without birding interest as the garden Pitta bounced into view and sat for a considerable time in open view attracting interest from fellow diners and restaurant staff as well as our party!

Many of the group had eaten an early meal and set off to climb Sigiriya Rock whilst the remainder joined me in a birding walk through the adjacent parkland. It was a cloudy, humid morning but the birdlife was as lively as ever and we had soon accumulated an interesting variety of sightings including soaring Oriental Honey Buzzards, Openbills and a single Woolly-necked Stork, Grey-bellied Cuckoo, Large Cuckoo-Shrike, Rufous-winged Bushlark, White-browed Prinia and a handsome pair of Black-headed Cuckoo-Shrikes. For a short while a number of Crested Treeswifts glided around over the forest but drifted away just before the rock climbers rejoined us having completed their ascend in just a few hours. The combined group enjoyed more views of the Cuckoo-Shrikes, White-bellied Drongos, perched Red-rumped Swallows and at least one Thick-billed Flowerpecker, in-between relating tales of close up Shaheens and other birds seen during the rock climb.

After another splendid lunch we returned to the perimeter road for a further look at the forest visited the previous afternoon. Highlights included a somnolent Crested Serpent Eagle, which we telescoped at less than 20 metres range as it sat on a low branch, a Brown-capped Babbler hopping around amid leaf debris at the edge of a pool, Bar-winged Flycatcher-Shrikes and four very extrovert Gold-fronted Leafbirds. At least two white Paradise Flycatchers were on show today, one of them competing for our attention with a lovely brilliant blue Tickell's Flycatcher. More Forest Wagtails, Flame and Small Minivets, Asian Brown Flycatchers and Sri Lanka Woodshrikes added to the quality whilst several Black-headed Yellow Bulbuls in the bushes were the first for the holiday. With a back-up cast of barbets, White-browed Bulbuls, Blue-winged Leafbird, Green Warbler, White-rumped Munia, Baya Weaver and Paddyfield Pipit it had been another successful afternoon but one further surprise awaited. Back at the hotel an al fresco garden buffet was being prepared but for us the entrée was a Jerdon's Nightjar which we heard calling from trees beside the hotel. With the aid of Dammi's tape we eventually had the male bird sailing backwards and forwards over our heads displaying the big white flashes on his wings and tail. It was an encounter that was both thrilling and unexpected but it certainly entertained our fellow guests!

Day 5

Thursday 9th February

The dawn patrol was again rewarded by fine views of the Orange-headed Ground Thrush, indeed two individuals were found today along with an Indian Pitta, Forest Wagtails and the skulking female Indian Blue Robin. The returning bats arriving at the swimming pool pumping station found that someone had closed the entrance door and scores of the creatures were fluttering against the front of the building trying to find access. I opened the door and they poured in but someone must have closed the door again shortly afterwards because Noel found the same situation when he walked over to take a look. Even more were struggling to get in and dived through the opening the moment the door was opened. Hundreds of bats of two different sizes spend the day tucked away behind grilles in the pump house but few of the hotel guests ever notice their presence.

Somewhat reluctantly we took our leave of the Sigiriya Hotel after breakfast and began the fairly short journey to Kandy, albeit stopping within minutes of leaving the hotel to look at a Grey-bellied Cuckoo perched on a fence post! En route to Kandy we paid our customary visit to a Spice Garden near Matale and most of the party were given a conducted tour of the grounds followed by a massage using some of the oils on sale here. The accuracy of the accompanying patter might be questionable, and it has to be said that the efficacious properties claimed for some of the potions rivaled those of Lily the Pink's 'medicinal compound'! In due course everyone emerged from the shop, clutching spice purchases, and we continued on our way to the very attractive university city of Kandy. The bustle and noise of city traffic was quite a shock after a few days of relative quiet but Sunil was in his element and steered through the chaos with consummate ease. A rice and curry lunch at the Peradiniya Rest House was well received and followed by a gruelling coach journey of at least 200 metres to the Botanical Gardens on the other side of the road! It may seem lazy to use the coach but it is safer to cross the road in the vehicle than on foot! We spent an absorbing few hours wandering through the acres of beautifully maintained gardens. It is an idyllic location, set amid thickly forested hills, and is a great place to birdwatch even though on this warm afternoon it was hard work finding many species. Throughout the hill country, Sri Lankan Hanging Parrots regularly announce their presence with distinctive loud calls but are generally much harder to see perched so I was particularly pleased that a flowering tree near the Orchid House contained several of these delightful birds and that they remained long enough for us to set up telescopes. Continuing around the extensive gardens in an anti-clockwise direction we were not overwhelmed with birds but little by little more species were found. A pair of Tickell's Blue Flycatchers was followed by a gorgeous Black-rumped Flameback clinging to a trunk, White-bellied Drongos chased around the higher canopy and several Grey Tits were investigating bark crevices for insects, pale versions of the familiar Parus major from home. At least three Forest Wagtails were feeding beneath the trees, Black-hooded Orioles added splashes of yellow to the scene and a huge White-bellied Sea Eagle glided over our heads, one of the local nesting pair. The gardens are never a quiet place as assorted parakeets, Common Mynas, House Crows, Palm Squirrels and other noisy residents add their voices to the background din, but one particular tree was the source of a cacophony of whistles and shrieks originating from a feeding flock of Hill Mynas. At first it was quite difficult to obtain views of the birds high in the foliage but later we found several sitting in open situations and enjoyed remarkable telescope close-ups. The telescopes were also employed to look at a Common Hawk Cuckoo perched in almost the same tree where I saw one in 2005! From here we made our way to the huge roost of Indian Flying Foxes. These are one garden resident that would certainly be difficult to miss, peevish calls and occasional views of pterodactyl like shapes flapping over the trees a prelude our arrival at the main roosting area where thousands of bats are clustered like so many strange fruits in the trees. Many thousands of animals now spend the daytime in the gardens and I never tire of watching their antics as they prepare for another night's foraging. Some bats hang asleep while others are grooming their fur in the equivalent of morning ablutions, and a few neighbours squabble with each other in some dispute over space. It is an impressive spectacle and long may it continue in this delightful place.

Other birds seen during a pleasant afternoon at Peradiniya included Shikra, Alexandrine Parakeets, Sri Lanka Green Pigeons, Koel, Coucal, Blue-winged Leafbird, Asian Brown Flycatcher, Magpie Robin, Oriental White-eye and all three sunbirds. Toque Macaques represented the primates and a pair of large Rat Snakes had chosen to mate on a patch of grass beside the main path, causing passers by to stop and Naturetrek tour members to deploy cameras. Clearly exhibitionists, the couple carried on regardless but I hope they moved somewhere more discreet before someone came along with a hatred of snakes!

David, Barbara and Julian left us at 4.30 with Dammi in order to attend an evening performance of traditional Kandy dancing at the Lakeside Club but they missed very little as it soon began to drizzle and we eventually found ourselves drinking tea in the park restaurant before making our way to the exit.

Threading our way through the horrendous rush-hour traffic we headed into the heart of Kandy and the Suisse Hotel, our accommodation for the next two nights. The elegance of this old colonial hotel gives a taste of former splendours and it is perfectly sited for visiting the Temple of the Tooth, literally across the lake from the hotel. Before long the rain increased in intensity and soon a full scale thunderstorm was raging over the city. The tropical deluge quickly flooded the roads and I was concerned about the safety of the trio at the Lake Club but somewhat later than expected they arrived back at the hotel in motor rickshaws having been obliged to wait in a queue for transport. They were however surprisingly dry and reported a most entertaining performance enhanced by Little Swifts flying in and out of the building as they watched the dancers!

Day 6

Friday 10th February

The storm had passed overnight and after an early breakfast we braved the rush hour traffic to travel the short distance to Udawattakele Reserve, a splendid tract of primary forest on a hill overlooking the city. The reserve was a haven of peace after the chaos of vehicles thronging the streets and we soon began to find some interesting birds. To begin with we stood at the edge of the forest pool near the entrance and gradually picked out some of the birds calling from high in the forest canopy. Another endemic, the Yellow-fronted Barbet, was one of the commonest inhabitants but not always easy to watch amid the foliage. Noisy flocks of Black Bulbuls appeared along with several Flame Minivets and the inevitable Hanging Parrots arrowing overhead. Screeching Layard's Parakeets teased us with their calls but remained unseen and Tickell's Blue Flycatchers uttered their sweet little songs from the dark undergrowth. A lot of Hill Mynas were present in the forest, the most I have ever seen in this location and from time to time individuals presented telescope views. A raucous Stork-billed Kingfisher landed on a branch overlooking the water but even his huge beak was no match for the big Tilapia swimming in the pool below. Yellow-browed Bulbuls were initially elusive but later we were rewarded by good views as they repeatedly came to feed in a fruiting tree beside the path. Continuing slowly along the main track beside the pool we saw more Yellow-fronted Barbets and Hanging Parrots but the highlight was trio of Greater Flameback Woodpeckers in much the same area I had watched them in 2005. To begin with the views were fairly distant but later we were treated to a wonderful performance as two adults and a juvenile chased up and down the trunk of a dead tree only 50 metres from the path. These really are impressive woodpeckers and it was nice to think that they continue to thrive so close to a big city. A Brown-capped Babbler collecting nesting material was the next attraction but was slightly ignored as members of the party discovered one or two leeches about their persons precipitating an outburst of frantic searching for any others that might have penetrated defences! The side of the forest overlooking Kandy city was also catching the mid morning sun and as we walked along the trail we were afforded excellent views of various species feeding in the fruiting trees including Hanging Parrots, numerous sunbirds, Yellow-fronted, Brown-headed and Copper-smith Barbets. In the vicinity of the information centre, a Brown-breasted Flycatcher chased insects in the forest and a handsome Calotes calotes lizard was clinging to the gates. As if to compete for attention, a vivid Blue Mormon butterfly flew around the clearing before vanishing amid the trees. Inside the building were a number of excellent photographs of Sri Lankan butterflies but modesty prevented Dammi from telling us that he was the photographer responsible for these portraits!

Returning to the entrance it was clear we were not the only visitors to the reserve as Valentine's Day neared, and we met many couples strolling along the paths or sitting on benches and no doubt cursing the intrusion of binocularized birdwatchers! Narrowly avoiding the worst of the daily traffic chaos at the nearby school, we were soon back at the hotel and some of the group used the extended lunch period to squeeze in a visit to the Temple of the Tooth.

After lunch, we exchanged the city for the clear air of the hills and an afternoon at Hatane amid the Udawela Tea Estate. Acres of tea bushes cloaking the hills gave a taste of the scenery to come as we entered deeper into the hill country on subsequent days. This picturesque spot is usually excellent for parakeets but a particularly hot day seemed to curtail activity and at first we saw very little along the ridge. Bill got things off to a good start however when he spotted a Streak-throated Woodpecker clinging to a tree beside the twisting road. Fortunately it stayed in the area for some while and we had super views from the roadside. This is a local resident of the hill country which prior to 2005 had only been seen on a few of our tours but on last year's visit we found a pair in exactly the same spot.

