

Sri Lanka - Wildlife & History

Naturetrek Tour Report

8 - 24 February 2014



Cave interior Dambulla



Mugger Crocodile



Sri Lanka Blue Magpie



The Golden Temple of Dambulla

Report, images and checklists by Rob Murray



Naturetrek Cheriton Mill Cheriton Alresford Hampshire SO24 0NG England

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

F: +44 (0)1962 736426

E: info@naturetrek.co.uk

W: www.naturetrek.co.uk

Tour Leaders:	Sunil Gunathilake	
	Chaminda Dilruk	
	Thushara Senevirathne (day 2)	
Tour Manager	Rob Murray	Naturetrek
Participants:	Bernard Booth	
	Lynne Booth	
	Alan Goodkin	
	Lyn Goodkin	
	John Hartley	
	Jane Hartley	
	Phil Haywood	
	Hazel Haywood	
	David Hill	
	Ann Hill	
	Alan Oliver	
	Gill Oliver	

Summary

It is hard to imagine a tour that could provide greater experiences of a country. We encountered a rich culture and heritage in the form of ancient settlements in absorbing scenery; religious art and Buddhist temples. Exotic butterflies, gigantic fruit bats, bizarre reptiles and colourful birds were our constant companions. We watched territorial disputes between rival troops of monkeys. Elephants, Wild Boar and, of course, a magnificent Leopard were amongst the mammalian highlights. Thirty of the thirty three endemic species of birds crossed our path. The enigmatic Blue Magpie, scruffy Frogmouths, Red-faced Malkohas and Grey Hornbills were all memorable birds. A visit to a tea plantation revealed how much labour went into producing the everyday cup of tea. The Sri Lankan rural agricultural life was all around us from rice-fields to spice farms and coconut groves to banana plantations. The quality and variety of food proffered was exceptionally high with something for everyone to enjoy. We visited a diverse range of habitats from high moorland to tropical rainforest; from Acacia scrub to expansive marshes; from man-made reservoirs to urban parks. It was this fascinating diversity of culture, food, wildlife and scenery that made this such an enriching experience.

Day 1

Saturday 8th November

Our Sri Lankan Airways flight departed at 20.50 from Heathrow terminal 3. The on-board catering was of a very high standard and their generosity with drinks from the bar was impressive.

Day 2

Sunday 9th November

We arrived at Colombo airport on time at 1pm and we were processed by immigration with the utmost speed. Perry (the ground agent), Thushara and Sunil waved a Naturetrek sign as we sailed through customs so that the entire group assembled quickly. It was a luxurious 30°C with pleasant sunshine as we set off in a comfortable and spacious bus for the long drive to Anuradhapura. There is a different driving culture here. Overtaking can be

hair-raising for front seat passengers, but the drivers are skilful and calculating and they know the code. It all seems to work out well despite Tuk Tuks weaving about and mopeds coming at us on the wrong side of the road. Dogs seem to prefer lying on the roads, and they begrudgingly amble out of the way at the last second.

The bird list got underway with House and Thick-billed Crows and quickly increased when we took a roadside break alongside a 'tank' which provided an ideal habitat for a range of water birds. Whiskered Terns were dipping over the water surface and Indian Pond Herons, Purple Swampheens, Pheasant-tailed Jacanas, Lesser Whistling-ducks and Great, Intermediate and Little Egrets probed the soft mud. White-throated Kingfishers, Common Mynas and Blue-tailed Bee-eaters made use of the power lines running beside the road. Several 'fried' Indian Fruit Bats were hanging lifelessly in their electrocuted pose having collided with the wires.

Our next stop for an hour or so was at a Ramsar site at Anawilundawa just south of Puttalam off the A3. A Stork-billed Kingfisher flew past whilst we were marvelling at a dense colony of Spot-billed Pelicans adorning trees on the far side of the tank. Here we saw an exotic White-bellied Fish Eagle and some familiar birds such as Coots, Dabchicks and Grey Herons consorting with unfamiliar neighbours. Perhaps the highlight of the day was a splendid Blue-faced Malkoa creeping about the canopy searching for bitter fruits. A stop for biscuits with fresh, succulent, sweet, diminutive bananas was appreciated by all and we vowed to sample all 15 varieties of bananas grown in Sri Lanka. Coconut milk from a freshly hacked open coconut imbibed through a straw was a refreshing, exotic delight.

It was well after dark when we arrived at the Rajarata Hotel in Anuradhapura. Driving at night presents fresh challenges. Many mopeds and cycles had no lights; dogs and pedestrians sauntered out onto the road. By 8pm we were seated for a splendid meal in refurbished accommodation. The trouble was that our biological clocks registered 2.30 pm and going off to bed at what seemed like 6.30pm was decidedly strange!

Day 3

Monday 10th November

Some of the group met at 6.15am for a birding amble towards the reservoir. It was hazy but dry. Scaly-breasted Munias were nest building and flying in with long grass stems to weave into a very bulky nest. Both Purple-rumped and Long-billed Sunbirds were attending to brightly coloured blossoms in the hotel gardens. Spot-billed Pelicans were cruising around the fishing boats reflected in the limpid water and hazy light of a tropical dawn. We returned for breakfast at 7.30.

After breakfast, we set off to spend the morning visiting the archaeological sites of Anuradhapura before returning to the hotel for lunch. The main site was first established around the 3rd. century BC and 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. Such a landscape is inevitably going to support a good number of birds. Amongst them was the endemic Sri Lanka Woodshrike. Thushara was happy to provide the historical background at each location, beginning at the famous Rock Temple then progressing to the Sacred Bo Tree and the Elephant Stupa. We fared well for wildlife finding Grey Langurs, Toque Monkeys and Grizzled Squirrel. It was necessary to remove our shoes in order to enter these religious zones. The slabs increased in temperature as the hours passed and some of us danced like lizards in the Namib Desert to avoid burning our bare feet. Local people dressed in white, proffered trays of flowers to

Buddha. These attracted hornets and a spectacular swarm of them was suspended from a bough of *Ficus religiosa*. Another Stupa attracted our attention as it had facilities for a comfort stop and a museum.

Our next stop was to admire the Moonstone which is a semi-circular stone motif depicting the procession of life. It proved to be a good site for displaying Green Garden Lizards too. There is a large statue of Buddha at Samadi. At the time of our visit a Giant Squirrel and a Paradise Flycatcher were also paying their respects. The endemic Grey Hornbill was seen in a tree alongside two spectacular pigeons. These were the endemic Sri Lanka Green pigeon and Green Imperial pigeon. The final visit before lunch was to the Stupa at Jetawana which still has snake charmers.

After a satisfying lunch, we departed for an afternoon at Mihintale, a very important historical site about 12 km from Anuradhapura. It is here that Buddhism was first introduced to Sri Lanka from India, and the spot is marked by a particularly fine stupa perched on the top of a forested hill. A White-rumped Sharma tried to elude us but our persistence was duly rewarded. The sky darkened and thunder rumbled nearby. Fortunately, the rain held off until we were back on the bus and heading off to Mhakanabarawa Dam. These huge tanks attracted a fascinating range of birds, which kept us amused until sundown. A Star Tortoise ambled onto the road so we stopped to admire and rescue it. Today our local leaders had successfully married the archaeological and avian interests of the region to give us a memorable experience.

Day 4

Tuesday 11th November

The pre-breakfast walk was a resounding success this morning. An Indian Pitta emerged from the thicket and sat in a tree giving all of us a splendid view. A fine Jezebel butterfly circled round for long enough to be appreciated but few of the other exotic Lepidoptera were so obliging. They bobbed up and down and twirled around the multi-coloured flower heads of *Lantana* like dancing Manikins, with no thoughts of settling. Those of us who missed the strikingly green Jerdon's Leafbird yesterday were treated to fine views this morning. To allow time for packing we delayed our departure until 9am.

Our sharp-eyed leaders spotted a pair of Ashy Woodswallows and a Black Drongo from the bus. It was amusing to watch a Giant Squirrel performing a high-wire circus act along a sagging telegraph cable. We pulled up to admire a dense aggregation of Black-headed Ibises clustered onto a dome-shaped bush at the waterside. The offer of an opportunity for a brief stretch of the legs was readily accepted by the side of a huge expanse of marsh. Here two White-bellied Fish Eagles sat prominently on their lookout post, as a Richard's Pipit paraded up and down a sandy track. The distinctive outline of an Oriental Honey Buzzard made identification easy as it sailed above us, whilst a sedentary, juvenile Crested Serpent Eagle required closer scrutiny. The final find of quality before our arrival at Sigiriya was a Grey Drongo.

