

# Sri Lanka – Wildlife & History

Naturetrek Tour Report

24th January – 12th February 2026

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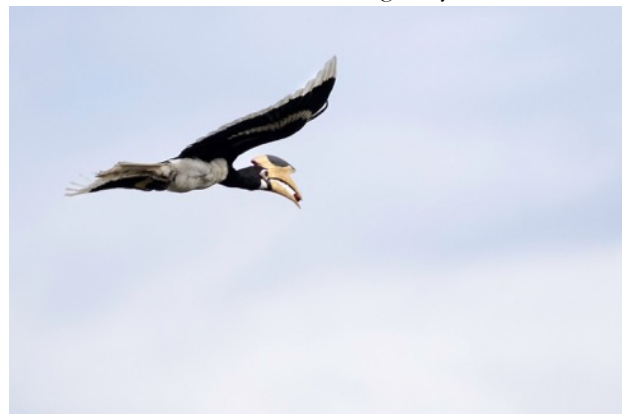
Indian Flying Foxes by Brian Baker



Malabar Trogon by Seamus Griffin



Grey Langur by Brian Baker



Malabar Pied Hornbill by Brian Baker

Tour report by Saman Kumara



Naturetrek Mingledown Barn Wolf's Lane Chawton Alton Hampshire GU34 3HJ UK

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

E: [info@naturetrek.co.uk](mailto:info@naturetrek.co.uk)

W: [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk)

Tour Participants: Saman Kumara (Tour Leader), Dhanushka Perera & Pradeep Rathnasiri (Local Guides) with 16 Naturetrek clients.

## Day 1

**Saturday 24th January**

Flight from Heathrow to Colombo.

## Day 2

**Sunday 25th January**

### Katunayake

Clients arrived on UL 504 at 12:45 p.m. at Bandaranaike International Airport and were met by Saman, Dhanushka, and Pradeep. We left the airport at 2:00 p.m. and drove towards Anuradhapura, the first capital of ancient Sri Lanka, established in the 4th century BC. The city was the political and religious center of the island for over a thousand years and is known for its large irrigation reservoirs, Buddhist monasteries, and ancient stupas.

En route, we stopped at Anawilundawa Wetland Sanctuary, a Ramsar-designated wetland that is part of an ancient irrigation system over 2,000 years old. The interconnected tanks, originally built for rice cultivation, now provide habitat for a wide variety of birds, reptiles, and mammals.

Late afternoon birding along the tank bunds and water edges was productive. Notable sightings included a Stork-billed Kingfisher, a Pied Kingfisher that hovered before diving sharply into the water to catch a fish, White-throated Kingfisher, and Common Kingfisher. Other birds observed were White-bellied Sea Eagle, Changeable Hawk-Eagle, Brahminy Kite, Lesser Adjutant, Pheasant-tailed Jacana, Purple Swamphen, Indian Roller, and Red-backed Flameback Woodpecker. A total of 43 species were recorded.

Mammal sightings included Indian Palm Squirrel and Toque Macaque. After about an hour of birding and a short break, we continued to Rajarata Hotel, arriving at 8:30 p.m. Dinner followed, ending the day.

## Day 3

**Monday 26th January**

### Anuradhapura

We set out at 6:30 a.m. for an early morning birding session around Anuradhapura Nuwara Lake. Bird sightings included Yellow-billed Babbler, Indian Robin, Oriental Magpie Robin, White-breasted Waterhen, Sri Lanka Woodshrike, Green Imperial Pigeon, Purple-rumped Sunbird, Purple Sunbird, Scaly-breasted Munia, and Pale-billed Flowerpecker.

After breakfast at 7:30 a.m., we explored the ancient city of Anuradhapura, founded in the 4th century BCE and now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. We began at the Sri Maha Bodhi, the sacred fig tree grown from a cutting of the original Bodhi tree in India under which the Buddha attained enlightenment.