Eventually both Layard's and Plum-headed Parakeets were seen in flight as well as the inevitable Hanging-Parrots whilst other observations included Black-rumped Flameback, White-bellied Drongo, Hill Myna, Yellow-fronted Barbet, Oriental White-eye, Small Minivets, Brown Shrike and Indian Swiftlet. A Shikra posed in a tree and a soaring Black Eagle put in a brief appearance. As the afternoon progressed a dozen or more Alexandrine Parakeets began collecting in the top of a distant tree but were not joined by their smaller relatives although there were more fly-pasts and as David (T) and I walked down the road we were fortunate to encounter a pair of Plum-headed Parakeets courtship feeding.

As dusk settled, many hundreds of egrets began flying in to roost on an island in Kandy Lake, filling the tree tops with white bodies as we passed by on our way to the hotel. The evening bird log, which we often have to call in whatever corner we can find, took place tonight in the spacious conference room where the furniture was being decorated in preparation for a company awards ceremony the following day. I lived in fear of spilling my tea over the tablecloth but it survived unstained!

Day 7

Saturday 11th February

We left the city at 830am and drove along the winding road to Nuwara Eliya, the capital of the hill country. The lushness of the vegetation around Kandy gave way to a succession of tea estates as we gradually climbed into the hills, the huge factory buildings surrounded by rows of tea bushes among which, teams of pickers were engaged in collecting the leaves. The twisting journey was rendered even more tortuous by extensive road works but we did not suffer too many lengthy delays and when completed the new highway should greatly improve the link between the two cities. For the moment however it seemed an almighty mess and peering from the coach at the muddy trenches and shattered rocks it looked more than a little chaotic. I wonder how much the road will have progressed by my next visit? Eventually we reached the Glen Loch Tea Estate where we stopped for a leg stretch and tour of the factory. A Changeable Hawk Eagle caused me a few moments of excitement as I wrongly identified it as a Mountain Hawk and rushed around screaming for everyone to leave the building only to realize my mistake as it sailed overhead. Hill Swallows nesting in the factory were a safer bet as they swooped backwards and forwards to their nests while the group were led round to observe the various processes involved in producing top quality tea. Duly educated in the mysteries of tea production, and clutching packets of tea

purchased in the shop, we continued on our way to Nuwara Eliya, the road twisting ever higher through a series of hairpins affording splendid views of deep forested valleys, and distant ranges of hills. Pied Bushchats began to appear on telephone wires as eventually the tea estates were replaced by vegetable cultivations then rows of pines on the outskirts of town. A female Kestrel caused a brief stop before we passed through the bustling centre of the old hill-station and drove a few kilometres out of town to the Galway Forest Lodge, our base for the next two nights. Situated close to the forest reserve of the same name, this new hotel is in a perfect setting for a birdwatching tour and one of the best hotels of the itinerary. We enjoyed a fine lunch then drove back to the town centre for a spell of birding in the unusual setting of the town park.

Victoria Park, in the heart of Nuwara Eliya, is an unlikely hot-spot, a busy town park of tidily manicured flower-beds and shrubs, bisected by a rubbish strewn muddy stream, but it regularly attracts a splendid mix of both resident hill country birds and winter visitors from the Himalayas. It is probably one of the best places in the sub-continent to see Pied Ground Thrushes but on this occasion our initial search of the stream bank failed to locate any, perhaps due in part to the unfortunate clearance of waterside vegetation by the tidy-minded park staff. Numerous Magpie Robins caused binoculars to be hastily raised more than once but there was no sign of the long distance travellers although Pond Herons, Common Sandpipers and Grey Wagtails were seemingly finding plenty to eat as they foraged along the litter on the banks along with several Forest Wagtails. Crashing in the trees above our heads betrayed several Bear Monkeys, the long coated highland race of the Purple-faced Leaf Monkey, but they soon climbed higher out of view. During thirty years of visiting Victoria Park I had never before seen Bear Monkeys here, and one of the gardeners who attached himself to us for the afternoon, also indicated that it was the first sighting for him. A few miles down the road these monkeys are common but to reach the park must have involved crossing some rather unfamiliar terrain for a largely arboreal creature! Moving on we mingled with the afternoon crowds enjoying the park and slowly began to find some of the avian residents. Chirping flocks of Sri Lanka Hill White-eyes swept through the foliage, Tailorbirds sang from the flower beds and several Blue-tailed Bee-eaters demonstrated that crowds were no deterrent as long as food was on the wing. A once-productive thicket of bushes along the stream had been savagely massacred but a little cover remained and in here our gardener friend managed to find an obliging Indian Pitta for us to look at. We finally reached the corner of the gardens where I usually expect to find a few birds and sure enough our arrival was greeted by the peevish calls of a lively Kashmir Flycatcher which treated us to a wonderful display as it chased insects just metres away. A Blyth's Reed Warbler emerged from cover to inhabit the same bushes as the flycatcher and several Yellow-eared Bulbuls completed a magical ten minutes birding. Despite hearing the thin calls of Pied Ground Thrushes the elusive birds failed to provide a finale for us but as we made our way towards the exit scores of Indian Swiftlets and several Alpine Swifts directed our attention skywards. It had been a productive Saturday afternoon in the city park and other species noted included Brown Shrike, Pale-billed Flowerpecker, Grey Tit and Dusky Squirrel, the hill country version of the Palm Squirrel.

Day 8

Sunday 12th February

We made a 5.30 start from the hotel for the excursion to Horton Plains, taking with us dozens of cardboard boxes containing packed breakfasts. The 18 miles from Nuwara Eliya took about an hour and we arrived at the famous Arrenga pool at the beginning of the Horton Plains Reserve, just as darkness gave way to the first light of dawn. Earlier in the journey a Sambar charging across the road had disturbed the slumbers for at least one of the three mini-buses as we climbed to the plateau. In the cold light of dawn we joined a couple of people waiting for the Arrenga but as the forest slowly came to life this most retiring of birds remained stubbornly out of sight

although on a couple of occasions we did hear a few distant calls from deep in cover. A Dull Blue Flycatcher flitting along the forest edge behind the Arrenga pool gave us something to look at as we waited, and two Sri Lanka Blue Magpies flew noisily, but briefly, over the forest. Everyone was still clad in warm clothes, and Dammi looked positively freezing but gradually the sun worked its magic and the Sri Lankan contingent stopped shivering! A Sri Lankan Woodpigeon made two high speed fly-pasts along the road, scores of Yellow-eared Bulbuls were calling from the bushes and a short walk along the road was rewarded by excellent views of Scimitar Babblers along with hordes of Sri Lanka Hill White-eyes. Back at the pool, some of the group glimpsed a Sri Lanka Bush Warbler creeping through the undergrowth by the water edge but it remained typically hard to see as were several other individuals that we found by the edge of the road but could not persuade to show themselves. Eventually we broke off to savour the gastronomic experience known as a packed breakfast and excited the curiosity of a fine stag Sambar which suddenly emerged from cover and stood watching us. I somehow doubt it was the hard-boiled eggs which attracted him!

A steady stream of vehicles had been passing us since first light, all heading towards World's End so after our feast we decided to follow suit. A sunny public holiday guaranteed crowds at this popular venue and although still only 9am we were going to be late arrivals. First however, as we crossed the wide grassy plateau, we made a customary stop to admire the view of Adam's Peak, clearly visible among a jumble of distant mountains. Paddyfield Pipits and Fantail Warblers were numerous in this moorland habitat, along with scattered pairs of Pied Bush Chats whilst Swallows and Hill Swallows dashed around catching insects overhead. Several of the grey race of Common Buzzard soared into view over the plains and a sizeable herd of Sambar was grazing at the forest edge.

The car park and HQ of the National Park was predictably thronged with vehicles and people enjoying their day out and judging by the noise level, a fair amount of Arrack had already been imbibed by some! We purchased our entry tickets and joined the numerous walkers heading towards World's End but unlike them our progress was soon halted by sightings of Brown Shrike, Hill Swallow, Blue-tailed Bee Eater and other distractions. Our party soon fragmented however as the keener hikers took advantage of the opportunity to stride out on the longer circular route taking in Baker's Falls whilst the remainder of the group followed me on the main track to World's End.

After watching some Hill Swallows nest building under a bridge, the 'dawdlers' began the three kilometre trek to World's End. Despite the ever increasing number of walkers, many of whom were noisily enjoying a dram or two along the way, we saw a fair selection of birds including Oriental Honey-Buzzards, several more Dull Blue Flycatchers, Green Warblers, Pied Bush-Chats, many Hill White-eyes and numerous Yellow-eared Bulbul. Butterflies were again a feature of the morning with several new species such as Red Helen among the hundreds of insects adding colour and beauty to every metre of the walk.

The view was pretty clear at Little World's End despite our late arrival there and we were duly impressed by the steep escarpment dropping away to the southern plains far below. The lake at Uda Walawe was clearly visible, a place we would be visiting later in the tour. We decided to pause here rather than continue to the higher viewpoint and soon found plenty to occupy our binoculars as a roving feeding flock in the nearby forest included Bar-winged Flycatcher Shrikes, Yellow-eared Bulbuls, several Grey-headed Canary Flycatchers and 3 or 4 Velvet-fronted Blue Nuthatches. A small unidentified rodent also entertained us as it foraged around the grasses at our feet. The return walk provided more views of the feeding flock, this time at much closer range, and we found a

Black-lipped Calotes lizard, one of the hill country endemics. By this time the stream of walkers had assumed rush hour proportions and we were kept busy answering questions such as ‘what is your country?’ and ‘how do you like Sri Lanka?’

Eventually we arrived back at the car park and enjoyed a nice cup of tea at the nearby café watching the visitors who were still arriving in force. The Baker’s Falls contingent appeared soon afterwards and we boarded the mini-buses for a return drive to Nuwara Eliya where late lunch at the hotel was eaten with more than usual relish. Travelling back in daylight allowed us to appreciate the impressive Horton Plains scenery and the dramatic rise of the plateau from the surrounding countryside.

After the meal many of the group opted to relax at the Forest Lodge whilst a few of us walked down the road to birdwatch in Galway’s Forest Reserve. It has to be said that this was not a very productive exercise, indeed it was only Yellow-eared Bulbuls that prevented it being entirely birdless, but we did see a handsome Tennant’s Giant Squirrel and several more Dusky Squirrels. A trio from the group wisely chose instead to visit the splendid Hill Club in Nuwara Eliya for afternoon G&T’s and returned suitably impressed by the colonial elegance of this well known hotel.