The grounds of the hotel harboured a fascinating array of wildlife from slithering Rat Snakes, mischievous monkeys, corpulent Giant Squirrels, cheeky chipmunk-like Palm Squirrels and enormous Blue Mormon butterflies. A Land Monitor barged its way across the dining room, whilst gaudy-throated Green Garden Lizards bobbed their heads in threat from the sanctity of the Palm trees. We passed a profitable afternoon sauntering up the road, which threaded its way through dense woodland as it delivered a constant stream of traffic to the entrance of the ancient rock settlement. Amongst the highlights were close encounters with White-rumped Shamas, Oriental White-eyes, Paradise Flycatchers and Sri Lankan Swallows. More elusive, but equally enigmatic

were Dark-fronted and White-browed Babblers. Two wild Sri Lankan Junglefowl strutted across the road with the boldness and brashness of farmyard cockerels but the Indian Blue Robins permitted only the most fleeting of views. Some of us were distracted and diverted en route to the dining room by the discovery of a Bronzeback Tree Snake taking a dip in the swimming pool. It was worth examining the areas of walls adjacent to exterior lights for an array of invertebrates attracted to the intense pool of light like moths to a flame. There were large, exotic moths, Praying Mantids, iridescent beetles, an assortment of grasshoppers and weird-looking, unfamiliar taxa. As each new arrival spiralled fatefully down to the illuminated patch, the resident Geckos shot out from behind the room number plaques to seize and devour those hapless visitors.

Day 5

Wednesday 12th November

The early morning birding session was well attended and, for these stalwarts, the reward was to see a few endemic Sri Lanka Junglefowl, Tickell's Blue Flycatcher and Brown-capped and Dark-fronted Babblers. Then, after breakfast, we were driven to the museum at Sigiriya, where we watched a short video showing the settlements which have been excavated upon the towering geomorphological outcrop known as an inselberg. The architecture of the building had been thoughtfully designed to allow trees to thrive within plazas, so that as they mature they will spread out over the museum to enable it to blend into its surroundings. We could see the effectiveness of this strategy as we looked down and across the plain from the summit of the inselberg. Pools of purple Lotus flowers were an additional attraction and the presence of Stork-billed and Common Kingfishers along with an array of dragonflies added to our pleasure.

Armed with a basic knowledge of the history gleaned from the museum exhibits, it was now time to begin the trek to the summit. We found plenty to observe on the approach road. A Crested Serpent Eagle remained in a stately pose for long enough for not only our group to imbibe its regality, but also for a host of passers by too. Several artificial pools were in various stages of restoration. They held many interesting species ranging from Mugger Crocodiles and Pond Herons to Monitor Lizards and exotic dragonflies. Notice boards advised against swimming in the moat and tanks. Good advice indeed! Another notice urged visitors to be silent, suggesting that noise would aggravate the local hornets and invite a deadly attack. Fewer people heeded this advice. The local race of Peregrine Falcon, called a Shaheen, was nesting in a collapsed cavern on the rock face. One adult was in attendance, and the other was seen performing a dramatic stoop from the summit. It was a steep ascent up hundreds of steps, caged spiral staircases and stony tracks to the top.

Some of the group opted out at an early stage and stayed at a lower level, enjoying the company of inquisitive Toque Monkeys. A few more fell by the wayside at one of the false summits, whilst the remaining few battled on up to the top. The view was quite spectacular and we could see the hotel nestled between the trees, with its blue swimming pool gleaming up at us. The ancient wall paintings were a special feature. We all appreciated them for their antiquity, but some felt the subject matter was their least attractive feature. We hadn't appreciated that implants and Botox were available so long ago! As the summit party descended, they linked up with the two satellite groups just in time to witness a territorial conflict between rival bands of Toque Monkeys. Sunil was a member of the Primate Study Group, and it was fascinating to hear him give a commentary of the ensuing battle. Males who occupied the upper echelons of the dominance hierarchy charged at their counterparts. One male drove the females towards a place of safety whilst they shepherded the youngsters away from the battle front. Surprisingly quickly, the resident troop on their home range repelled the attackers and normality returned. We resumed our descent and arrived back at the bus none the worse for our exertions. Some beautiful butterflies

graced the rock faces. We saw the Blue Bottle, Common Crow, Common Eggfly, Lemon pansy, Leopard and Blue Glassy Tiger.

Lunch was another prodigious feast, and the option to rest for an hour before going birding again was seized without hesitation. Duly refreshed, our next destination was a large tank with emergent vegetation and drowned trees. It was a picturesque habitat surrounded by distant hills and rice fields. On the way, two Malabar Hornbills crossed our paths and a colony of Baya Weavers was encountered at last. They have the most remarkable pendulous nests equipped with dangling entrance tunnels designed to deter snakes from devouring their chicks. At the lake, three Indian Pittas holding adjacent territories began a vocalised border dispute that drew them out from cover. The orange hued breast of a Shaheen stood out like a beacon even though it was some distance away. A nectar-rich tree had lured many butterflies to its blossom. Among them were a few magnificent Jezebels. A Grey-breasted Prinia was a new find for the trip. It was evident that a thunderstorm was brewing. Our decision to head back to the bus appeared apposite, but was taken too late. Torrential tropical rain poured down and continued past our scheduled departure time for our evening session to hunt for Slender Loris. It forced a close of play.

Day 6

Thursday 13th November

Bringing the pre-breakfast walk forwards to 6am didn't deter many people. We went to the first stretch of the road to Sigiriya Rock, which had been productive yesterday. Two birds new for the trip were Bar-winged Flycatcher and Jungle Prinia. The spectacular Indian Pitta showed well and a Stork-billed Kingfisher flew past.

We checked out and headed for Dambulla Rock Temple. One could be forgiven for noticing the resemblance of the entrance to a seaside amusement arcade. However, after plodding up 300 steps, the true splendour of the site became apparent. There was a series of caves ornately decorated with ancient paintings and housing numerous statues. The reclining Buddha was an oft-repeated theme. One mural depicts Buddha repelling characters brandishing fiendish weapons, and it is reputed to be centuries old. Even the local Buddhists were bemused by the fact that one of the evil forces is brandishing a shot gun. The only birds of note were raptors, which included Oriental Honey Buzzards and Changeable Hawk Eagle. It was very hot and humid making all of us feel uncomfortable. By the time we reached the Luckgrove spice garden it was raining, and we completed the circuit beneath umbrellas. A guide explained how a range of spices were grown and extracted, whilst standing before the actual plants. Then he promoted herbal remedies, with the conviction of a religious convert or a reformed smoker. Obviously, these were on sale! Some of the group allowed masseurs to attend to them for a 15 minute session outside, beneath a roofed 'stable'. A beautiful Tickell's Flycatcher was singing and sitting in a prominent position. Our search for roosting owls did not bear fruit. The rain was relentless, so we modified the programme. We visited The Temple of the Tooth in Kandy this evening before supper. Walking around in bare feet through puddles and over stone tiles and rock for some distance raised no complaints. We watched the initial stages of the presentation of food to Buddha, but it was not possible to see his lower canine tooth which is housed behind an ornately decorated door.

Day 7

Friday 14th November

Adjacent to the Presidential Palace and just a few kilometres from our base stands the regal forest of Udawattakele. The trees stand tall with roots penetrating the red lateritic soils and their trunks forming a ladder

to the heavens for assorted vines and creepers. Shafts of sun beams sought out weaknesses in the dense canopy's defence to send smoky rays to the decaying leaf litter. Leaches were something of an issue, but were easy to pull off and seemed to dislike antiseptic tissues. They carry no infections and can be deterred by wearing clothing tucked in and covering as much skin as possible. The prevalence of leeches this time was due to the long wet period the region has endured and is not typical.

We saw two roosting Brown Wood Owls which were more than adequate compensation. A Forest Wagtail was a bonus for the lucky few who could see it grovelling about the dark, dank forest floor. Yellow-browed Bulbul and Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher were special treats too. Tracks of Bandicoots and Wild Boar had registered in the mud along the 4 kilometre walk. Perhaps the most impressive of the trees was the Cannonball, with huge spherical fruit suspended from the trunk.