Next, we visited the Ruwanwelisaya Stupa, built by King Dutugemunu in the 2nd century BCE, one of Sri Lanka's most important stupas. We also observed the Sandakada Pahana (Moonstone), an intricately carved stone step at

the entrances of ancient buildings, and the Kuttam Pokuna (Twin Ponds), part of the bathing complex used by monks. Our walk continued to the Abhayagiri Stupa, the centre of a large monastic complex, and finally to Thuparamaya, considered the first stupa built in Sri Lanka during King Devanampiya Tissa's reign.

While moving through the ancient city, we recorded Malabar Pied Hornbill and Asian Palm Swift. Mammals included Toque Macaque and Tufted Grey Langur. Reptiles observed were Bengal Monitor, Common Water Monitor, Indian Flat-shelled Turtle, and Indian Black Terrapin.

We returned to the hotel for lunch at 1:00 p.m. After a short rest, we departed at 3:00 p.m. for Mihintale, traditionally regarded as the place where Buddhism was introduced to Sri Lanka in the 3rd century BCE following the meeting between Arahata Mahinda and King Devanampiya Tissa. The site includes monasteries, stupas, and meditation caves dating back over two thousand years.

Birds recorded at Mihintale included Crimson-fronted Barbet, Indian Paradise Flycatcher, Indian White-eye, and Tickell's Blue Flycatcher. Mammals and reptiles included Purple-faced Langur, Giant Squirrel, Deraniyagala's Day Gecko, and Bark Gecko.

We returned to the hotel by 6:30 p.m., followed by the daily checklist and briefing at 7:30 p.m. Dinner at 8:00 p.m. concluded the day.

## Day 4

Tuesday 27th January

### Sigiriya

At first light, we went on a pre-breakfast birding walk around the village near Anuradhapura. Species recorded included Common Moorhen, Little Grebe, Grey-breasted Prinia, Ashy Woodswallow, and Shikra.

We returned to the hotel for breakfast at 7:30 a.m., checked out at 9:00 a.m., and continued our journey towards Sigiriya. Our next stop was the Aukana Buddha Statue, a standing Buddha carved from a single granite rock during the 5th century CE, likely under King Dhatu-sena. At over 12 metres tall, it is one of the finest examples of ancient Sinhalese stone sculpture, with the robe carved close to the body, showing impressive craftsmanship. Nearby, we spotted a small roost of Schneider's Leaf-nosed Bats, along with Woolly-necked Stork, Oriental Garden Lizard, and Bronze-green Little Skink.

We arrived at Hotel Sigiriya at 1:30 p.m., checked in, and had lunch. After a short break, we went birding at Halmilla Wewa at 4:00 p.m. Here, we recorded Indian Cuckoo, Sri Lankan Junglefowl, Purple Swamphen, Crested Serpent Eagle, Asian Green Bee-eater, Alexandrine Parakeet, Indian Pitta, Large-billed Crow, Grey-breasted Prinia, Plain Prinia, Blyth's Reed Warbler, Barn Swallow, White-browed Bulbul, Orange-headed Thrush, Golden-fronted Leafbird, and Baya Weaver.

The day ended with the checklist session at 7:00 p.m., followed by dinner.

## Day 5

## Wednesday 28th January

### Sigiriya

The day began at 6:30 a.m. with pre-breakfast birding as the sun rose. We recorded Small Minivet, Alexandrine Parakeet, Grey-headed Fish Eagle, and several other species seen earlier.

We then climbed Sigiriya Rock Fortress, also known as Kassapa's Lion Rock. Built in the 5th century CE by King Kashyapa, the rock served as a royal citadel and palace complex. Halfway up is the Lion Staircase, which once formed the entrance to the palace between the paws of a large lion sculpture. At the summit, we explored the remains of the royal palace, reservoirs, and foundations, with wide views over the surrounding plains. Birds and wildlife observed included Peregrine Falcon, Coppersmith Barbet, Brown-breasted Flycatcher, Sri Lankan Swallow, Paddyfield Pipit, and a Mugger Crocodile.