Day 9

Monday 13th February

A somewhat chilly dawn visit to the Galway's Land Reserve close to the hotel was only marginally better the previous afternoon but we did say farewell to the local Yellow-eared Bulbuls and saw a perched Shikra. Before leaving the hotel a strange little beetle was discovered in a plant pot beside the entrance and for a change even Dammi was stumped over its identification. Patterns on the insects red-brown upperparts looked exactly like the features of a face so it was put down as ‘masked beetle’, photographed and will hopefully be identified in due course!

After Sunil had steered us around countless winding hairpins on the long descent to the plains, we made a brief diversion to the Surrey Tea Estate at Welimada, giving an opportunity for a leg-stretch and a chance to enjoy some excellent birding. The Manager's house is surrounded by tall trees and birdwatchers are permitted to wander around the grounds where many species can be found. The best known inhabitants of the estate are several Brown Wood Owls which many European birders have seen at their daytime roost in the garden. Initially we failed to locate these elusive birds but Dammi persevered and eventually emerged from the depths of the garden in a very excited state having finally tracked down one owl. Unfortunately it quickly flew off but soon returned to its shady day time perch in the midst of tree foliage and all the tour members managed to scramble to the viewing position just thirty metres from the bird. Brown Wood Owls are arguably the most attractive members of their family in Sri Lanka, large brown eyes dominating a plumage of chocolate brown and beige marked with darker bars and paler feather tips. It made an exquisite sight and was justifiably rated bird of the tour by some of the group but unfortunately the local Yellow-billed Babbler did not share our appreciation and soon began mobbing the owl.

Other more showy residents were easier to find in the garden and our tally for the visit included; Sri Lanka Hanging Parrots, Black-rumped Flameback, Lesser Yellownappe Woodpecker, Black-hooded Oriole, White-bellied Drongo, White-backed Munia, Ashy Prinia, Brown Shrike, Scimitar Babbler, White-browed Bulbul, Bar-winged Flycatcher-Shrike, Tickell's Blue Flycatcher, White-browed Fantail and Oriental White-eye. A Junglefowl

was seen by some and heard by the rest, a male Black-headed Cuckoo-Shrike showed well in trees at the edge of the tea estate and a Changeable Hawk Eagle soared over the valley. A wonderful aroma from the small bakery close to the entrance tempted Anthony and Mary to buy for the group which were eaten in exotic circumstances whilst watching a lovely Black-rumped Flameback climbing up a trunk and a Tickell's Blue Flycatcher sitting just metres away! It was hard to leave after such a lively few hours but our departure was further delayed when David Lovell spotted a perched bird in a tree which looked unfamiliar. To my amazement it was a male Pied Ground Thrush sitting beside a browner plumaged female and the birds precipitated a rapid evacuation of the coach by those who had already reached the vehicle. Fortunately both remained in view for some while before dropping down to feed among the tea bushes in rather atypical manner. After missing these charismatic birds in Nuwara Eliya it was a cause of celebration to see them in such obliging circumstances.

One hour after leaving the Surrey estate, following a winding drive punctuated by views of gorgeous Chestnut-headed Bee-eaters on the roadside wires, and a close Black-shouldered Kite, we arrived at the Ella Rest House for lunch. Perched at the head of a deep valley looking down to the plains below, the rest house has recently been renovated and now boasts smart new solar-heated rooms. After admiring the views we sat down to a very respectable lunch in the restaurant which combined with the drowsy heat of the afternoon induced a degree of somnolence for much of the long drive south!

After a brief stop to photograph a roadside waterfall we continued the twisting descent to the lowlands but observations en route included a Ruddy Mongoose crossing the road and an unmistakable Black Eagle patrolling over a stretch of forest. A few Land Monitors were also surprised on the road but managed to find the necessary turn of speed to avoid being flattened by the traffic.

We finally reached the lowlands at Wellawaya and continued towards the coast entering an increasingly arid landscape dotted with palm trees. With nothing to halt our progress we did not stop again until within striking distance of our destination at Tissamaharama, when a late afternoon leg- stretch afforded nice views of both Green Imperial and Orange-breasted Green Pigeons.

Completing the last few kilometres to Tissa, we quickly checked in at the lakeside Rest House then returned a few kilometers out of town. Here we followed the edge of a canal for a few hundred metres to reach a coconut grove regularly frequented by a pair of White-naped Woodpeckers. Sadly this extensive plantation of palms is now being developed and new buildings are being constructed where many of the trees have been felled. Initial fears that the woodpeckers would abandon the area have however been proved wrong and it seems these attractive birds are more resilient than we thought. Despite recent sightings our vigil today was in vain although several Black-rumped Flamebacks did appear and set pulses racing each time. Swarms of Ring-necked Parakeets were occupying the palms, their numbers augmented at dusk as even more flew in to roost. A Stork-billed Kingfisher shrieked at us from the muddy canal and a White-bellied Sea Eagle joined Brahminy Kites sailing overhead. Eventually we had to admit defeat and returned to the hotel just as Flying Foxes were departing for their nocturnal foraging.

Day 10

Tuesday 14th February

After breakfast we drove back into Tissa town then walked along the raised embankment surrounding Deberawewa Tank, which I consider to be one of the best expanses of fresh water in the Tissamaharama

District. It certainly did not disappoint and from the moment we first raised our binoculars, the species came thick and fast. A Black Bittern flapped up from a small swampy area adjacent to the parked coach and dropped out of sight only to fly up again a short while later. Moving along the embankment we encountered scores of Jacanas, Purple Swamphens, Pond Herons and White-breasted Waterhens which are all very numerous here and display little fear being well used to the traffic of villagers along the bund. Purple Herons were sat around on bushes and masses of egrets of all four species waded in the shallows along with Black-headed Ibis, Painted & Openbill Storks. Clamorous Reed Warblers singing vigorously from thickets of bullrushes permitted occasional views, Black-headed Munias dived in and out of the sedges collecting nest material and Striated Weavers were telescoped feeding out in the waterside vegetation. A Pied Cuckoo joined Blue-tailed Bee-eaters using fence posts as perches out in the middle of the marsh but the most surprising visitor to these wooden posts was a splendid White-naped Woodpecker which stayed long enough for telescopes to be deployed. After yesterday's surprise Pied Ground Thrush it was beginning to seem that we were destined to see star species one day later than expected! More birds appeared in quick succession; Oriental Darter, Garganey, Whistling Duck and Spot-billed Pelican among the waterbirds and Black-hooded Orioles, Small Minivets, Ioras and Brown Shrike in the bushes. Great Egrets resplendent in breeding plumes adorned a tree in the marsh, scores of Pond Herons were busy stalking fish and three or four White-winged Black Terns were identified among the many Whiskered Terns dipping over the water. Anxious calling from a flock of Whistling Ducks at the base of a tree drew attention to a Mugger Crocodile lying almost submerged in the water with just eyes and snout visible but enough to alarm the ducks. Another predator seen here was a fierce looking Shikra which succeeded in capturing a hapless Black-headed Munia which it carried up into a tree. Later we saw another concealed crocodile and an enormous dead python on the bank which must have been 4 or 5 metres in length. Hundreds of Barn Swallows gathered on telephone wires over the rice paddies reminded us of autumn in Britain but some of their companions were rather more tropical in the form of Little Green and Blue-tailed Bee-Eaters, munias and several Ashy Woodswallows. The latter presented even closer views in one corner of the tank where appropriately for Valentine's Day a pair sat side by side, also preening each other with great tenderness. Telescoping them from the bank we could see every feather and several Bee-Eaters nearby also make colourful subjects for study. We continued our progress along the perimeter track as a steady flow of motor-bikes, rickshaws and bicycles passed by in both directions

Sunil was waiting for us at the end of the walk and we then drove along the side of the much larger Tissamaharama Tank, pausing to admire Flying Foxes hanging from waterside trees, before heading to Weerawila Tank, another prime birding locality. The large lagoon at Weerawila was fringed by flocks of waders and terns which provided a remarkably lively 30 minutes or so of birdwatching before we had to leave for lunch. It was really difficult knowing where to look first as a succession of new birds competed for our attention. It was a fine opportunity to admire the graceful profile of Marsh Sandpipers feeding in the shallow pools but other waders nearby included Common Redshank, Greenshank, Turnstone, Little Stint, Pacific Golden, Lesser Sand and Kentish Plovers, Black-winged Stilts, Red & Yellow-wattled Lapwing, Curlew, Wood & Common Sandpipers. A Black Bittern caused chaos as it suddenly flew out of cover and across the road to pitch in the midst of a bush where it remained in clear view for some while. Whilst watching the bittern several Stone Curlews were spotted dozing in the shade of a tree then the focus shifted back to the other side of the road to admire a very close Yellow Bittern doing its best to remain unseen in a scant clump of reed. A flock of Oriental or Small Skylarks were quietly feeding on the turf, sharing the habitat with Paddyfield Pipits, a Grey-headed Wagtail, and briefly, two Ashy-crowned Sparrow Larks. Rafts of Garganey bobbed on the open water, Caspian

and Gull-billed Terns flew among the usual hundreds of Whiskered Terns. It was a veritable feast of birding but eventually we were compelled to leave for another kind of feast at the Rest House!

After lunch we drove south to Bundala Reserve, travelling along the main road from Tissamaharama which is remarkable for the large number of roadside stalls selling delicious Curd, a particular speciality of the region. It was interesting to speculate what makes people stop at any one stall but some of the proprietors were not leaving such matters to chance and tried to flag down approaching traffic! Resisting the temptation we carried on to Bundala and on reaching the edge of this massive lagoon were greeted by the impressive spectacle of countless egrets, storks, herons and terns scattered over the marshes. The first flocks of Spoonbills and Black-tailed Godwits were among this throng and many more small waders which on inspection were mostly Little Stints and Curlew Sandpipers. After several such distractions we eventually reached the Reserve HQ where we transferred to a trio of waiting jeeps. Dividing the group in this manner is unavoidable but never a very satisfactory arrangement when the vehicles are following one another along narrow dusty trails through scrub jungle. Some birds such as the numerous Peafowl, Purple Sunbirds and White-browed Bulbuls were seen by all but sadly only the occupants of one jeep managed to glimpse a flighty Sirkeer Malkoha which quickly vanished into cover. An amusing confrontation between troupes of Grey Langurs was easier for everyone to watch as were several Crocodiles hauled out on the sides of pools. Eventually we arrived at the waterside bushes where there is usually a small nesting colony of cormorants and Openbills but whilst the birds were not at home a large, contented Indian Elephant was enjoying the cool water. Our drivers manoeuvred the jeeps as close as they dare and we spent some while taking photographs as the elephant hosed itself down with obvious pleasure, paying no attention at all to the watching humans. A selection of waders at the waters edge included Marsh, Wood and Curlew Sandpipers but far rarer than these was a Painted Snipe, sitting partially obscured at the base of a bush. It was a remarkable feat of observation on behalf of the reserve guard traveling with us, and such was the camouflage provided by the birds cryptic plumage that it was only the large dark eye that convinced me that it was not just a tangle of vegetation.