Due to traffic, it took longer than expected to cover the short distance to The Botanic Gardens of Peradeniya. Memorable birds here were Golden-fronted Leafbird, Yellow-fronted Barbet and Tickell's Flycatcher. The orchid house displayed some magnificent blooms.

A late lunch was taken and then we made a lightning visit to the mountainous area opposite near to Hatane amid the Udawela Tea Estate. This was extremely interesting scenery as the tea plantation offers the chance to admire intriguing birds in an attractive setting. Hill Mynahs, Indian Black Robin, Hanging Parrot, Plum-headed Parakeet and Oriental White-eye graced the slopes. The finest encounter of all was probably with two Common Hawk-cuckoos whose lengthy call starts at a low pitch and accelerates and builds up, rising in pitch and volume, to make a very loud and distinctive announcement of its presence. As we returned to the hotel dusk was closing in and enormous Indian Flying Foxes took to the air flapping slowly across the urban landscape like harbingers of doom.

Day 8

Saturday 15th November

The resident troop of Toque monkeys just sense which rooms are occupied by persons of low intelligence. As they barged in through the open balcony doors and trashed my room I could almost hear the alpha male asking "which part of 'don't leave your patio door open' do you not understand?"

There is no such thing as a rush hour in Kandy, as traffic is heavy at all times of day. We drove around the lake and then up onto the mountain road towards our next destination which lies at the end of this meandering and undulating route through the tea plantations. A tour of a tea factory was memorable for the Hill Swallows breeding on the building. We had an escorted tour during which the different stages of processing were explained. It was a noisy and dusty environment, yet none of the workers wore protective masks or ear defenders. There were raptors soaring in the area and we had good views of a Rufous-bellied Eagle, Changeable Hawk Eagle and a Sparrowhawk-like Besra. We reached Nuwara Eliya, at lunch time. The Leisure Village Hotel stands on a hill overlooking Gregory's Lake. A pair of Pied Stonechats was an attractive sight right by the hotel. The afternoon was spent in the eucalyptus forests of Bomuruella. A very kind and tolerant local lady invited us into her garden to see a spectacular, endemic reptile known as the Rhino-horned Lizard. Four were on display clinging vertically to plant stems. Both males and females were on show. Great Tits, Grey Wagtail and Greenish Warblers made us feel more at home, but Sri Lanka White-eye, Yellow-eared Bulbul and Dull-blue Flycatcher reminded us where we really were. All three are endemic. The leeches were much less numerous here and of a

different species, sporting a yellow dorsal stripe and adopting a less aggressive strategy. None secured a meal from any of us today. The mammals were of interest. A Dusky Squirrel demonstrated its speed and agility by leaping from branch to branch with great accuracy. There is an isolated race of Toque Monkey here. They have much longer hair and shorter tails than either of the other two races. Those at Kandy were rusty-red in colour and quite different.

After supper, upon hearing the news that a 5am departure was necessary tomorrow, the dining room was swiftly vacated as everyone felt the need for an early night.

Day 9

Sunday 16 November

We had hoped to make a 5.00am start from the hotel to visit Horton Plains, and to time our arrival with the opening of the gates and the dawn protestations of some of the endemic birds. Unfortunately, our four-wheel drive vehicles were 30 minutes late arriving. We loaded up our packed breakfasts and set off for the 18 mile trek along winding roads, hairpin bends and rising altitude. As we entered the park, we could see a marvellous view towards Adam's Peak and many of the highest areas of Sri Lanka. A herd of 15 Samba Deer were resting in the open, which was more satisfying to see than the tame one parading around the car park. A wild stag had been seen on the road beforehand. The quest for endemic birds began by the side of a small pool. A Dull-blue Flycatcher was first up, but it took a lot of patience to locate a very skulking pair of Sri Lanka Bush Warblers. Due to their extreme secrecy and diminutive size, it was astounding that everyone managed to see them. Finding a Whistling Thrush required more standing around peering into visually- as well as physically-impenetrable thicket. It was a spectacular bird and worth the wait. The Indian Blackbird is a likely candidate for a split in the near future, which will make it an 'armchair tick' and add one more endemic to the 33 cited at present. It is really only our common Blackbird, but when we found one it did generate a modicum of excitement!

We continued our trek along the path which was quite degraded for the final two kilometres, and required a bit of stamina and sure-footedness to complete. The major disappointment of the day was to find one of the best views in Sri Lanka denied to us by low cloud and mist. There was no alternative but to retrace our steps to the car park. Purple-faced Monkeys were a joy to find, and one posed for us (if a little indelicately!) for long enough to appreciate its amazing face. Velvet-fronted Nuthatches are handsome birds and a pair repeatedly displayed themselves on dead trees so at last we obtained unobscured views. Our final endemic species of the morning was a highly attractive reptile known as the Black-lipped Lizard. They creep about amongst the greenery of shrubs but will allow a very close approach.

We returned to a very tasty and much enjoyed Sri Lankan curry lunch. At 3.30pm we made the short journey to Victoria Park situated in the heart of Nuwara Eliya town. It was raining steadily as we arrived, and then heavily. Undaunted, we raised our umbrellas and scurried about the immaculately tended flower beds looking for the special birds the park attracts. It was difficult in these conditions, but we did see a male Kashmir Flycatcher and two most attractive Scimitar-billed Babblers. Turning over a randomly selected rock revealed a neat little burrowing snake known as the Common Rough-sided Snake. The light was appalling and the weather very miserable, so we called it a day. Interestingly, we encountered several species today which would feature on some garden or local patch lists back home. It is fascinating to reflect upon how very different their lives and neighbours are in comparison to their British relatives. They were House Sparrow, Blackbird, Kestrel, Buzzard,

Grey Wagtail, Great Tit and Common Sandpiper. For those who do a bit of twitching you could add Alpine Swift and Greenish Warbler to the list of already familiar birds.

Day 10

Monday 17th November

An early morning visit to the eucalyptus area of Bomuruella had the intention of plugging a gap in our experience of endemic species. The missing bird was the Sri Lanka Woodpigeon. Drizzle did not deter the 6 stalwarts of the pre-breakfast club and we plodded on regardless. It was a profitable visit, as we saw Grey-headed Canary Flycatchers, Velvet-fronted Nuthatches, Yellow-eared Bulbuls, Sri Lanka White-eye and a glimpse of the celebrated Woodpigeon. A female Indian Robin hopped into a clearing giving a clear view. Purple-faced Leaf Monkeys had not been seen in abundance, so it was pleasing to watch a few this morning. The race of Toque Monkey with the centrally parted, long hairstyle, and frenetic Dusky Squirrels were other enjoyable mammals. Two Rhino-horned Lizards were racing over the leaf litter despite the cool and miserable weather. We should have been back at the hotel by now to join our colleagues for breakfast, but further delay was inevitable when an incredibly bright orange-plumaged bird caught our attention. It was a dazzling Flame Minivet.

Our companions took our tardiness with grace and declined to chide us too much. Soon we were on the A5 and heading down out of the hill country. As we passed a Hindu shrine, Toque Monkeys were scrambling over it. These would be the last of this wet zone race that we would see. It was 0950 when we reached the Surrey Bird Sanctuary. A walk around the perimeter unearthed some splendid birds such as Layard's Parakeets, Yellow-fronted and Brown-headed Barbets and Scimitar-billed Babblers. Chaminda is nothing less than committed as a bird-finder, and he advised us to stay on the road whilst he leapt off into the bushes, like Tarzan in pursuit of Jane! As expected, Chaminda did locate the elusive bird. The logistical conundrum was how to get the whole group into a position to see it. By means of instructions delivered by mobile phone from Chaminda, Sunil led us into the thicket. We scrambled through tangled briars and fended off lashings from thorny vines. Entwining creepers wrapped their tendrils around us holding us back. Mud clung to our boots as we slipped and grovelled our way to the Holy Grail. A dancing green light from his laser pen indicated where to look - and there it was! A Woodpigeon! Two ladies of the group declined to descend into the abyss. They had weighed up the potential benefit against the risks and discomfort of fighting the undergrowth, just to see a pigeon. Even worse, a Woodpigeon! As they stood on the roadway awaiting our return, this endemic and elusive Sri Lanka Woodpigeon flew down and settled right next to them!