We returned to the hotel for lunch and rested before heading out at 4:00 p.m. to Sigiriya Sanctuary. The forest around the rock preserves wildlife and remnants of the ancient gardens. Species recorded included Small Minivet, Sri Lankan Woodshrike, Alexandrine Parakeet, Jerdon's Leafbird, Crimson-fronted Barbet, Coppersmith Barbet, Asian Woolly-necked Stork, Sri Lankan Green Pigeon, and Paradise Flycatcher.

At 6:15 p.m., we returned to the hotel and met for the daily checklist at 7:00 p.m. After dinner, we set out on a night safari at 9:00 p.m. in the surrounding area. Species observed included Brown Fish Owl, Jerdon's Nightjar, Paradise Flycatcher, Sri Lankan Frogmouth, Grey Slender Loris, Eurasian Otter, Indian Hare, Chital, Golden Jackal, Small Indian Civet, Northern Palm Civet, and Green Forest Lizard.

We returned to the hotel at 12:30 a.m., ending a full day of history, wildlife, and forest exploration.

## Day 6

## Thursday 29th January

### Kandy

After breakfast, we checked out of the hotel at 9:00 a.m. and travelled towards Kandy. On the way, we visited the Dambulla Cave Temple, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of Sri Lanka's most important centres of Buddhist worship. The complex dates back to the 1st century BCE and features several rock caves containing numerous Buddha statues, along with extensive wall and ceiling paintings. Birds and wildlife recorded here included Blue-tailed Bee-eater, Oriental Honey Buzzard, Brahminy Kite, and Indian Rock Dweller (Dragonfly).

Around midday, we stopped at a spice garden for lunch and a guided tour. The garden showcased a variety of spices traditionally grown in Sri Lanka, including cinnamon, pepper, cardamom, cloves, nutmeg, and vanilla. We learned about their cultivation, harvesting, and uses in cooking and medicine, and saw how the plants grow in their natural environment. The garden also had small fruit trees, flowering plants, and native birds, and we recorded the Brown-capped Babbler during the visit.

We reached our hotel in Kandy at approximately 5:30 p.m. The evening was at leisure, followed by dinner at 7:30 p.m., concluding the day.

## Day 7

Friday 30th January

### Kandy

We started the day with an early breakfast at 6:30 a.m. and then travelled into Kandy to visit Udawattakele Forest Sanctuary. This protected forest was once part of the royal domain of the Kandyan kings and was later used by forest-dwelling monks for meditation. Today it remains an important forest refuge within the city, supporting a range of birdlife and mammals in a relatively undisturbed habitat. During our walk, we recorded Black-backed Dwarf Kingfisher, Sri Lankan Shama, Layard's Parakeet, Sri Lankan Hanging Parrot, Southern Hill Myna, Indian Blue Robin, and Malabar Red Muntjac.

Next, we visited the Temple of the Tooth Relic, also known as Sri Dalada Maligawa, the most important Buddhist shrine in Sri Lanka. The temple safeguards the sacred tooth relic of the Buddha, which has been closely linked to the island's political and religious history. During the Kandyan Kingdom, the ruler who held the relic was considered the legitimate king. Devotees were engaged in worship and offering flowers at the shrine.

Lunch was taken at the hotel, followed by an afternoon visit to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Peradeniya. Established in 1821 under British administration, the gardens developed from earlier royal gardens used by the Kandyan kings. They are known for their extensive collection of tropical plants, orchids, palms, and towering mature trees. The gardens also serve as a haven for birds and bats, and we observed several species previously recorded during the trip while walking through the well-maintained avenues and orchid houses.

In the evening, some of the group attended a Sri Lankan cultural show, experiencing traditional Kandyan dances, drumming, and costume performances. Everyone regrouped at 7:00 p.m. for the daily checklist, followed by dinner at 7:30 p.m., concluding the day.