We moved next to the great expanse of salt pans which make Bundala one of the best places in Sri Lanka to see waders. This series of rectangular pools connected by narrow earth causeways teems with thousands of waders and could easily occupy a full day but as usual we arrived late afternoon with just a few hours to pay a cursory visit. As we scanned the first stretch of shoreline we marvelled at the ribbon of waders stretching along the water's edge, a mix which included Black-tailed Godwits, Marsh, Curlew and Wood Sandpipers, Little Stints, Turnstone, Stilts, Redshank, Greenshank, Kentish, Lesser Sand and Grey Plovers in addition to Brown-headed Gulls, Little, Gull-billed, Caspian, Crested and Lesser Crested Terns! Nearby a pair of goggle-eyed Great Thick-knees reluctantly moved out of the way as we approached. It was no wonder that we made slow progress but once on the bunds intersecting the pans we were forced to move more briskly as the sun began to sink towards the west. Flocks of waders flew from the banks on either side as the vehicles drove past and we tried to check them for new species as best we could. A noisy Pied Kingfisher diverted our attention from the shorebirds then obligingly perched in a dead tree as if to make sure we hadn't overlooked it! A resting group of gulls and terns also warranted a stop and comprised many Little Terns, an equally large gathering of Caspians and smaller numbers of Crested, Lesser Crested and Gull-billed Terns with some Brown-headed Gulls. Another stop allowed us to admire a rare Reef Egret playing hide and seek as it dodged in and out of a concrete outflow pipe on the bank. Although thinly distributed along the coast these light grey herons are not seen on every tour and this individual was a particularly handsome bird. The same description applied to the dainty Small Pratincoles which we soon encountered along the tracks. One of the star attractions of these salt pans, the pratincoles were present

in good numbers this year and as we drove along we met 15 or more sitting on the gravel track which so exactly matched the colour of their upperparts. The very last salt pan held another surprise as we telescoped six Red-necked Phalaropes spinning around in the water. This little flock of long distance migrants made a fine conclusion to an excellent Bundala visit and we returned to the Park Entrance where Sunil awaited with the coach. A ninety minute drive via Tissamaharama took us the excellent Yala Village Hotel where we wasted no time in locating our chalet rooms and tucking in to the evening buffet. Face towels dispensed at the entrance barrier suggested that this new establishment would not be lacking in comfort and we soon discovered that the beautifully situated complex was indeed the most luxurious accommodation of the tour. Individual chalets were set amid bushy gardens and connected by broad pathways to the central reception and restaurant area where a swimming pool invited the guests for a cooling dip after an afternoon safari. The hotel is located amid a sea of bushes and trees contiguous to Yala National Park and just a few hundred metres from the Indian Ocean which could be seen from the relaxing vantage point of a second storey bar above the restaurant. It was no surprise that during the welcoming reception we were warned to be careful at night as various wild animals, including Elephants, were likely to be met wandering around the grounds! As a precaution, teams of 'torch-boys' awaited departing diners to escort them back to their rooms!

The evening log call revealed some of the disparities resulting from being in three jeeps and in addition to the Sirkeer mentioned earlier, other species not seen by all the group included two Golden Jackals on the road, Pied Cuckoo, Crested Tree Swift, Hoopoe and Yellow-crowned Woodpecker. The day's activities had pushed our cumulative bird list to 197 but more importantly had included some excellent views of many fine birds and of course the first jumbo of the holiday. Another new mammal was Wild Boar and several were trundling around the grounds of the hotel creating interesting noises in the early hours. As I walked back to my chalet after dinner several Common Indian Nightjars were hunting moths over the buildings and their distinctive calls sounded on every side.

Day 11

Wednesday 15th February

Yala is one of the most outstanding nature reserves in Sri Lanka, a combination of open savannah, coastal lagoons, fresh water pools and forest, which supports an impressive variety of birds and mammals. After collecting the mandatory reserve escort, we set off into the Park at just after 7 a.m. passing the first of many displaying Peacock outside the entrance gates. Despite the confines of the somewhat battered old jeeps, we gradually saw a typical mix of birds and mammals as we followed the network of park trails but once again, with three vehicles, not all the occupants saw all the birds.

The overall impression inside Yala is of an abundance of birds, particularly in the wetland areas where the usual masses of egrets and waders are augmented by some of the local Painted Storks, Spot-billed Pelicans, Black-headed Ibis and Spoonbills. Many of the pools contained feeding waders, a mixture which included some 15 species. The usual Whiskered Tern flocks wheeling over each stretch of open water also included several Gull-billed, a few Little and on the larger lagoons, several Caspian Terns. Turning our attention to the drier bushy areas we found plenty to watch with Sri Lanka Junglefowl strutting along the paths, scores of Peacocks showing off their fine feathers, Orange-breasted Green Pigeons, Rufous-winged Bushlarks, Brown Shrikes and Hoopoes. Both Blue-tailed and Little Green Bee-eaters were common and often perched on branches only metres from the passing vehicles tempting the photographers to expend yet more film as did the less numerous but equally extrovert Chestnut-headed! Huge Malabar Pied Hornbills lumbered across the sky in front of the jeeps then

showed well in the trees. There was some evidence of tsunami damage at places where the sea had rolled inland depositing great heaps of vegetation which now dotted the landscape but overall the trees and bushes seemed to have survived the inundation and only in a few places did we see uprooted trees. More obvious when we reached the Indian Ocean beach was the total destruction of the park bungalow which once stood there but more positively, the nearby fishing village was back in business with new boats provided by donors.

Other highlights of the morning session included 5-6 Changeable Hawk-Eagles, Grey-headed Fishing Eagle, Crested Serpent Eagles, Crested Tree-Swifts, Pintail Snipe Yellow-wattled Lapwing, handsome Brahminy Starlings, Yellow-eyed Babblers, Grey-bellied Cuckoo, Black-headed Cuckoo Shrikes, and for one jeep at least, a diurnal Pitta posing in the sunshine.

Yala is associated with mammals for most visitors and despite our ornithological priorities we did see a few of the park mammalian residents including several Indian Elephants, herds of Spotted Deer, Wild Boar, Water Buffaloes, Grey Langurs and Ruddy Mongooses. Land Monitors were regularly encountered and several large Crocodiles maintained a sinister presence on some of the pools. Feeling quite satisfied with our visit we began to return along the main track but frantic gesticulating from the occupants of another jeep ahead of us caused a sudden turn of speed by our driver as we raced to investigate. I knew that such excitement could only mean one thing, a Leopard on view, and as we reached the spot we were just in time to glimpse this most prized of Yala residents, climbing higher into a tree about forty metres from the road. After some rather frustrating minutes the big cat finally reached a thick horizontal bough and stretched out to enjoy a snooze, one paw hanging into space and head pillowed on a convenient lump in the branch. Unfortunately one of our jeeps had gone off in a different direction but eventually the mysterious bush telegraph reached them and before long the whole group was able to savour this wonderful encounter. It later transpired that the Leopard remained in the tree for much of the afternoon and was a magnet for scores of jeeps but we were fortunate that we had it pretty much to ourselves and could make the best of our good fortune. More than a little elated we continued our return progress but had not gone far before we came upon a delightful herd of seven elephants having a wonderful time in a deep pool beside the road. Three of the group were tiny youngsters and we watched spellbound as the group splashed about in obvious delight. It was also a very comical performance and we laughed aloud when one baby skidded as he tried to climb the muddy bank and slid back into the water on top of his mother. The playful nature of these elephants contrasted with the rather menacing demeanour of a solitary bull which we gingerly drove past as he stood at the junction of a side track. Lines of liquid running down his face indicated that he was in musth, a condition analogous with the rut in deer which renders the bull very unpredictable and potentially dangerous. This was the last highlight of an action-packed morning in Yala and we returned to the village in high spirits. A brief stop at the pool in front of the hotel revealed a Ruff and Wood Sandpiper among the throng of Marsh Sandpipers and other waders, before we headed back for a welcome shower and lunch.

The swimming pool and bar seduced some of the group to spend an afternoon of relaxation but later in the afternoon a few of us dragged ourselves away to take a look at Yala Salt Pans, an interesting series of salterns a few kilometers from the hotel. Although not as productive as Bundala, the pans did contain yet more waders, Crested and Lesser Crested Terns plus the bonus of a smart little Starred Tortoise underneath the track side bushes. Nearby Yala Lagoon was also crammed with waders and out in deeper water an impressive flock of 1,000+ Pintail was busily feeding with smaller numbers of Garganey. Back at Yala Village there was time for a drink or two before the evening buffet and whilst sitting by the pool I was amused to observe 60 or 70 Wild

Boar of every size from big boar to tiny piglet, charging through a bushy area just outside the buildings having perhaps heard that pork was on the evening menu!

Day 12

Thursday 16th February

With a distinct air of reluctance, we took our leave of this idyllic spot and were soon once again on the road to Tissamaharama, although before departing I saw a Giant Squirrel in the garden cause a moment of panic for a couple walking in front of me as it launched itself across the path from one bush to another at head height! We stopped at Yala Lagoon to photograph a large assembly of Spot-billed Pelicans which obligingly flew from a more distant shore to gather on a sand bar in front of us. At least 60 birds were present and after posing for photographs they flew back to the original spot making me wonder how Dammi had arranged this for us! Hundreds of Indian Shags indicated an abundance of fish in the shallows and the rafts of Pintail were still upending in the lagoon.

From Tissa we headed north towards the hills but then turned off the main road to visit Uda Walawe Reserve. A few Black-shouldered Kites and a Pied Cuckoo along the way enlivened the drive and before reaching the Park entrance we met the first Elephant standing at the boundary fence looking hopefully towards a roadside fruit stall. Four jeeps awaited our arrival at the entrance gate along with packed lunches collected from an hotel at Embilipitiya! We were soon underway and very quickly came upon more elephants which were wisely seeking the shade of trees during this hot midday period. Most of the early encounters were with lone bulls but later we did see youngsters with their mothers and whilst duplication was possible on the return journey our pachyderm total for the afternoon probably exceeded 30 animals. Some were more distant than others but a number were watched and photographed at close range. Uda Walawe is a great place for birds and very scenic with the Hill Country escarpment dominating the northern border but it has to be said that it was far too hot for comfort during our afternoon safari. The warmth was however welcomed by numerous Cittani lizards clinging to small trees throughout the Reserve. As we toured around in the jeeps abundant small birds in the grasses on either side of the tracks included many Zitting Cisticolas, White-browed and Ashy Prinias, Scaly-breasted, White-rumped and Black-headed Munias, with a few Yellow-eyed Babblers and one or two Blyth's Reed Warblers to add variety. Five or six Changeable Hawk Eagles, several Crested Serpent Eagles and Black-shouldered Kites were observed during the drives and during a lunch break overlooking the reservoir we braved the blistering heat to see a pair of White-bellied Fishing Eagles beside their bulky tree-top nest and a Grey-headed Fishing Eagle in a tree. Most mammals were keeping out of the sun but we did pass a small group of Spotted Deer quietly browsing in shade.