There is a hotel in Ella with a dining room that looks out onto a magnificent vista. This is where we had lunch. It was a memorable Sri Lankan curry which was delicious! As we descended from the hill country and advanced across the plain we noted that tea plantations had been left behind to be superseded by rice-growing. Peacocks, Woolly-necked Storks and Black-headed Ibises were at home here. The presence of Grey Langur Monkeys indicated that we were back in the dry zone. The Safari hotel in Tissamaharama beckoned and, with just enough time to find our rooms, we were back on the road again to spend the final hour of daylight by a huge tank. We walked along the margins of a lake, as the sun was dropping like a stone and night-time was brooding. Hundreds of egrets, herons and ibises were winging in to roost. Yellow Bitterns tormented us by flying a short way and then plunging into thick reeds. Thousands of Indian Fruit Bats emerged silently and lethargically from their day-time roosts and flapped leisurely across the open water, in no hurry to plunder the fruit plantations. We were spellbound. The richness and diversity of wildlife here is truly astounding.

Day 11

Tuesday 18th November

We departed in half-light at 5.30am and the bus took us to the entrance of Bundala Ramsar Reserve. Here we transferred into three jeeps for an exploration of a range of habitats; scrub, salt pans and marshes and sea coast. It is principally a bird reserve but we did encounter a Ruddy Mongoose and up to five Golden Jackals, together with scores of Grey Langurs, Toque Monkeys and two Spotted Deer. Although we were split as a group between three vehicles, it was surprising how little our checklists varied at the end of the excursion. No one missed anything vital! The emphasis was very much on birds. The most notable sightings were Small Pratincole, Lesser Adjutant Stork and Red-necked Phalarope. Odd groups of Painted Storks and Spoonbills waded in the shallow depressions. A Grey-headed Fish Eagle had caught a large fish and it remained oblivious to our parked jeeps as it dismembered its catch at the water's edge. A Yellow Wagtail of one of the unfamiliar Asian races was a surprise. We stopped to eat our packed breakfasts on the sea shore where a Noddy Tern was flying back and forth above two Leather-backed Turtles. They bobbed up and down only showing themselves at the surface for seconds at a time.

The salt pans had attracted a wealth of waders and terns. Greater Crested Terns, Caspian Terns and Whiskered Terns were the supporting cast to a host of waders. Plovers included Lesser Sand Plover, Pacific Golden, Grey, Little Ringed, Ringed and Kentish. We drove along the narrow, raised causeways in an attempt to get closer to the waders. Despite this, a telescope was essential, but difficult to put up in the jeep. The remaining long list of species we logged can be referenced by consulting the checklist appended to this report.

On the way back to Tissamaharama we made a slight detour to a water channel lined with tall trees. It was here that we found a fine looking Brown Fish Owl. Chaminda 'scoped it and organised the party well so that we could view it one at a time. Then we scurried back to the Hotel, a little behind schedule for check-out. Lunch was ready for us at our next hotel, right on the edge of Yala reserve. We were startled whilst seated at our long table, when an audacious Palm Squirrel hopped, skipped and jumped down the entire length of the table. Many animals here are habituated to human activity and pursue their own agendas with total disregard of people. This applies to a Land Monitor who scavenges around the huts. The immediate area around the hotel holds plenty of interest and many subjects to photograph. That is why we whiled away our afternoon and early evening session walking round the lake. Mugger Crocodiles with wide-gaping mouths and rapacious grins basked on a rocky islet. Some cruised very slowly in a ripple-less motion towards dabbling pelicans and wading storks and stilts. Their resemblance to a drifting log fooled none of these wary birds. It is fascinating to see species which are very familiar to us in the UK consorting with exotic co-inhabitants. A Redshank and a Common Sandpiper were foraging around an indolent crocodile and scurrying between the legs of Painted Storks. A Kingfisher peered down into the murky water where huge terrapins and catfish lurked.

As dusk approached we stationed ourselves at the lake side by an area of open ground. It was not long before Indian Nightjars were gliding and cavorting around our heads in pursuit of moths.

Day 12

Wednesday 19th November

Yala is an accessible and outstanding reserve because a network of dirt roads permeates all of the habitats. There are patches of open savannah, saline lagoons, freshwater ponds and mixed forest. Naturally, its high biodiversity is a major feature of its ecosystem. We set off at 5.30am hoping to be amongst the first to be admitted through

the gates. Early thunder and sheet lightning presaged the inevitable heavy downpours. Rain lashed the roofs of the jeeps and swept in from the unprotected sides, but this deterred no one. Even Peacocks had already begun calling and displaying despite the gloom and cool temperature. Many advertised their availability from high vantage points giving us excellent views. Large herds of Spotted Deer were soon noticed, but the larger, more impressive Samba Deer were in short supply. A single elephant munched its way through the dense scrub but Wild Boars were more easily observed. One was frantically digging in the red lateritic soil under the surveillance of two Myna birds. Periodically the boar showered them with excavated earth but the reward of unearthed worms and assorted titbits was worth the inundation. Golden Jackals wandered menacingly across the plain whilst truly wild Water Buffalo wallowed in the cool, deeper ponds.

A Leopard had been sighted reclining in a stout, emergent tree. There were 14 jeeps in pursuit, and they surged into a treacherous, muddy track all vying for the optimal position to afford their clients the best view. Whilst some of our party had clear views, others experienced only brief and cluttered views, as foliage obscured the cat. However, we did all at least see it. Peering down from its lofty lair upon the assembled scrummage of vehicles, the Leopard decided that it had had enough and slithered down the trunk and was gone. Rain was still falling and the light was far from optimal but several people acquired treasured images of this revered carnivore. Now we turned our focus upon birds. Chestnut-headed Bee Eaters, a Dollarbird, and Brahminy Starling were certainly much appreciated sightings. Paradise Flycatchers and Indian Pittas never fail to please. The list of species encountered was indeed impressive.

In the afternoon we took a 10 minute bus ride to Palatupana salt pans in search of waders. Unfortunately, it rained all the time we were there, but we carried on regardless. For those without telescopes it may not have been quite as interesting, because close views were necessary to distinguish between the plovers and calidrids. Marsh Sandpipers, Little Stints, Redshanks, Turnstone, Curlew Sandpipers and Greenshank were all seen well. Although there were good numbers of Lesser Crested Terns they were quite far away. Greater Crested terns were amongst them affording a good opportunity for comparison. Both Greater and Lesser Sandplovers were side by side too. The flat, open grassy areas supported a range of passerines. Ashy-crowned Sparrow Larks were in small flocks and Paddyfield Pipits raced about amongst them. As we drove along the sodden, muddy tracks we noted Black-naped Hares, Indian Pitta, Greater Coucal and smartest of all, Green Imperial Pigeons. We had planned to stay out until dusk to look for nightjars but the inclement weather caused us to abandon that idea. On the far side of the lake by the hotel we encountered a herd of 12 Wild Boar foraging.

Day 13

Thursday 20th November

Grey Langurs seem to think it is amusing to leap up and down on the roofs of the chalets late at night and early in the morning. Wild Boars stood defiantly outside chalet doors but offered no threat. House Crows were hitching rides on their backs and leaning over to pick ticks off the boars' hides. Palm Squirrels scampered around the breakfast table and a Giant Squirrel munched leaves nonchalantly, despite the human activity at its shoulder. This is just a sample of the endless interest to be found in the immediate vicinity of the hotel. Crocodiles and many water birds occupy the lake adjacent to the chalets, and just a short stroll takes you to an idyllic beach. It was only because we knew that further excitement lay ahead that we were able to overcome our reluctance to depart.

At 8am we were on the road towards Tissamaharama, where some marshes were worth exploring. Before that we witnessed an incident that sent guffaws of laughter reverberating around the bus. A young man operating a JCB swung the digger around and smacked his mate's motorbike to the ground. His expression of astonishment at what he had done was stereotypically cartoon in nature. Up went the hand to the mouth and wide eyes bulged from their orbits. It was not until a few kilometres further on that the laughter subsided. Close to the Stupa in Tissa stands a tree festooned with Night Herons' nests. Many smart adults were involved in their business of courtship and nest maintenance. Ten Stone-curlews were loitering beneath some scrub when we arrived at the marsh. Little Terns plunged for fish along the edge of the lake. The highlight was a swirling flock of over 200 Oriental Pratincoles coming down to rest. Just outside Tissa, along the boulevard by the huge tank, we pulled in to watch an enormous roost of hundreds of Indian Fruit Bats squabbling in the tree tops. It was here that, at last, a Crested Tree Swift deigned to cease streaking across the heavens, and to perch on a tree so that its crest could be appreciated.