## Day 8

Saturday 31st January

### Nuwara Eliya

We began the day at 6:00 a.m. with early morning birding around Kandy Lake. The lake, constructed in 1807 by the last Kandyan king, Sri Wickrama Rajasinghe, provides an important habitat for birds and wildlife within the city. During the walk, we recorded several species seen over the previous days, and large numbers of Indian Flying Foxes were a striking sight as they roosted in the trees around the lake.

After breakfast, we checked out of the hotel and travelled towards Nuwara Eliya. En route, we spotted a Black Eagle and visited a tea factory. Tea cultivation in Sri Lanka began in the mid-19th century after coffee plantations were affected by disease. At the factory, we observed the full production process—from leaf plucking in the plantations to withering, rolling, drying, and grading for export.

We arrived at our hotel in Nuwara Eliya by 1:30 p.m. for lunch. At 2:00 p.m., we visited the Hakgala Botanical Garden, one of the highest gardens in Sri Lanka, established in the 19th century during British rule. The garden is known for its temperate plant collections and scenic layout. Here, we recorded Yellow-eared Bulbul, Dull Blue

Flycatcher, Sri Lankan White-eye, Cinereous Tit, Hill Swallow, Green Warbler, Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher, Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike, Scarlet Minivet, and also saw Purple-faced Langur and Dusky-striped Squirrel.

We returned to the hotel by 6:00 p.m. The evening was at leisure, followed by the daily checklist at 7:00 p.m. and dinner at 7:30 p.m., bringing the day to a close.

## Day 9

**Sunday 1st February**

### Nuwara Eliya

We departed at 5:00 a.m. for an early morning visit to Horton Plains National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Sri Lanka's central highlands. Established in 1969, the park is known for its dramatic montane grasslands, cloud forests, and highland streams. Horton Plains forms part of the Central Highlands World Heritage area and is home to numerous endemic species adapted to the cool, wet climate. The park also holds cultural significance, with nearby sites linked to ancient local legends and early settlements.

Morning birding was productive, with sightings including Sri Lankan Whistling Thrush, Yellow-eared Bulbul, Sri Lankan Bush Warbler, Dull Blue Flycatcher, Pied Bush Chat, Paddyfield Pipit, Zitting Cisticola, Tri-coloured Munia, Hill Swallow, Sri Lankan White-eye, Common Emerald Dove, Legge's Hawk Eagle, Black Eagle, Indian Blackbird, and Grey Wagtail. Mammals and reptiles recorded included Purple-faced Langur, Dusky-striped Squirrel, Sambar Deer, and Black-cheek Lizard.

We returned to the hotel for lunch at 2:00 p.m., after a long but rewarding morning exploring the park. At 3:30 p.m., we visited Victoria Park, a historic urban park established during the British colonial period and named in honour of Queen Victoria. Originally designed as a public garden, it became a hub for recreation and relaxation for colonial officials and local residents alike. Today, it provides a green refuge in Nuwara Eliya and is known for highland bird species, walking trails, and ornamental gardens. Bird sightings included Kashmir Flycatcher, Forest Wagtail, Grey Wagtail, Common Tailorbird and Common Sandpiper.

Back at the hotel, we gathered at 7:00 p.m. for the checklist session, followed by dinner, bringing the day to a close.

## Day 10

**Monday 2nd February**

### Tissamaharama

After breakfast at 7:00 a.m., we checked out at 9:00 a.m. and visited Victoria Park again. We walked the ornamental gardens and tree-lined pathways, seeing a variety of highland flora. Here we recorded Piped Thrush, Sri Lankan Small Babbler, and several other species seen on previous days.

Our next stop was the Nuwara Eliya Post Office, an iconic colonial-era building constructed in 1894. The post office reflects British architectural style, with its bright red roof and clock tower, and remains a central landmark in the town.