Even though we did not see Uda Walawe at its best, our short visit did produce an interesting variety of birds including Green Sandpiper, Plum-headed Parakeets and Pied Cuckoos but the exceptional heat detracted from the overall enjoyment and I think everyone was quite glad to get back to the cool of the coach air-conditioning after our drive.

We managed to leave Uda Walawe shortly after 330pm and settled back to reflect on the day's sightings while Sunil steered us on the three hour drive to the next overnight stop at the Blue Magpie Lodge near Sinharaja Forest. Although the route was initially along the main Colombo road we met with a few hold ups due to large numbers of enthusiastic, noisy and frequently not very sober, young men brandishing the flags of their particular political parties as they drove along in chaotic conveyances of mini-buses and tut-tuts. Various rallies were being held

in support of candidates for local elections and the scenes were repeated at intervals all along the journey to Sinharaja, only the colour of the flags changing as we moved from the stronghold of one part to another. Eventually in the outskirts of Ratnapura we turned off the main highway onto a narrower minor road which gradually wound higher and higher into the hills passing through a succession of small villages and tea estates. Impressive forested hills began to appear beside the road as we gained in altitude but enjoyment of the scenery was somewhat marred by ominous dark skies overhead which heralded the onset of heavy rain. Before long we were driving through a ferocious storm with deafening cracks of thunder and violent flashes of lightning suggesting that the storm was almost overhead. The downpour didn't seem to lessen the enthusiasm of the political supporters and we passed several open backed vehicles containing some very sodden occupants still singing and chanting as they waved their party flags!

Eventually the rain eased and at long last we finally reached the small settlement at Sinharaja and turned off onto an even bumpier track to reach the Blue Magpie Lodge. As we spilled off the coach we were welcomed by Perry, the organizational wizard from Baur's and willing hotel staff carried our bags to the rooms. It was a relief to be back in this isolated hotel at the very edge of the legendary forest and even though it lacks the luxury of Yala the unique location more than compensates for any deficiencies. Before the Blue Magpie opened we were obliged to stay in Ratnapura which entailed a 4am departure and a three hour drive to reach the forest so at the very least we were gaining a few hours sleep! Being on the spot is a great advantage although the final 5 or 6 kilometres would still have to be driven in jeeps as the approach road to the start of the forest remains in an appalling condition.

Day 13

Friday 17th February

After registering at the nearby ticket off we climbed into waiting jeeps and then it was a case of hanging on for grim life as the drivers crunched gears and struggled to negotiate the shattered boulders which characterise the final uphill kilometres from the HQ to the start of the forest trail. The steeply ascending track more resembles the bed of a rocky stream than a road making the journey both uncomfortable and painfully slow but after countless twists and turns we eventually climbed out at the start of the forest trail and gathered together our possessions for the walk. We were accompanied for the day by two sharp-eyed guards from the Reserve, Thandula Jayarathna and Rathnasena Singhapura, and their skills, honed from spending day after day bird-watching in the forest, were to be a great help to us. Employing 'Duke's first law of forest birding' which states that when birdwatching in forest it is always worth telescoping isolated tall bare trees, we struck lucky with one particular candidate for scrutiny as a succession of interesting birds chose to visit its branches. First to appear were Green Imperial and Pompadour Pigeons followed by a small flock of endemic White-faced Starlings, Crested Drongo, Black Bulbuls, Flame Minivets and finally a singing White-throated Flowerpecker. Scanning the trees also revealed a handsome Mountain Hawk Eagle, wings spread to catch the warmth of the rising sun, and several Sri Lanka Blue Magpies which showed very well before crossing the valley to land in trees close to our group providing excellent photographic chances for those closest to these stunning birds. After this promising start we moved slowly along the forest edge encountering Crimson-breasted and Yellow-fronted Barbets, Yellow-browed and Black-capped Yellow Bulbuls as well as the first of the morning's leeches! We could hear the unmistakable sounds of a mixed feeding flock deep in the forest but unfortunately it remained out of view as did several others heard during the day. Thanks to our friends from the Reserve we were treated next to wonderful views of a Frogmouth sitting on its branch top nest. There is no way we would have seen this bird without being shown it but once located it was easy to see the prominent rectal bristles and cryptic plumage of the parent bird.

Reaching the broader section of the forest we saw rather fewer birds as the morning grew warmer but perched Layard's Parakeets offered the first chance to appreciate their plumage and a Crested Goshawk caused panic among the small birds as it flew in to perch on a branch, fortunately staying long enough for us to train our telescopes on it. An elusive Indian Blue Robin was however seen by just a few of our group and Noel was fortunate by being in the right spot when a flock of Ashy-headed Laughing Thrushes spilled across the path.

Before reaching the Research Station, which is usually the terminus for our walk, Rathnasena dived off into the forest and returned a short while later indicating that we should follow. A slippery and in places, steep, scramble through the forest brought us to a spot where Dammi had set up a telescope for us to view a roosting Serendip Scops Owl. This lovely little owl was only discovered for science in the 1990's when Deepal Warakagoda finally tracked down the source of mysterious calls that had been heard over many years. Since the first sighting over 40 have been located but it remains a mysterious and rare creature which we were extremely fortunate to view by daylight. Conditions dictated that only a few of the group could move forward at a time but luckily the owl was quite untroubled and eventually everyone was able to take a look. After this success, the time spent around the Research Station was a little disappointing but a splendid male Junglefowl paraded for us behind the restaurant, a female Malabar Trogon appeared briefly in the forest and we had more sightings of White-throated Flowerpeckers, Black-naped Monarch Flycatcher and other Sinharaja residents. It was by now midday and we began the trek back to the start of the walk with relatively few distractions during this unfavourable time for bird activity. This did give us a chance to admire some of the non-ornithological attractions such as the beautiful Bamboo-Orchids flowering beside the track and the abundant butterflies which included scores of delicate Tree-Nymphs floating like wind-blown tissue paper over the canopy, and a Common Birdwing with brilliant yellow hind-wings. A bright green male *Calotes calotes* lizard was also a colourful find.

After a welcome lunch at the Blue Magpie we passed the early afternoon in various ways but sitting on the verandah was popular as various small birds including Black-capped Bulbuls and Paradise Flycatchers came to visit the bushes. A Black Eagle sailed above the hills and several Red-rumped Swallows were feeding over the adjacent paddy fields. Entertainment was also provided by Scaly-bellied Munias collecting nesting material and flying back to their nest trailing strips of vegetation three or four times their length! Distant rumbles of thunder indicated that another afternoon storm was likely to occur and in hope of beating the rain a few of us braved the jeeps again to return to the start of the forest trail. As we bumped our way up to the start barrier an Indian Cuckoo sitting quietly in the forest was a surprise addition to our bird list. The flashes of lightning seemed somewhat nearer as we began to walk along the trail, and before long the rain began but not before we had achieved nice views of Orange-billed Babblers noisily exploring every branch as they flowed from tree to tree beside the path. No doubt other components of the feeding flock would have been revealed but with a full blown storm imminent we retreated to the sanctuary of Martin's Bungalow, a Rest house at the edge of the forest operated by a former Reserve guard. Martin was away but his family made us welcome with pots of tea and as the rain poured down we were able to continue birdwatching from the shelter of his open sided restaurant. Apart from Black Bulbuls not many birds ventured out into the storm but we were charmed by a female Junglefowl, obviously well used to humans, which shepherded her brood of tiny chicks into the yard just metres away from us. The protection of the building also allowed us to telescope several Sri Lanka Grackles collected in a tree nearby and a Brown Shrike perched on a fence post. As the rain eased we started the drive back to the Blue Magpie and during the descent disturbed two Spot-winged Thrushes feeding on the wet road, our final endemic of the day.

Day 14

Saturday 18th February

The pre-breakfast walk took us a short distance back to the village and along the forest edge near the Sinharaja Forest HQ. A pair of Gold-fronted Leafbirds at the Blue Magpie got the day off to a good start and this threatened to become sensational when a Dwarf or Pygmy Kingfisher was heard calling in a thicket of bushes beside the river. Dammi and Thandula somehow managed to get telescopes focused on the tiny jewel of a bird perched deep within the bushes but sadly it dashed off almost immediately and few of the group gained more than a fleeting glimpse. Moving on to the HQ buildings we stood for some while on a wooden veranda overlooking the fast flowing river and just as in 2005, it was not long before a Green-billed Coucal obliged by emerging from cover on the far bank where it showed extremely well in the trees. This vantage point seems the place for obtaining early morning views of this skulking bird and this particular individual was clearly enjoying the warmth of the rising sun as it sat with wings and tail spread. Although the star of the show, the Coucal was not the only bird at the river edge and we enjoyed a spell of productive birding during which time Flame Minivets, White-bellied Drongos, Brown-breasted Flycatcher and a Stork-billed Kingfisher visited the trees as well as Ioras, Black Bulbuls and one or two Greater Coucals for comparison with their endemic cousin. A large Water Monitor in the river was also of interest and Thandula managed to find us a splendid Spot-winged Thrush singing lustily from a perch in the forest.

Although the day was warming up we returned to the start of the forest trail for one last try for a feeding flock. As we began the walk the usual Green Imperial Pigeons, barbets and bulbuls were much in evidence but we had to walk rather further than anticipated before we finally met with a mixed flock working through the trees beside the path. For a while we could only hear the tantalizing sound of the birds deep in the forest but eventually the flock moved in our direction and we were able to see the dozens of Orange-billed Babblers and Ashy-headed Laughing Thrushes united in a common search for prey in the foliage. It was entertaining and exciting bird watching especially when some of the individuals came into open view exploring the canopy just metres away. Dark-fronted Babblers were with the babblers and we had glimpses of a trogon and another Brown-breasted Flycatcher but this particular flock seemed to be lacking any of the peripheral species often associating with such bird waves such as the striking Red-faced Malkoha. Pleased with our success we made our way back to the jeeps encountering Sri Lanka Blue Magpie on the way and taking a last look at the Frogmouth on its nest.

It was another sad farewell as we climbed aboard the coach after lunch to commence the 3 hour drive to Ratnapura for the last overnight stop of the tour. The Blue Magpie had been a great place to stay and once again the wonderful Sinharaja Forest had provided a myriad of special memories to take away. It was farewell too for Anthony and Mary who were whisked away in a minibus to a coastal hotel for a week of relaxation after the rigours of touring.