Next we turned down the approach road to Bundala reserve. Today we concentrated upon scanning the marshes for Watercock, but we failed to locate one. A foraging flock of Pacific Golden Plovers and a host of marsh birds kept us occupied. Chaminda became excited by the discovery of two Collared Doves, which are scarce in the north of Sri Lanka but exceptionally rare in the south. It was hard for him to comprehend our total disinterest. Embilipitiya is a busy, linear settlement straddling the main road. The Hotel Centauria was not only our chosen base, but also that of a pair of Collared Scops Owls which glared down at us from a tangle of branches in the car park.

After lunch, our attention turned to elephants. We visited Udawalawe National Park where elephants were easily seen. Three jeeps transported us along muddy and bumpy trails through a landscape of regenerating growth being held back by the increasing population of elephants. The scenery is very attractive as the hill country encircles this plain, giving views of uplifting grandeur. Heavy rain fell and made viewing awkward, which contributed to the disparities between lists of wildlife seen. On this occasion, splitting the group did result in one jeep or another discovering something missed by the others. However, we all saw the enthralling spectacle of wallowing Water Buffalo hybrids being trampled on by dozens of opportunistic herons, who were using the heads, backs and horns of the bovines as vantage points for fishing. Two Black-winged or Black-shouldered Kites were spotted, but the commonest raptors were eagles perched motionless on spindly dead trees hoping to drop on to a meal.

Day 14

Friday 21st November

It rained heavily throughout the night, and thunder disturbed sleep. Thankfully, it stopped in time to permit our 6am wander, along the lake shore and through the back roads in the vicinity of the hotel. It was a very productive session. Thirteen Stone-curlews stood idly on a patch of waste ground in the company of both Red- and Yellow-wattled Lapwing. The first Great Cormorant of the trip was perched on a post out in the lake. Brightly coloured Small Minivets were popular, and Stork-billed Kingfishers always cause astonishment. After a quick check on the Collared Scops Owls, tucked away in their daytime roost amid tangled vegetation at the top of a tree, we were ready to begin the long drive to Sinharaja.

Roads meandered up hill sides cloaked in tea plantations with scattered palms. It was attractive scenery. We stopped to admire a number of raptors, the most spectacular of which were Black Eagles. Cinnamon plants had

sprouted along the verges, so we stopped to crush a few leaves and have a good sniff. It is perfectly legal! A flock of ten Sri Lanka Small Barbets were cause for another stop, but we watched the southern race of Purple-faced Leaf Monkey cavorting in the trees from the bus. It was midday when we finally arrived at the Blue Magpie Lodge. After lunch, thunder echoed round the hills and torrential rain hammered upon the tin roofs. It persisted into the night, so any hopes of visiting the trails were severely dashed.

However, from the open sided restaurant area it was possible to birdwatch. Those keen enough to sit it out were rewarded with sightings of 25 species. These included drongos, bulbuls, munias and parakeets. The most notable were the endemics. Orange-billed Babbler, Black-capped Bulbul, Black Bulbul, Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot, Layard's Parakeet and Sri Lanka Swallow all made an appearance. White-bellied Drongos habitually perched on the highest bare branches to spread their tails and wings to the full force of the torrential rain. Indian Swiftlets and Brown-backed Needle-tailed Swifts ignored the tempest and raced back and forth overhead.

Day 15

Saturday 22nd November

As we sat down to breakfast uninvited guests gate-crashed the party. Red-vented Bulbuls descended and stole what they could, before being offered their own plate of papaya. With binoculars at the ready, and gazing out whilst breakfasting, we picked up some good species including Plum-headed Parakeet and Yellow-fronted Barbet. Three jeeps arrived to transport us up the hill to the reserve entrance. It certainly was a bumpy ride over boulders and divots suggesting it was really a stream bed rather than a road. As we meandered up the hill, a Spot-winged Thrush was noted. The jeeps shuddered to a halt at the park gates. The vibrations must have been a symphonic delight to the leeches, but they certainly didn't spoil our enjoyment of this spectacular rainforest. Two forest guides joined us but, even with their expertise, we couldn't locate the two calling Chestnut-backed Owlets. One of the most challenging of the endemic species to locate is the White-faced Starling. Chaminda saw two in the distance, and was able to direct a telescope straight at them. A large, strikingly black and white chequered butterfly with the most graceful, gliding flight appealed to everyone. It is known as the Ceylon Tree Nymph and is quite common. Junglefowl continued to toss leaves about and forage for insects despite our proximity; they virtually ran around our feet.

For some the next encounter would rank very highly as one of the finest of the trip. Two Sri Lanka Frogmouths were huddled against each other perched on a branch. Their wide mouths fringed with bristles, accentuated eyebrows and scruffy tufts give them a comical expression. Tossing a few morsels of bread into the stream immediately activated a feeding frenzy amongst the Comb-tailed Fish and also enticed a catfish to surface. The two guides had gone on ahead to the research station armed with a crust or two. They prised the magnificent Sri Lanka Blue Magpies out of the forest. These individuals were tame and bold. They gave wonderful opportunities for photographers to record their behaviour, as they spent much time in open areas.

Bird populations were rather low in the dense canopy, meaning that it was only contortionists who stood much chance of locating perched birds. However, with considerable help from Chaminda, we did see the oddly-shaped Crested Drongo and Sri Lanka Mynas. Red-faced Malkoas were every bit as impressive as imagined, but sadly they stayed up in the canopy. Probably the most striking bird of the day after the magpies was the brightly plumaged Malabar Trogon. Tantalisingly brief views were all one or two of us had of Scaly Thrush, but a soaring Jerdon's Baza was a prize indeed, as there is only one pair of these raptors in the reserve area. It was 4pm when

we returned to the Blue Magpie Lodge, and rain had been falling for a while. We attempted a birding walk from the lodge but had to turn back.

Day 16

Sunday 23rd November

At 5am the regular group of five stalwarts took their first teas and coffees of the day, then boarded the jeeps for the ascent of the boulder strewn track. A local family very kindly invited us into their home shortly after first light to watch Sri Lanka Spurfowl grovelling in their garden. They make quite a din! Junglefowl mingled with them and a Spot-winged Thrush hopped around too. A Green-billed Coucal and a Greater Coucal dropped in enabling a comparison of these two out-sized cuckoos. After a great deal of searching a Chestnut-backed Owlet appeared high up in a tree close to the road. Telescope views were excellent of this diminutive endemic owl. It was pleasing to see some wary Blue Magpies up in the canopy after the tame ones of yesterday.

We returned to the lodge sooner than anticipated, and breakfast was brought forward. Rain showers began but we attempted a walk up the track between downpours. It was to be foreshortened as heavy rain soon fell again. Many birds with which we are now familiar were logged for the last time, but none that would elicit the deep-throated growl of “lifeeeeer!” at this evening’s log. The most attractive were the Golden-fronted Leafbirds and dumpy Hanging Parrots.

Lunch at the lodge presaged packing and our departure for Colombo. It took nearly four hours to get to The Gateway Hotel near to the airport. At 6pm we were out birding again. It was just getting dark and fruit bats were leaving for their feeding grounds. Our quarry was another impressive owl known as the Brown Hawk Owl. One was quickly located perched on a bare branch out in the open. Suddenly and unexpectedly a second bird joined the first. The pair sat very close to each other calling repeatedly. It was pitch dark by now and definitely time to call it a day.

Day 17

Monday 24th November

At 5.30 this morning the Brown Hawk Owls were duetting. At 6am some of the group headed out to some marshes in the direction of the airport to search for bitterns of various species. In the event only Yellow Bitterns were found, but we did see 45 other species of birds and a range of dragonflies. It was with a twinge of sadness that we watched our last Brahminy Kite sail past. It was time to depart for the airport. The flight was about one and a half hours late leaving, but once again Sri Lankan Airlines’ generosity with drinks made this easy to forgive.