We then travelled to Surrey Estate Bird Sanctuary, a small forest patch within a tea estate. The sanctuary is notable

for its rich avian diversity and has become a popular spot for birdwatchers, particularly for sightings of owls and endemic forest species. Here we recorded Brown Wood Owl, Sri Lankan Grey Hornbill, and Red-backed Flameback Woodpecker.

Lunch was taken at Ella Mount Heaven Hotel, which offers sweeping views of the surrounding hills, valleys, and tea plantations that define the central highlands.

In the afternoon, we visited Ravana Falls, a prominent waterfall along the Ella–Wellawaya road. The falls are entwined with legends from the Ramayana, where it is believed King Ravana once hid Princess Sita in nearby caves. The waterfall is also celebrated for its height, rock formations, and lush surroundings.

At 4:30 p.m., we stopped at Debara Wewa, a small wetland area that has become a recognized site for owl species, recording Brown Boobook, Jungle Owlet, and Indian Scops Owl.

Before heading to the hotel, we visited Tissamaharama to observe a large colony of Indian Flying Foxes. The town is historically significant as a centre of the ancient Tissa Maha Vihara Buddhist complex and sits near important wetlands that support a variety of wildlife.

We arrived at the hotel at 6:00 p.m., conducted the daily checklist at 7:00 p.m., had dinner, and concluded the day.

## Day 11

**Tuesday 3rd February**

### Yala

We began the day with an early check-out at 5:00 a.m., taking a picnic breakfast and lunch with us, and set out for Lunugamwehera National Park. Established in 1995, the park is part of Sri Lanka's network of protected areas designed to conserve dry-zone wildlife and habitats, including forests, grasslands, and large irrigation reservoirs. It also forms a crucial elephant corridor connecting Yala and Udawalawe National Parks, allowing herds to move safely between habitats.

We entered the park at 6:00 a.m. and spent the morning exploring its tracks and wetlands. Lunugamwehera is known for its rich biodiversity, supporting numerous bird species, mammals, and reptiles adapted to the dry-zone ecosystem. During the drive we recorded Grey-bellied Cuckoo, Orange-breasted Green Pigeon, Sri Lankan Green Pigeon, Great Stone Curlew, Indian Stone Curlew, Little Ringed Plover, Crescent-tailed Jacana, Lesser Adjutant, Painted Stork, Glossy Ibis, Crested Tree Swift, Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker, Marshall's Iora, Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, Ashy Drongo, Jerdon's Bush Lark, Jungle Prinia, Western Yellow Wagtail, Blyth's Pipit, and White-browed Fantail. Mammals observed included Asian Elephants, Ruddy Mongoose, and Water Buffalo, while reptiles included Indian Black Terrapin and Indian Flap-shelled Turtle.

By 6:30 p.m., we arrived at Cinnamon Wild Hotel, set within the forested edge of the park. After reviewing the day's checklist, we had dinner, bringing the day to a close.

## Day 12

Wednesday 4th February

### Yala

We started the day early at 5:00 a.m. with a half-day safari in Yala National Park. Established in 1938, Yala is Sri Lanka's oldest national park, known for its dry-zone forests, scrublands, wetlands, and coastal habitats. The park supports an extraordinary diversity of wildlife and is particularly famous for having one of the highest densities of Leopards in the world, though sightings are still rare, making every encounter special.

During the safari, we were fortunate to spot a Leopard, a highlight of the trip and a rare, thrilling experience that few visitors get to witness. In addition to this iconic sighting, we recorded numerous bird species, including Blue-faced Malkoha, Pacific Golden Plover, Yellow-wattled Lapwing, Eurasian Wryneck, Eurasian Whimbrel, Black-tailed Godwit, Pin-tailed Snipe, Marsh Sandpiper, Wood Sandpiper, Common Redshank, Common Greenshank, Ruff, Little Stint, Barred Buttonquail, Eurasian Spoonbill, Common Hoopoe, Pied Kingfisher, Yellow-crowned Woodpecker, Yellow-eyed Babbler, Rosy Starling, and Brahminy Starling.