The Ratnaloke Tour Inn is situated amid rubber plantations about 7 kilometres outside the bustling gem city of Ratnapura and we reached this haven by mid-afternoon allowing plenty of time to make use of the hotel swimming pool. A birding walk along the approach road was surprisingly productive later in the afternoon. A Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker offered excellent views in trees beside the road and a short distance further along the road we were able to admire a little flock of Chestnut-headed Bee-Eaters at very close range and some very obliging Hanging Parrots which for a change remained perched for long intervals. A young Tamil lad who had attached himself to us from the village outside the hotel was delighted to look at these birds through our optics and taught us the Tamil name for each species. Other birds seen during the walk included Oriental

Honey-Buzzard, Yellow-fronted Barbets, Red-rumped Swallows, Black-hooded Orioles, Oriental White-eyes, White-browed Fantail and Small Minivets whilst back at the hotel we were able to sip tea whilst watching an assortment of birds in the garden. Several Black-rumped Flamebacks were chasing each other around the grounds and a brown-phase male Paradise Flycatcher shared the canopy of a big tree beside the verandah with Tickell's Blue and White-browed Fantail Flycatchers. It was a pleasant way to end the day and the penultimate sunset of the tour brought yet more bats from their roosts to begin patrolling up and down the verandah.

Day 15

Sunday 19th February

After the coach crew had improvised repairs to the jammed combination lock on Julian's suitcase we left the Ratnaloke and drove to Bodhinagala Forest which we reached at about 9am. This tract of forest surrounding a temple is always worth a visit and today was no exception despite the fairly late arrival. A Purple-faced Leaf Monkey was seen as we climbed out of the coach and sat in prominent view on a branch eating a bread fruit with considerable relish which rather surprised me as I thought they were exclusively leaf eaters! Unusual or not the fruit kept the monkey in view long enough for photographs to be taken and provided a great start to our walk. Not far along the trail which winds its way uphill towards the temple we came upon a pair of Malabar Trogons in the forest. Although not always easy to see as they sat quietly in the high canopy we did eventually manage excellent telescope views of both to make up for the partial glimpses at Sinharaja. A white male Paradise Flycatcher appeared in the same trees and several Dark-fronted Babblers made their furtive way through the undergrowth. After this exciting encounter we made our way to the temple where a pair of Grey Hornbills showed well and we found a very tame Brown-breasted Flycatcher. On the way back to the coach we heard two endemics which both managed to elude us, a calling Chestnut-backed Owlet that stubbornly refused to respond to tapes, and Spurfowl uttering their weird calls from deep in the forest. Several Black-naped Monarch Flycatchers were more obliging and the last Giant Squirrel of the tour peered at us from high in a tree.

A very good lunch at the nearby Citizens Rest House and a session of group photographs was followed by a hot afternoon drive into Colombo where a stop at a Government Emporium enabled the dedicated shoppers in the group a chance to purchase presents for home. Continuing through the leafy environs of Colombo, free of commercial activity on this quiet Sunday, we headed north along the coast to the Airport Garden hotel where rooms awaited us. Two more tour members took their leave as David and Kath headed off to a beach resort for a few days of sunshine and Dammi also departed to prepare for his next incoming group. All that remained for the rest of us was the usual pre-departure routines of packing and relaxing before an evening buffet and an early bed to try and catch a little sleep before a middle of the night transfer to the airport.

Day 16

Monday 20th February

Punctual to the last, all the group members assembled in the lobby at a time when partygoers would just be thinking of going to bed, and with ever-cheerful Sunil at the wheel drove the short distance to the airport. Sad farewells were bid to the brilliant bus crew and we entered the airport for the tedious formalities of checking-in. All went to plan and following a smooth flight home we arrived at Heathrow more or less on time and dispersed to our respective corners of Britain. It had been a splendid tour, full of interesting sightings which I enjoyed sharing with a very pleasant, compatible tour group. I hope our paths may cross again in the future.

Species lists

Bird list

The figure in parenthesis indicates the number of days recorded

LITTLE GREBE (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*) (3) Some 7-8 individuals
 SPOT-BILLED PELICAN (*Pelecanus philippensis*) (7) Still fairly widespread in small numbers on larger tanks and coastal lagoons. 60+ inc immatures at Yala Lagoon was the biggest number in one place but overall no significant flocks apart from this.
 LITTLE CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax niger*) (13) Widely distributed and common
 INDIAN CORMORANT (SHAG) (*P. fuscicollis*) (6) Always less common than Little Cormorant-largest flocks Yala & Mihintale
 GREAT CORMORANT (*P. carbo*) (2) Just 5-6 individuals
 ORIENTAL DARTER (*Anhinga melanogaster*) (5) 20+ individuals on larger tanks & National Parks
 LITTLE EGRET (*Egretta garzetta*) (10) Frequently seen
 WESTERN REEF EGRET (*Egretta gularis*) One seen well at Bundala
 GREY HERON (*Ardea cinerea*) (7) Widespread in small numbers
 PURPLE HERON (*A. purpurea*) (7) Locally numerous in marshy areas (esp Tissamaharama District)
 GREAT EGRET (*Egretta alba*) (8) Often numerous on tanks & marshes- some in summer plumage
 INTERMEDIATE EGRET (*Mesophoyx intermedia*) (13) Present at most suitable areas in small numbers. Some in summer plumage.
 CATTLE EGRET (*Bubulcus ibis*) (15) Widespread and very common
 INDIAN POND HERON (*Ardeola grayii*) (15) Numerous and often on smallest of pools
 BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) Amazingly only one immature en route to Yala –an inexplicable absence from usual localities such as Anuradhapura
 YELLOW BITTERN (*Ixobrychus sinensis*) (3) Two Kekiwewa, Singles Weerawila and Anuradhapura
 BLACK BITTERN (*I. flavicollis*) (1) One Deberewewa one or two Weerawila
 PAINTED STORK (*Mycteria leucocephala*) (4) Mostly on southern wetlands & tanks
 ASIAN OPENBILL (*Anastomus oscitans*) (9) Up to 10 daily in north but also many at Annawillundawa Tank, commoner on southern tanks & wetlands
 WOOLLY(WHITE)-NECKED STORK (*Ciconia episcopus*) (1) Scarcity continues with only one at Sigiriya
 BLACK-HEADED(WHITE)IBIS (*Threskiornis melanocephalus*) (8) Widely scattered in small numbers
 EURASIAN SPOONBILL (*Platalea leucordia*) (3) 50+ around Yala NP & Bundala
 LESSER WHISTLING DUCK (*Dendrocygna javanica*) (7) Present at many tanks in both north and south
 COTTON PYGMY-GOOSE (*Nettapus coromandelianus*) (2) Six+ Annawillundawa Tank three Kekiwewa
 NORTHERN PINTAIL (*Anas acuta*) (2) 1,000+ Yala Lagoon
 GARGANEY (*Anas querquedula*) (4) Small flocks on four days – most Weerawila/Yala/Bundala
 ORIENTAL HONEY-BUZZARD (*Pernis ptilorhynchus*) (5) 8+ individuals, best views Sigiriya & Horton Plains
 BLACK-WINGED KITE (*Elanus caeruleus*) (2) One by road in Hills and 6+ Uda Walawe & District
 BRAHMINY KITE (*Haliastur indus*) (12) Locally numerous around coasts, Anuradhapura area and in south.
 WHITE-BELLIED FISH-EAGLE (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*) (7) Mostly singles or pairs. Total of appx. 12+ birds
 GREY-HEADED FISH-EAGLE (*Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus*) (2) One Yala and one Uda Walawe
 CRESTED SERPENT EAGLE (*Spilornis cheela*) (8) Widespread - although only perhaps 10-12+ individuals seen
 CRESTED GOSHAWK (*Accipiter trivirgatus*) Adult Sinharaja
 SHIKRA (*Accipiter badius*) (8) A scatter of sightings involving some 8-9 birds
 COMMON BUZZARD (*Buteo buteo*) Two at Horton Plains
 BLACK EAGLE (*Ictinaetus malayensis*) (3) Hatane, roadside in hills and at Sinharaja
 CHANGEABLE HAWK-EAGLE (*Spizaetus cirratus*) (5) Seen en route Anuradhapura & 18+ other birds at various locations but particularly Yala & Uda Walawe
 MOUNTAIN HAWK-EAGLE (*Spizaetus nipalensis*) One perched Sinharaja
 COMMON KESTREL (*Falco tinnunculus*) (1) Single near Nuwara Eliya
 SHAHEEN (*F. peregrinus*) c3 Sigiriya Rock
 (SRI LANKA SPURFOWL (*Gallus bicalcarata*) Heard Bodhinagala)
 SRI LANKA JUNGLEFOWL (*Gallus lafayetii*) (7) Heard or seen at various locations but particularly at Yala & Sinharaja (10-15+) heard several other locations. Female with chicks Sinharaja
 INDIAN PEA FOWL (*Pavo cristatus*) (5) Numerous in vicinity of Yala & Uda Walawe, a few elsewhere
 WHITE-BREASTED WATERHEN (*Amaurornis phoenicurus*) (13) Widespread and plentiful
 PURPLE SWAMPHEN (*Porphyrio porphyrio*) (6) Numerous in suitable marshy habitats in north & south
 COMMON MOORHEN (*Gallinula chloropus*) (5) 6+ Deberawewa
 PAINTED SNIPE (*Rostratula benghalensis*) Female Bundala
 PHEASANT-TAILED JACANA (*Hydrophasianus chirurgus*) (7) Numerous on suitable tanks in north & south
 PACIFIC GOLDEN PLOVER (*Pluvialis fulva*) (2) Very small numbers in Weerawila & south coast area
 GREY PLOVER (*P. squatarola*) (3) Yala & Bundala
 LITTLE RINGED PLOVER (*Charadrius dubius*) (3) Small numbers Yala/Bundala
 KENTISH PLOVER (*C. alexandrinus*) (3) Small numbers in usual south coast wader areas