The success of a tour is often dependant upon the expertise and organisational skills of the leaders. Chaminda and Sunil were perfect partners, and shared a very wide range of knowledge with us, ranging from primate behaviour to bird identification and the history and culture of Sri Lanka. They were incredibly informative. However, even with excellent leaders, success ultimately depends upon the quality of the bus driver. Bandera was outstanding in all respects as our driver. He understood the proclivities of birders and would stop at our every whim. He even spotted a few birds for us. Taranga assisted him competently through awkward manoeuvres. It really was a formidable team that Perry, the ground agent, had assembled for us and we are most grateful.

Species Lists

Birds (Sri Lankan Endemics – Highlighted)

	Common name	Scientific name	November															
			9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
1	Sri Lanka Spurfowl	<i>Galloperdix bicalcarata</i>															2	
2	Sri Lanka Junglefowl	<i>Gallus lafayetii</i>			2	4							11		H	11	3	
3	Indian Peafowl	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>	1	6	6	H					16	30	25	25				
4	Lesser Whistling-duck	<i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>	50+	1	12	14	8					37	20	16				1
5	Knob-billed Duck, Comb Duck	<i>Sarkidiornis melanotos</i>									100+							
6	Cotton Pygmy-goose	<i>Nettapus coromandelianus</i>	8		4	9												
7	Painted Stork	<i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>	3								23	30	61	60			1	
8	Asian Openbill	<i>Anastomus oscitans</i>	100	6	1	3					4	20	10	10	2		19	
9	Woolly-necked Stork	<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>			3	3					7			1				
10	Lesser Adjutant	<i>Leptoptilos javanicus</i>										2		1				
11	Black -headed Ibis	<i>Threskiornis melanocephalus</i>	40	2	50+	11					100s	25	15	30			4	
12	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	2									18	25	18				
13	Yellow Bittern	<i>Lxobrychus sinensis</i>									8							5
14	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	1	1	4		19	1	1		2	15		100+	15			
15	Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>										3	2	1				
16	Indian Pond Heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>	20	20	20	50+	8	2	3	8	100+	30	12	60	6		10	6
17	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	5	60	10	1	1				6	13	8	15			2	
18	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	5	2	4		1				4	8	2	15			1	2
19	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	50+	50+	100s	100s	6	3	15	42	100s	50	15	30	100s		100+	4
20	Great Egret	<i>casmerodius albus</i>	20	17	7	1	3	1	1		6	15	6	15			10	2
21	Intermediate Egret	<i>Mesophoyx intermedia</i>	3	2	15	10		1			3	8	4	10			40+	
22	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	100	10	50+	14	2	1	1		11	15	3	25			16	
23	Spot-billed Pelican	<i>Pelecanus philippensis</i>	60	9	20	3					15	11	6	35	18			
24	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	8	1		6					3							
25	Little Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax niger</i>	10	4	60	10	6	15	12	8	15	15	6	60	20		100+	
26	Indian Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax fuscicollis</i>	3	2	50	6	3				30	10	3	100+	20		4	1
27	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	2												2			
28	Darter	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>	3	1	5	4	1	1			5	25	2	12	7		20	
29	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>								1								

	Common name	Scientific name	November															
			9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
30	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>				2												
31	Black-winged Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>												2				
32	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>												1				
33	Brahminy Kite	<i>Haliastur indus</i>	8	11	20	6	4			1	1	4	3	6	3		38	2
34	White-bellied Sea Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>	2	2	3	1		1	1	1	1	2		4	1			
35	Grey-headed Fish Eagle	<i>Lcthyophaga ichthyaetus</i>			2							1	1					
36	Jerdon's Baza	<i>Aviceda jerdoni</i>														1		
37	Shikra	<i>Accipiter badius</i>		1	2	2								1			2	2
38	Besra	<i>Accipiter virgatus</i>							1			1					1	
39	Oriental Honey-buzzard	<i>Pernis ptilorhynchus</i>			2		1	2	5			2		2	2		2	
40	Himalayan Buzzard	<i>Buteo burmanicus</i>								1								
41	Crested Serpent Eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>		2	2	1	1	1	2			1	1	2	9	1	1	
42	Black Eagle	<i>Lctinaetus malayensis</i>								2					2			
43	Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>						1										
44	Rufous-bellied Eagle	<i>Lophotriorchis kienerii</i>						1	1									
45	Changeble Hawk Eagle	<i>Spizaetus cirrhatus</i>					2	1	1			2	2	15	1	1	2	
46	White-breasted Waterhen	<i>Amauornis phoenicurus</i>	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	3	20	8		5	4	1	3	7
47	Purple Swamphen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>	12		10	6	4				15	60		35				6
48	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>		1	1						8	6		6				
49	Common Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	7															
50	Pheasant-tailed Jacana	<i>Hydrophasianus chirurgus</i>	25		8	12	2				45	50		18				
51	Indian Thick-knee	<i>Burhinus indicus</i>										2		10	13			
52	Great Thick-knee	<i>Esacus recurvirostris</i>										8	6	1				
53	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>			10						17	20	14	25				
54	Yellow-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus malabaricus</i>										9	8		3			
55	Red-wattled lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>	4	3	20	2	2	2	3	1	7	9	7	10	4		2	4
56	Pacific Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis fulva</i>										6	7	30				
57	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>										4						
58	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>										3						
59	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>										6	4	1	1			
60	Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>										8	40	6				
61	Lesser Sand Plover	<i>Charadrius mongolus</i>										20	50	20				

	Common name	Scientific name	November															
			9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
62	Greater Sand Plover	<i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>											2					
63	Pin-tailed Snipe	<i>Gallinago stenura</i>										1						
64	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>										60						
65	Wimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>										1						
66	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	1									1						
67	Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>										12						
68	Common Red shank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>									8	25	10	4				
69	Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>										25	15	10				
70	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>										4	1	1				
71	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>												1				
72	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>										4	2	2				
73	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>								4		10	6	6	3			
74	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>										6	14					
75	Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>										30	70	30				
76	Temminck's Stint	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>										8	2					
77	Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>										25	8	13				
78	Red-necked Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>										1						
79	Oriental Pratincole	<i>Glareola maldivarum</i>												200				
80	Small Pratincole	<i>Glareola lactea</i>										2						
81	Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>										40	6	20				
82	Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>										12						
83	Lesser Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bengalensis</i>											6					
84	Greater Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bergii</i>										6	8					
85	Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>										4		20			1	
86	Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>	17	100+	70	20					30	70	25	40	40		3	2
87	White-winged Tern	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>												4				
88	Brown Noddy	<i>Anous stolidus</i>										1						
89	Common Pigeon, Rock Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	100+	25	30		5	6	6	20	70	20	20	10	6		50+	20
90	Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba torringtoniae</i>									H	3				1		
91	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>												2				
92	Spotted Dove	<i>Stigmatopelia chinensis</i>	20	15	20	10	7	6	6	4	8	25	30	70	100+	8	30	10
93	Emerald Dove	<i>Chalcophaps indica</i>				1									2	3	3	

	Common name	Scientific name	November															
			9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
94	Orange-breasted Green Pigeon	<i>Treron bicinctus</i>												21				
95	Sri Lanka Green Pigeon	<i>Treron pompadora</i>		2	2	3	1						1		2	2	1	
96	Green Imperial Pigeon	<i>Ducula aenea</i>		1			2					2	2	1		3	2	
97	Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot	<i>Loriculus beryllinus</i>						3	3	1					3	2	4	
98	Alexandrine Parakeet	<i>Psittacula eupatria</i>			7	6	6		15									
99	Rose-ringed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>	3	30	100s	30	15		2		12	13	20	200+	20		9	17
100	Plum-headed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula cyanocephala</i>						1	1					5		2		
101	Layard's Parakeet	<i>Psittacula calthropae</i>						1	1			2			3	3		
102	Jacobin Cuckoo	<i>Clamator jacobinus</i>			2									1				
103	Common Hawk Cuckoo	<i>Hierococcyx varius</i>						2	2									
104	Banded Bay Cuckoo	<i>Cacomantis sonneratii</i>															1	
105	Grey-bellied Cuckoo	<i>Cacomantis passerinus</i>										3	4	1				
106	Drongo Cuckoo	<i>Surniculus lugubris</i>				2												
107	Asian Koel	<i>Endynamys scolopacerus</i>	1		3			1	1		1	3	2					1
108	Blue-faced Malkoha	<i>Rhopodytes viridirostris</i>	1										2	2				
109	Red-faced Malkoha	<i>Phaenicophaeus pyrrhocephalus</i>														6		
110	Greater Coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>			1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	3	2	3		2	2
111	Green-billed Coucal	<i>Centropus chlororhynchos</i>														1	2	
112	Sri Lanka Frogmouth	<i>Batrachostomus moniliger</i>														2		
113	Indian Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus asiaticus</i>										3						
114	Collared Scops Owl	<i>Otus bakkamoena</i>												2	2			
115	Chestnut backed Owlet	<i>Glaucidium castanotum</i>														H	1	
116	Brown Fish Owl	<i>Ketupa zeylonensis</i>										1						
117	Brown Wood Owl	<i>Strix leptogrammica</i>						2										
118	Brown Hawk Owl	<i>Ninox scutulata</i>															2	H
119	Indian Swiftlet	<i>Collocalia unicolor</i>			2	6	3	3	2	2					100+	50	25	
120	Brown-backed Needletail	<i>Hirundapus giganteus</i>													8	2		
121	Asian Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus balasienensis</i>	6	25	7	15	2	20	25	20		2	2		20	20	10	
122	Alpine Swift	<i>Tachymarpis melba</i>									4							
123	House Swift, Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>		6	100	70	20				7	6	12	3	5			
124	Crested Treeswift	<i>Hemiprocne coronata</i>		5		2	1						5	2		15	7	
125	Indian Roller	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>	12		1							1		4				