Mammal sightings included Asian Elephant, Ruddy Mongoose, Striped-neck Mongoose, Chital (Spotted Deer), Sambar Deer, Water Buffalo, and Indian Hare.

We returned to the hotel for lunch, then spent the afternoon birding around the lake adjacent to the hotel, recording Little Heron, Indian Silverbill, Pin-tailed Snipe, Gull-billed Tern, and Kentish Plover.

The day concluded with the checklist at 7:00 p.m., followed by dinner, capping off an unforgettable morning featuring one of Yala's most elusive and iconic residents - the Leopard.

## Day 13

Thursday 5th February

### Embilipitiya

After breakfast, we checked out of the hotel at 6:00 a.m. and travelled to Bundala National Park. Bundala is a UNESCO-designated Ramsar wetland in southeastern Sri Lanka and is internationally recognized for its importance to migratory waterbirds. The park consists of lagoons, scrubland, and salt pans and serves as an important wintering ground for flamingos, shorebirds, and many other wetland species.

During our birding session we recorded Garganey, Jacobin Cuckoo, Eurasian Collared Dove, Watercock, Grey Plover, Common Ringed Plover, Red-necked Phalarope, Curlew Sandpiper, Caspian Tern, Greater Crested Tern, Lesser Crested Tern, Yellow Bittern, Black Bittern, Indian Cuckoo-shrike, Ashy-crowned Sparrow-Lark, Oriental Skylark, Clamorous Reed Warbler, Sand Martin, Streaked Weaver, Terek Sandpiper, Oriental Pratincole, Great Stone-curlew, and Indian Stone-curlew.

By midday, we departed Bundala and continued to Udawalawe National Park, arriving around 2:00 p.m. for lunch. At 4:00 p.m., we went on a bird walk around the Udawalawe Tank, a large irrigation reservoir that supports a variety of waterbirds and edge species. Here we recorded Red-rumped Swallow, Tawny-bellied Babbler, Thick-

billed Flowerpecker, Brown-backed Needletail, Indian Swiftlet, Indian Cuckoo-shrike, White-browed Bulbul, and Orange-headed Thrush.

In the evening, we met at 7:00 p.m. for the checklist session to review the day's sightings. Dinner followed, and the day concluded as we prepared for the upcoming wildlife activities.

## Day 14

Friday 6th February

### Sinharaja

We began the day with a 6:00 a.m. jeep safari in Udawalawe National Park, carrying packed breakfasts. The park was established in 1972 to protect the catchment of the Udawalawe Reservoir and has since become one of Sri Lanka's most important protected areas for dry-zone wildlife. Udawalawe is particularly well known for its large and easily observable population of Sri Lankan Elephants, and we encountered a herd during the safari.

Birding during the drive was productive. Species recorded included Blue-faced Malkoha, Sirkeer Malkoha, Barred Buttonquail, Green Sandpiper, Plum-headed Parakeet, and Marshall's Iora, along with many species observed earlier in the tour. Mammals recorded included Water Buffalo and Chital, while reptiles included Mugger Crocodile and Bengal Monitor.

We returned to the hotel for lunch and checked out at 1:00 p.m., then travelled towards Sinharaja Forest Reserve. Sinharaja is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and represents Sri Lanka's largest remaining tract of lowland tropical rainforest. The forest is internationally recognized for its very high level of endemism, supporting many species found nowhere else on the island, and it also plays an important role in watershed protection and climate regulation.

After arriving at Blue Magpie Lodge, we spent some time birding from the lodge's restaurant area. Species recorded included Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot, Yellow-fronted Barbet, Square-tailed Bulbul, Indian White-eye, Legge's Flowerpecker, Black-capped Bulbul, White-bellied Drongo, and Indian Pitta.