LESSER SAND PLOVER (*C. mongolus*) (3) Locally numerous in south coast area
 YELLOW-WATTLED LAPWING (*Vanellus malabaricus*) (3) Small numbers in arid south coastal areas
 RED-WATTLED LAPWING (*V. indicus*) (10) Common away from hills
 BLACK-TAILED GODWIT (*Limosa limosa*) (3) Flocks at Bundala & Yala
 PINTAIL SNIPE (*Gallinago stenura*) One Yala
 WHIMBREL (*Numenius phaeopus*) One Yala Salterns
 COMMON REDSHANK (*Tringa totanus*) (3) 40-50+ Tissamaharama & south coast wader areas
 MARSH SANDPIPER (*T. stagnatilis*) (3) Locally numerous in south coast area
 COMMON GREENSHANK (*T. nebularia*) (3) Up to 10+ in south coast wader areas
 GREEN SANDPIPER (*Tringa ochropus*) (1) Single Uda Walawe NP
 WOOD SANDPIPER (*T. glareola*) (3) A few scattered singles in south
 COMMON SANDPIPER (*T. hypoleucos*) (5) Scatter of records including several around Nuwara Eliya
 RUDDY TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*) (2) Small numbers in south coast areas
 RED-NECKED PHALAROPE (*Phalaropus lobatus*) Six Bundala Salterns
 LITTLE STINT (*Calidris minuta*) (3) Numerous on southern wetlands/coast
 CURLEW SANDPIPER (*C. ferruginea*) (3) Distribution as Little Stint but smaller numbers
 BLACK-WINGED STILT (*Himantopus himantopus*) (6) Widespread in small numbers, locally numerous
 EURASIAN STONE-CURLEW (*Burhinus oedicnemus*) A pair Weerawila
 GREAT THICK-KNEE (STONE PLOVER) (*B. recurvirostris*) (2) 10+ birds in Bundala/Yala area
 SMALL PRATINCOLE (*Glareola lactea*) c.15 Bundala
 BROWN-HEADED GULL (*Larus brunnicephalus*) (1) 15-20 Bundala/Yala Lagoon
 GULL-BILLED TERN (*Sterna nilotica*) (5) Scattering of sightings from Kekirawa & Mihintale to south coast where c40 Bundala was highest count
 CASPIAN TERN (*S. caspia*) (2) Small numbers in south especially near Yala, Bundala (80+) & Weerawila.
 CRESTED (SWIFT) TERN (*S. bergii*) (2) 30+ Bundala and 20+ Yala Salterns
 LESSER CRESTED TERN (*S. bengalensis*) 3 Bundala, 20+ Yala Salterns
 LITTLE TERN (*S. albifrons*) (2) Small numbers at southern sites, scores Bundala & Yala Salterns
 WHISKERED TERN (*Chlidonias hybridus*) (10) Widespread and locally very common
 WHITE-WINGED BLACK TERN (*C. leucopterus*) (3) 15-20 Deberawewa, Bundala & Yala
 SRI LANKA WOODPIGEON (*Columba torringtoni*) 2 Horton Plains (flight only)
 SPOTTED DOVE (*Streptopelia chinensis*) (15) Common-seen all but one day of tour
 EMERALD DOVE (*Chalcophaps indica*) (5) mostly singles some very close views Sinharaja
 ORANGE-BREASTED GREEN PIGEON (*Treron bicincta*) (5) Annawillundawa, en route Tissamaharama, Yala/Bundala area & Uda Walawe
 POMPADOUR GREEN PIGEON (*T. pompadora*) (5) Mostly in north but a few in south
 GREEN IMPERIAL PIGEON (*Ducula aenea*) (6) Small numbers in south especially Sinharaja
 SRI LANKA HANGING PARROT (*Loriculus beryllinus*) (7) Plentiful in hill country and at Sinharaja also Ratnapura
 ALEXANDRINE PARAKEET (*Psittacula eupatria*) (5) Most seen at Sigiriya Hatane & Peradiniya, a few sightings elsewhere
 RING-NECKED (ROSE-RINGED) PARAKEET (*P. krameri*) (12) Locally abundant away from hill country
 PLUM-HEADED PARAKEET (*P. cyanocephala*) Surprisingly only seen at Hatane & Uda Walawe
 LAYARD'S PARAKEET (*P. calthropae*) (2) Several Udawattakele, & Hatane, small flocks at Sinharaja more usually heard than seen
 PIED CUCKOO (*Oxylophus jacobinus*) (3) Two Anuradhapura, two Deberawewa, 3-4 Uda Walawe
 PLAINTIVE (GREY-BELLIED) CUCKOO (*Cacomantis passerinus*) (4) Four singles-best views Sigiriya
 COMMON HAWK-CUCKOO (*Cuculus varius*) One Peradiniya Gardens Kandy
 INDIAN CUCKOO (*C. micropterus*) One Sinharaja
 ASIAN KOEL (*Eudynamis scolopacea*) (8) A frequently heard and often seen bird of gardens & country
 SIRKEER MALKOHA (*P. leschenaultii*) One Bundala
 GREATER COUCAL (*Centropus sinensis*) (13) Another widespread resident
 SRI LANKA GREEN-BILLED COUCAL (*C. chlororhynchus*) One gave perfect views Sinharaja
 INDIAN SCOPS OWL (*Otus bakkamoena*) Two roosting Meridiya Hotel Anuradhapura
 SERENDIP SCOPS OWL (*Otus thilohoffmanni*) One Sinharaja
 BROWN FISH OWL (*Ketupa zeylonensis*) One seen well Mihintale
 BROWN WOOD OWL (*Strix leptogrammica*) One Surrey Estate
 (SRI LANKA CHESTNUT-BACKED OWLET) (*Glaucidium castanonotus*) Heard Bodhinagala
 FROGMOUTH (*Batrachostomus monileger*) One on nest Sinharaja
 JERDON'S NIGHTJAR (*Caprimulgus collacalia*) Male Sigiriya
 (INDIAN NIGHTJAR *C. asiaticus*) Yala Village (PAD only)
 INDIAN SWIFTLET (*Collacalia unicolor*) (3) Nuwara Eliya & Horton Plains, also Sinharaja
 ASIAN PALM SWIFT (*Cypsiurus balasienensis*) (11) Plentiful near palms
 LITTLE SWIFT (*Apus affinis*) (10) Locally common
 ALPINE SWIFT (*A. melba*) Victoria Park Nuwara Eliya 2-3 with Swiftlets
 CRESTED TREE-SWIFT (*Hemiprocne coronata*) (3) 10+ Sigiriya/Mihintale then daily in Yala area
 MALABAR TROGON (*Harpactes fasciatus*) 1-2 Sinharaja, pair Bodhinagala
 COMMON KINGFISHER (*Alcedo atthis*) (7) Generally widespread in small numbers
 STORK-BILLED KINGFISHER (*Halcyon capensis*) (9) Annawillundawa, Anuradhapura, Sigiriya, Kandy & Sinharaja
 Total c10+

WHITE-BREASTED(Throated) KINGFISHER(*H. smyrnensis*) (14) A common daily bird
 PIED KINGFISHER(*Ceryle rudis*) (3) Bundala and Yala Salterns
 ORIENTAL DWARF KINGFISHER *Ceyx erithacus* One briefly Sinharaja
 LITTLE GREEN BEE-EATER(*Merops orientalis*) (6) Fairly numerous away from hills
 BLUE-TAILED BEE-EATER(*M. philippinus*) (13) The most widespread and numerous Bee-eater inc. hills
 CHESTNUT-HEADED BEE-EATER(*M. leschenaulti*) (3) 1-2 in hills then Yala NP and 20+ near Ratnaloke Tour Inns
 INDIAN ROLLER(*Coracias benghalensis*) (9) Widespread away from highest hills
 HOOPOE(*Upupa epops*) (2) Bundala & Yala
 SRI LANKA GREY HORNBILL(*Ocyroceros gingalensis*) (3) Anuradhapura, Mihintale, Sigiriya and Bodhinagala
 MALABAR PIED-HORNBILL(*Anthraceroceros coronatus*) (3) 2 Sigiriya, two other singles
 BROWN-HEADED BARBET(*Megalaima zeylanica*) (12) A common resident
 SRI LANKA YELLOW-FRONTED BARBET(*M. flavifrons*) (4) Common around Kandy and at Sinharaja
 CRIMSON-FRONTED BARBET(*M. rubricapilla*) (5) Small numbers Sigiriya-Kandy-Sinharaja
 COPPERSMITH BARBET(*M. haemacephala*) (8) More often heard than seen
 BROWN-CAPPED PYGMY WOODPECKER(*Dendrocopos nanus*) Near Ratnaloke Ratnapura
 YELLOW-CROWNED WOODPECKER (*Dendrocopos mahrattensis*) 2 Bundala
 LESSER YELLOWNAPE(*Picus chlorolophus*) One Surrey Estate
 STREAK-THROATED WOODPECKER (*Picus xanthopygæus*) Male Hatane
 BLACK-RUMPED FLAMEBACK(*Dinopium benghalense*) (6) Widely distributed in small numbers
 GREATER FLAMEBACK(*Chrysocolaptes lucidus*) 3 Udawattakele
 WHITE-NAPED WOODPECKER(*C. festivus*) One Deberawewa
 INDIAN PITTA(*Pitta brachyura*) (5) Total of 6 birds seen, others heard
 RUFOUS-WINGED BUSH-LARK(*Mirafra assamica*) (4) A lowland grasslands resident, common Uda Walawe
 ASHY-CROWNED SPARROW-LARK(*Eremopterix grisea*) Small flocks Weerawila/ Yala/Bundala area
 ORIENTAL SKYLARK(*Alauda gulula*) Several Weerawila, Bundala & Yala
 BARN SWALLOW(*Hirundo rustica*) (11) Locally numerous especially at Weerawila
 HILL SWALLOW(*H. dumicola*) (3) Hill Country generally (ie Glen Loch Tea Factory) 10+ Horton Plains
 RED-RUMPED (CEYLON)SWALLOW(*H. daurica*) (5) Mainly Mihintale/Sigiriya & Uda Walawe area but also Blue Magpie Sinharaja & Ratnapura
 BROWN SHRIKE (*Lanius cristatus*) (12) Widespread-(20-30 birds) those in hills predominantly *lucionensis*
 BLACK-HOODED ORIOLE(*Oriolus xanthornus*) (13) A common and beautiful resident
 BLACK DRONGO(*Dicrurus macrocercus*) Six en route to Anuradhapura
 WHITE-BELLIED DRONGO(*D. caerulescens*) (8) Small numbers at many places
 CRESTED DRONGO(*Dicrurus paradiseus*) Sinharaja Forest
 ASHY WOOD SWALLOW-SHRIKE(*Artamus fuscus*) Roadside birds south of Puttalam and four plus Deberawewa
 SRI LANKA WHITE-FACED STARLING (*Sturnus senex*) 10+ Sinharaja Forest
 ROSE-COLOURED STARLING(*Sternus roseus*) 50-80 morning fly-over at Meridiya Hotel Anuradhapura
 BRAHMINY STARLING(*S. pagodarum*) several in Yala
 COMMON MYNA(*Acridotheres tristis*) (15) Abundant everywhere
 SRI LANKA MYNA(*Gracula ptilogenys*) 4-6 Sinharaja Forest
 HILL MYNA(*G. religiosa*) Flocks Peradiniya, Udawattakele, Hatane and Sinharaja Forest
 SRI LANKA BLUE MAGPIE (*Urocissa ornata*) 1-2 Horton Plains 4-5 Sinharaja- very good views
 HOUSE CROW(*Corvus splendens*) (13) Very common away from hills & especially on coast
 LARGE-BILLED(JUNGLE)CROW(*C. macrorhynchos*) (9) Locally common especially in hills
 LARGE CUCKOO-SHRIKE(*Coracina macei*) One Annawillundawa two Sigiriya
 BLACK-HEADED CUCKOO-SHRIKE (*C. melanoptera*) (3) Males at Sigiriya, Surrey Estate & Yala
 COMMON WOOD-SHRIKE(*Tephrodornis pondicerianus*) (6) Small numbers only
 SMALL MINIVET(*Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*) (7) Several small flocks esp. Anuradhapura, Sigiriya Ratnapura
 FLAME (SCARLET) MINIVET(*P. flammeus*) (7) Often in pairs- total 20+ birds
 BAR-WINGED FLYCATCHER-SHRIKE(*Hemipus picatus*) (5) Just a few at five sites
 COMMON IORA(*Aegithina tiphia*) (12) Widespread in small numbers
 BLUE-WINGED LEAFBIRD(*Chloropsis cochinchinensis*) (4) Small numbers at four localities
 GOLD-FRONTED LEAFBIRD (*C. aurifrons*) Six plus Sigiriya, pair Sinharaja
 BLACK-HEADED(CRESTED) YELLOW BULBUL(*Pycnonotus melanicterus*) Just a few at Sigiriya and Sinharaja
 RED-VENTED BULBUL(*P. cafer*) (15) Common everywhere
 SRI LANKA YELLOW-EARED BULBUL(*P. penicillatus*) Common Nuwara Eliya & Horton Plains
 WHITE-BROWED BULBUL(*P. luteolus*) (6) Lowland bushy & scrubby areas particularly around Anuradhapura & Sigiriya
 YELLOW-BROWED BULBUL(*Iole indica*) (3) Udawattakele & Sinharaja Forest
 BLACK BULBUL(*Hypsipetes leucocephalus*) (4) A forest bulbul especially Kandy, Nuwara Eliya & Sinharaja
 BROWN-CAPPED BABBLER(*Pellorneum fuscicapillum*) (3) Sigiriya & Udawattakele Kandy
 SCIMITAR BABBLER(*Pomatorhinus horsfieldii*) Surrey Estate & Horton Plains- heard Sinharaja
 DARK-FRONTED BABBLER(*Rhopocichla atriceps*) (4) Horton Plains, Sinharaja & Bodhinagala
 YELLOW-EYED BABBLER(*Chrysomma sinense*) Yala NP & Uda Walawe
 SRI LANKA ORANGE-BILLED BABBLER(*Turdoides rufescens*) Small flocks at Sinharaja
 YELLOW-BILLED BABBLER(*T. affinis*) (12) A common resident
 ASHY-HEADED LAUGHING-THRUSH(*Garrulax cinereifrons*) 25+ at Sinharaja with babblers
 ASIAN BROWN FLYCATCHER(*Muscicapa dauurica*) (5) c.10 birds – rather scarce this year
 BROWN-BREASTED FLYCATCHER(*M. muttui*) (5) Singles at Udawattakele & Bodhinagala two Sinharaja Forest