	Common name	Scientific name	November															
			9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
126	Dollarbird	<i>Eurystomus orientalis</i>											1					
127	Green Bee-eater	<i>Merops orientalis</i>		1	2	4	1					20	30	20				
128	Blue-tailed Bee-eater	<i>Merops philippinus</i>	10	8	10	3					2	15	10	11	15	6	13	5
129	Chestnut-headed Bee-eater	<i>Merops leschenaulti</i>											3	2				
130	Stork-billed Kingfisher	<i>Pelargopsis capensis</i>	1			1	1					2			1			
131	White-throated Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>	5	6	15	7	11	4	4	6	1	12	5	40	8	3	30	4
132	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>			1	3	1				1	2	1	1				
133	Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>										7	2	1				2
134	Malabar Trogon	<i>Harpactes fasciatus</i>														2		
135	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>										1	1	1				
136	Brown-headed Barbet	<i>Megalaima zeylanica</i>	1	5	4	4	1	1	1			3	1	1	2	1		2
137	Yellow-fronted Barbet	<i>Megalaima flavifrons</i>						2	2			2			20	8	6	
138	Crimson-fronted Barbet	<i>Megalaima rubricapillus</i>			3									1		6		
139	Coppersmith Barbet	<i>Megalaima haemacephala</i>		1	1									3				
140	Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill	<i>Ocyrceros gingalensis</i>		6		3		2	1							2		
141	Malabar Pied Hornbill	<i>Anthraceroceros coronatus</i>				2					3	2						
142	Yellow-crowned Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos mahrattensis</i>										3	3	2				
143	Lesser Yellownape	<i>Picus chlorophus</i>														1	1	
144	Lesser Goldenback	<i>Dinopium benghalense</i>	2	1				3	3			1			3	2	2	
145	Crimson-backed Goldenback	<i>Chrysocolaptes stricklandi</i>						3	3							1		
146	White-naped Woodpecker	<i>Chrysocolaptes festivus</i>										2						
147	Indian Pitta	<i>Pitta brachyura</i>			1	3	1					2	2					
148	Sri Lanka Woodshrike	<i>Tephrodornis affinis</i>		4	6		3					2	2					
149	Large Cuckooshrike	<i>Coracina macei</i>	2															
150	Black-headed Cuckooshrike	<i>Coracina melanoptera</i>											1		3	1		
151	Small Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus cinnamomeus</i>			2	3									7	2	2	
152	Scarlet Minivet,	<i>Pericrocotus flammeus</i>										2			4	4	2	
153	Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike	<i>Hemipus picatus</i>			1		1				1				3			
154	Brown Shrike	<i>Lanius cristatus</i>		1	2	1				2	2	4	8	10	4		3	1
155	Common Iora	<i>Aegithina tiphia</i>			2	2	2					2	3	2	2	2	1	
156	Jerdon's Leafbird	<i>Chloropsis jerdoni</i>		1	6	2	1											
157	Golden-fronted Leafbird	<i>Chloropsis aurifrons</i>						2	2								1	

	Common name	Scientific name	November															
			9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
158	Black-hooded Oriole	<i>Oriolus xanthornus</i>	1	7	4	3	2					1	1	1	4			4
159	Sri Lanka Blue Magpie	<i>Urocissa ornata</i>										H				8	4	
160	House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>	100+	20	20		40	40	40	25		20	20	50	35		50	20
161	Large-billed Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>	100+	4	5	4	2	4	4	6	20	20	10	50	5		20	3
162	Sand Martin, Pale Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	1															
163	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	1	40	100s	6	20	7			2	100+	100+	100+	100+		100+	100+
164	Hill Swallow	<i>Hirundo domicola</i>								6	20							
165	Sri Lanka Swallow	<i>Cecropis hyperythra</i>			3			2	2			4			4	2	2	2
166	Ashy Woodswallow	<i>Artamus fuscus</i>			2													1
167	Black Drongo	<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>			1													
168	Ashy Drongo	<i>Dicrurus leucophaeus</i>			1													
169	White-bellied Drongo	<i>Dicrurus caeruleus</i>	2	1	4	2	1	2	2			1			2	3	2	2
170	Sri Lanka Drongo	<i>Dicrurus lophorhinus</i>														4	1	
171	Forest Wagtail	<i>Dendronanthus indicus</i>						1	1		1							
172	Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>										1		1	1			
173	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>								1	12	2			1		1	
174	Richard's Pipit	<i>Anthus richardi</i>			1							2						
175	Paddyfield Pipit	<i>Anthus rufulus</i>			4	1					1	4	15	20	1			
176	Blyth's Pipit	<i>Anthus godlewskii</i>												2				
177	Jerdon's Bushlark	<i>Mirafra affinis</i>										2	8	10				
178	Oriental Skylark	<i>Alauda gulula</i>		1								3	1					
179	Ashy-crowned Sparrow Lark	<i>Eremopterix griseus</i>											30					
180	Black-capped Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus melanicterus</i>						2							3		2	
181	Red-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>		6	10	20	7	15	4	4	6	4	20	50	20	9	20	2
182	Yellow-eared Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus penicillatus</i>								4	8	6						
183	White-browed Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus luteolus</i>		1	3	2	2	2			1	4	4		2		4	1
184	Yellow-browed Bulbul	<i>Acritillas indica</i>							2						2	10	3	
185	Black Bulbul	<i>Hypsipetes leucocephalus</i>													3	5	3	
186	Grey-breasted Prinia	<i>Prinia hodgsonii</i>				2									2			
187	Jungle Prinia	<i>Prinia sylvatica</i>					1							2				
188	Ashy Prinia	<i>Prinia socialis</i>		2		2												1
189	Plain Prinia	<i>Prinia inornata</i>			2	1		2	1		4	3	2	4	1			4

	Common name	Scientific name	November															
			9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
190	Common Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>		1	3	1		4	4		1	1	2	1	3		1	1
191	Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>		4	10						2	1		4				2
192	Sri Lanka Bush Warbler	<i>Bradypterus palliseri</i>									2	1						
193	Clamorous Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus stentoreus</i>		2								1						
194	Blyth's Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus dumetorum</i>										2		1			1	1
195	Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>												4				
196	Greenish Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochiloides</i>			1	1	1				3	1						
197	Green Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus nitidus</i>								2		1						
198	Large-billed Leaf Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus magnirostris</i>			1	1	2					1						
199	White-browed Fantail	<i>Rhipidura aureola</i>						3	2			2	2		4	2	1	
200	Black-naped Monarch	<i>Hypothymis azurea</i>														1		
201	Asian Paradise-flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone paradisi</i>		1	3		1					1	2		1	2	2	1
202	Brown-capped Babbler	<i>Pellorneum fuscicapillus</i>				3	2							1				
203	Sri Lanka Scimitar Babbler	<i>Pomatorhinus melanurus</i>									2	3						
204	Dark-fronted Babbler	<i>Rhopocichla atriceps</i>			2						4	2				3		
205	Tawny-bellied Babbler	<i>Dumetia hypertyra</i>		2		2						1						
206	Yellow-eyed Babbler	<i>Chrysomma sinense</i>											1					
207	Orange-billed Babbler	<i>Turdoides rufescens</i>													4	14	20	
208	Yellow-billed Babbler	<i>Turdoides affinis</i>		20	20	10	3	10	10	6		8	20	20	10	8	15	12
209	Ashy-headed Laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax cinereifrons</i>														5	6	
210	Sri Lanka Hill Myna	<i>Gracula ptilogenys</i>														5		
211	Lesser Hill Myna	<i>Gracula indica</i>						5	5									3
212	Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	40	35	50+	15	70	15	50	8	6	30	10	30	10		10	25
213	White-faced Starling	<i>Sturnornis albofrontatus</i>														5		
214	Brahminy Starling	<i>Sturnia pagodarum</i>											6	1				
215	Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush	<i>Myophonus blighi</i>									1							
216	Spot-winged Thrush	<i>Zoothera spiloptera</i>														2	1	
217	Sri Lanka Thrush	<i>Zoothera imbricata</i>														1		
218	Indian Blackbird	<i>Turdus simillimus</i>									1							
219	Indian Blue Robin	<i>Luscinia brunnea</i>			2				1			1						
220	Oriental Magpie Robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>		4	5	2	4	2	6	3	5	4	6	2	8	1	4	2
221	White-rumped Shama	<i>Copsychus malabaricus</i>		2	2													

	Common name	Scientific name	November															
			9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
222	Indian Robin	<i>Saxicoloides fulicatus</i>		1	2	1		2	3		1	2	6	8	3			
223	Pied Bushchat	<i>Saxicola caprata</i>								2	7	3						
224	Asian Brown Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa dauurica</i>	1	2		1	1	1							1			
225	Brown-breasted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa muttui</i>		1					3		1				1	3	3	
226	Kashmir Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula subrubra</i>									1	H						
227	Dull-blue Flycatcher	<i>Eumyias sordidus</i>								2	4	3						
228	Tickell's Blue Flycatcher	<i>Cyornis tickelliae</i>			2		1	1	1							1		
229	Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher	<i>Culicicapa ceylonensis</i>						1	2	1	1	4						
230	Thick-billed Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum agile</i>										1					1	
231	Legge's Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum vincens</i>													1			
232	Pale-billed Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum erythrorhynchos</i>				2		1	1		6					2	1	
233	Purple-rumped Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia zeylonica</i>	2	3	5	4	2	2	2		1	1	4	4	4	2	3	
234	Purple Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia asiatica</i>	2	1				1	1			1	2	2	3			
235	Loten's Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia lotenia</i>		3	1	2	1	2	1		1	3			2		2	
236	Oriental White-eye	<i>Zosterops palpebrosus</i>			6			13	13		2	8			3	2	3	
237	Sri Lanka White-eye	<i>Zosterops ceylonensis</i>								10	32	6						
238	Velvet-fronted Nuthatch	<i>Sitta frontalis</i>						2			3	4			2	2	2	
239	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>							7	11	15	5						
240	Baya Weaver	<i>Ploceus philippinus</i>				6							7					
241	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>					3			7	15	8	11	4	4		10	
242	Indian Silverbill	<i>Lonchura malabarica</i>											4					
243	White-rumped Munia	<i>Lonchura striata</i>										1		4	6		6	2
244	Scaly-breasted Munia	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>		2	8	4						1	4	2	8		30	2
245	Black-throated Munia	<i>Lonchura kelaarti</i>													2		3	
246	Black-headed Munia	<i>Lonchura malacca</i>		4								50		6	2			2

Mammals

1	Toque Macaque	<i>Macaca sinica</i>		38	40	20	30	15	30	12	10	15	2	8	8	6		
2	Grey Langur	<i>Presbytis entellus</i>		45	15	10	6				6	200	33	30				
3	Purple-faced Leaf Monkey	<i>Presbytis vetulus</i>			2					4	4				2	14	20	
4	Golden Jackal	<i>Canis aureus</i>										5	5					
5	Indian Grey Mongoose	<i>Herpestes edwardsii</i>	2		1													

	Common name	Scientific name	November															
			9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
6	Ruddy Mongoose	<i>Herpestes smithii</i>										1	1	1				
7	Leopard	<i>Panthera pardus</i>											1					
8	Indian Elephant	<i>Elephas maximus</i>										1	2	71				
9	Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>										2	39	20				
10	Muntjac	<i>Muntiacus muntjac</i>						4										
11	Spotted Deer (Chital)	<i>Cervus axis</i>										2	117					
12	Sambar	<i>Cervus unicolor</i>								15			4					
13	Water Buffalo	<i>Bubalus arnee</i>											6					
14	Indian Palm Squirrel	<i>Funambulus palmarum</i>	2	4	12	5	4		2		3	3	8	4	6	10	10	
15	Grizzled Giant Squirrel	<i>Ratufa macroura</i>	1	1	2	1	2				1		2	3	1	1		
16	Dusky Squirrel	<i>Funambulus sublineatus</i>							2	2	2							
17	Indian Hare	<i>Lepus nigricollis</i>											5					
18	Indian Flying Fox	<i>Pteropus gigantea</i>	100		5		27	100+	20		100s	20		100s	50+		200+	

Reptiles

1	Land Monitor	<i>Varanus bengalensis</i>		2	1	4	1	1			1	3	3	5	4			
2	Water Monitor	<i>Varanus salvator</i>			1				1						2		1	
3	Common Garden Lizard	<i>Calotes versicolor</i>		2	4	6									1		1	
4	Green Garden Lizard	<i>Calotes calotes</i>													1	2		
5	Black-lipped Lizard	<i>Calotes nigrilabris</i>								6								
6	Kangaroo Lizard	<i>Otocryptis weigmanni</i>														4		
7	Rhino-horned Lizard	<i>Ceratophora stoddarti</i>							5		2							
8	Common House Gecko	<i>Hemidactylus frenatus</i>			20	20					1		10			6	1	
9	Common Skink	<i>Mabuya carinata</i>		2		1	2							1		1		
10	Rat Snake	<i>Ptyas mucosa</i>			3													
11	Marsh/Mugger Crocodile	<i>Crocodylus palustris</i>				1					1	11	10	15				
12	Star Tortoise	<i>Geochelone elegans</i>		1														
13	Keelback Watersnake	<i>Xenochrophis asperimus</i>					2 d											
14	Common Rough-sided Snake	<i>Aspidura trachyprocta</i>							1d	1								
15	Flapshell Terrapin	<i>Lissemys punctata</i>						2										
16	Hard-shelled Terrapin	<i>Melanochelys trijuga</i>				4												
17	Leather backed Turtle	<i>Dermochelys coriacea</i>										2						

Butterflies

Crimson Rose, *Pachliopta hector*
 Lemon Pansy, *Junonia lemonias*
 Common Jezebel, *Delias eucharis*
 Common Indian Crow, *Eupolea core*
 Lemon Emigrant, *Catopsilia pomona*
 Common Sailor, *Neptis hylas*
 Great Eggfly, *Hypolimnas bolina*
 Evening Brown, *Melanitis leda*
 Lesser Albatross, *Appias paulina*
 White orange tip, *Ixias marianne*
 Nigger, *Orsotriaena medus*

Glassy Tiger, *Parantia aglia*
 Plain Tiger, *Danaus chrysippus*
 Blue Glassy Tiger, *Idiopsis similis*
 Common Bush Brown, *Mycalesis perseus*
 Blue Mormon, *Papilio polymnestor*
 Common Leopard, *Phalantha phalanta*
 Common Glassy Tiger, *Parantica aglea*
 Common Rose, *Pachliopta aristolochiae*
 Common Gull, *Cepora nerissa*
 Lime, *Papilio demoleus*
 Common Cerulean, *Jamides celeno*

Common Tiger, *Danaus genutia*
 Common Pierrot, *Castalius rosimon*
 Glass Yellow, *Eurema hecabe*
 Tail Jay, *Graphium agamemnon*
 Common Mormon, *Papilio polytes*
 Peacock Pansy, *Junonia almala*
 Common Bluebottle, *Graphium sarpedum*
 Ceylon Tiger, *Parantica taprobana*
 Salaman arab, *Colotis amata*
 Ceylon Tree Nymph, *Idea iasonia*

Dragonflies

Variable Flutterer, *Rhyothemis variegata*
 Blue Percher, *Diplacodes trivialis*

Oriental Scarlet, *Crocothemis servilia*

Rapacious Flangetail, *Ictinogomphus rapax*

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