KASHMIR FLYCATCHER (*Ficedula subrubra*) Single Victoria Park Nuwara Eliya
 SRI LANKA DULL BLUE FLYCATCHER (*Eumyias sordida*) Horton Plains
 TICKELL'S BLUE FLYCATCHER (*Cyornis tickelliae*) (6) Total of 10+, often heard in forests
 GREY-HEADED CANARY-FLYCATCHER (*Culicicapa ceylonensis*) Horton Plains
 WHITE-BROWED FANTAIL (*Rhipidura aureola*) (4) Sigiriya, Bundala, Yala & Ratnapura
 BLACK-NAPED MONARCH (*Hypothymis azurea*) (3) Sigiriya, Sinharaja & Bodhinagala
 ASIAN PARADISE FLYCATCHER (*Terpsiphone paradisi*) (9) Some 20+ birds including a number of white males
 SRI LANKA BUSH WARBLER (*Bradypterus palliseri*) 1-2 Horton Plains- typically hard to observe
 ZITTING CISTICOLA (*Cisticola juncidis*) (6) Numerous in lowland cultivations and Horton Plains. Especially common Uda Walawe
 ASHY PRINIA (*P. socialis*) (4) A widespread resident but only seen on four dates during this tour
 PLAIN(WHITE-BROWED)PRINIA (*P. inornata*) (5) Locally numerous in overgrown vegetation
 BLYTH'S REED WARBLER (*Acrocephalus dumetorum*) (2) Wintering individuals seen Nuwara Eliya Victoria Park & Uda Walawe but many others heard 'tacking'
 CLAMOROUS REED WARBLER (*A. stentoreus*) Singing birds at Deberawewa & Uda Walawe
 COMMON TAILORBIRD (*Orthotomus sutorius*) (15) Widespread but more heard than seen
 GREEN WARBLER (*Phylloscopus nitidus*) (7) c.10 wintering individuals, particularly evident Horton Plains- often heard calling in forests
 ORANGE-HEADED GROUND THRUSH (*Zoothera citrina*) Two Sigiriya
 PIED GROUND THRUSH (*Z. wardii*) Pair Surrey Estate
 SRI LANKA SPOT-WINGED THRUSH (*Z. spiloptera*) 3-4 Sinharaja
 INDIAN BLUE ROBIN (*Luscinia brunnea*) Female Sigiriya, male Sinharaja Forest seen by very few
 ORIENTAL MAGPIE-ROBIN (*Copsychus saularis*) (15) A common resident from lowlands to hills
 WHITE-RUMPED SHAMA (*C. malabaricus*) (4) Male seen at Sigiriya also heard Mihintale
 INDIAN ROBIN (*Saxicoloides fulicata*) (12) Plentiful in lowland areas
 PIED BUSH-CHAT (*Saxicola caprata*) (3) Small numbers in Nuwara Eliya area & Horton Plains
 GREAT TIT (*Parus major*) (5) Fairly common in hills
 VELVET-FRONTED BLUE NUTHATCH (*Sitta frontalis*) Four or five Horton Plains
 FOREST WAGTAIL (*Dendronanthus indicus*) (4) 15+ individuals in forest locations
 YELLOW WAGTAIL (*Motacilla flava*) One Weerawila
 GREY WAGTAIL (*M. cinerea*) Small numbers in hill country
 PADDYFIELD PIPIT (*Anthus rufulus*) (6) Widespread
 THICK-BILLED FLOWERPECKER (*Dicaeum agile*) Two Sigiriya area
 LEGGE'S(WHITE-THROATED)FLOWERPECKER (*D. vincens*) 7-8 Sinharaja
 PALE-BILLED FLOWERPECKER (*D. erythrorhynchos*) (14) Numerous
 PURPLE-RUMPED SUNBIRD (*Nectarinia zeylonica*) (14) A delightful little resident throughout island
 PURPLE SUNBIRD (*N. asiatica*) (11) Widespread and common but absent from hills
 LONG-BILLED SUNBIRD (*N. lotenia*) (6) Scattering of records, mostly singles or pairs
 SRI LANKA HILL WHITE-EYE (*Zosterops ceylonensis*) Flocks in hill country around Nuwara Eliya
 ORIENTAL WHITE-EYE (*Z. palpebrosus*) (7) Small flocks in forests away from central hills
 HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) (9) Around habitations
 BAYA WEAVER (*Ploceus philippinus*) Plenty of nests seen but only seen at Sigiriya
 STREAKED WEAVER (*P. manyar*) Some seen Deberawewa
 WHITE-RUMPED MUNIA (*Lonchura striata*) (7) Noted at quite a few places
 WHITE-THROATED SILVERBILL (*L. malabarica*) 5+ Uda Walawe grasslands
 SCALY-BREASTED(SPOTTED)MUNIA (*L. punctulata*) (8) Fairly numerous in grassy habitats
 BLACK-HEADED MUNIA (*L. malacca*) (2) Particularly numerous Uda Walawe & Deberawewa

Mammals

TOQUE MACAQUE (*Macaca sinica*) (10)
 GREY LANGUR (*Presbytis entellus*) (7)
 PURPLE-FACED LEAF-MONKEY (*P. vetulus*) (4) Lowland and Highland races
 GOLDEN JACKAL (*Canis aureus*) 2 Bundala
 INDIAN GREY MONGOOSE (*Herpestes edwardsii*) (5)
 RUDDY MONGOOSE (*H. smithii*) (4)
 LEOPARD (*Panthera pardus*) One Yala NP
 INDIAN ELEPHANT (*Elephas maximus*) One Bundala, 10+ Yala NP 30+ Uda Walawe
 WILD BOAR (*Sus scrofa*) Yala
 BARKING DEER (*Muntiacus muntjak*) One Udawattakele
 SPOTTED DEER (*Cervus axis*) Sigiriya Yala & Uda Walawe
 SAMBAR (*C. unicolor*) Yala & Horton Plains (50+)
 WATER BUFFALO (*Bubalus arnee*) Yala
 INDIAN PALM SQUIRREL (*Funambulus palmarum*) (13)
 DUSKY STRIPED SQUIRREL (*F. sublineatus*) Nuwara Eliya & Horton Plains
 GIANT (GRIZZLED) SQUIRREL (*Ratufa macroura*) (8) (Tennant's Giant Squirrel in Hills)
 INDIAN HARE (*Lepus nigricollis*) (3) Several Yala/Bundala also Horton Plains
 INDIAN FLYING FOX (*Pteropus gigantea*) (7) Large roosts at Peradiniya Kandy Lake & Deberawewa. Others by roadside
 BAT spp Many bats seen of varying sizes but only Painted Bat identified with confidence

Reptiles

Starred Tortoise
 Soft-Shelled Terrapin
 Water Monitor
 Land Monitor
 Mugger Crocodile
 Calotes Versicolor
 Calotes Calotes
 Fan-Throated Lizard
 Black-Lipped Calotes Lizard

Plus many unidentified lizards, geckos etc. & 2-3 unidentified snakes

Butterflies

(List provided by Dammithra)

Ceylon Tree Nymph
 Glassy Tiger
 Ceylon Tiger
 Blue Glassy Tiger
 Blue Tiger
 Dark Blue Tiger
 Common Tiger
 Plain Tiger
 Common Indian Crow
 Double Branded Black Crow
 Common Bushbrown
 Dark-Brand Bushbrown
 Gladeye Bushbrown
 Common Treebrown
 White Four-Ring
 Nigger
 Common Evening Brown
 Common Palmfly
 Clipper
 Chestnut-Streaked Sailor
 Common Sailor
 Danaid Eggfly
 Great Eggfly
 Chocolate Soldier

Indian Fritillary
Angled Castor
Common Castor
Tawny Castor
Dark Cerulean
Common Cerulean
Psyche
Common Jezebel
Chocolate Albatross
Common Albatross
Common Emigrant
Lemon Emigrant
Small Grass Yellow
Three Spot Grass Yellow
Common Grass Yellow
Little Orange Tip
Dark Wanderer
Common Birdwing
Ceylon Rose
Crimson Rose
Common Rose
Blue Mormon
Red Helen
Common Mormon
Lime Butterfly
Common Bluebottle
Tailed Jay
King Crow
Cruiser
Grey Pansy
Peacock Pansy
Blue Oakleaf
Commander