At 7:00 p.m. we met for the checklist session, followed by dinner. The day concluded at the lodge surrounded by the sounds of the rainforest.

## Day 15

Saturday 7th February

### Sinharaja

The day began early with breakfast at 5:30 a.m. before departing on a jeep drive into the famous Sinharaja Forest Reserve. As we travelled along the forest tracks and trails, the group recorded an impressive range of bird species including Sri Lanka Spurfowl, Common Emerald Dove, Yellow-fronted Barbet, Sri Lanka Blue Magpie, Yellow-browed Bulbul, Square-tailed Bulbul, Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill, Sri Lanka Spot-winged Thrush, Sri Lanka Frogmouth, Orange-billed Babbler, Red-faced Malkoha, Malabar Trogon, Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon, Sri Lanka Thrush, Dark-fronted Babbler, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, Ashy-headed Laughingthrush, and Sri Lanka Hill Myna. The morning in the rainforest offered excellent opportunities to encounter many of the island's endemic species within this unique ecosystem.

Reptiles and amphibians were also active in the forest environment during the morning hours. Among the species observed were the Sri Lankan Kangaroo Lizard, Hump-nosed Lizard, and a Green Vine Snake, along with several small frogs and skinks moving through the forest undergrowth.

We returned to the lodge by 3:00 p.m., allowing time to rest after the long and rewarding morning in the forest.

Later in the afternoon, at around 5:00 p.m., we took a relaxed walk around the lodge surroundings, adding a few more species to the day's checklist including Sri Lanka Drongo, Sri Lanka Hill Myna, White-faced Starling, Golden-fronted Leafbird, and White-rumped Munia.

The day concluded with the checklist session at 7:00 p.m., followed by dinner, with the evening spent enjoying the natural sounds of the rainforest surrounding the lodge.

## Day 16

## Sunday 8th February

### Sinharaja to Colombo

The day began at 6:00 a.m. with pre-breakfast birding at Kethalapathala, on the edge of the renowned Sinharaja Forest Reserve. This final morning in the rainforest provided another opportunity to record several notable species, including Chestnut-backed Owlet, Sri Lankan Frogmouth, Green-billed Coucal, Sri Lanka Hill Myna, White-faced Starling, Jerdon's Leafbird, White-rumped Munia, and the Sri Lanka Giant Squirrel. Many other species previously observed during our time in Sinharaja were also recorded, making for a rewarding last session of rainforest birding.

We later returned to the hotel for breakfast, bringing our Sinharaja Rainforest experience to a close. After lunch, the group separated for the next stage of their journeys. Three guests continued with a whale-watching extension along the southern coast, while thirteen guests travelled back to Colombo and stayed near the airport in preparation for their return flight to the United Kingdom the following day.

The tour concluded with warm farewells and reflections on the many highlights shared throughout the journey. From the rich rainforests of Sinharaja to the diverse wildlife and landscapes encountered across the island, the group departed with an impressive species list and lasting memories of their time exploring the natural wonders of Sri Lanka.

The remaining group journeyed to Koggala Beach Hotel and completed the check-in by 4:30 p.m, meeting dinner at 7:30 p.m.

## Day 17 Extension

## Monday 9th February

Departing at 5:30 a.m. with a picnic breakfast, we set out for a whale-watching expedition under calm morning skies. Along the way we observed Whiskered Terns, Bridled Tern, and a few Greater Crested Terns. At sea, Common Bottlenose Dolphins and Spinner Dolphins accompanied our boat, and we also encountered an Olive Ridley Turtle.

Although conditions were favorable, whales can sometimes be elusive. These large marine mammals travel across

vast areas of ocean and spend much of their time underwater, surfacing only briefly to breathe before diving again, often for extended periods. Their movements are also influenced by ocean currents, the availability of food, and seasonal migration patterns, which means sightings are never guaranteed even in well-known whale-watching areas. This unpredictability is part of the natural rhythm of the ocean and makes each encounter particularly special when it occurs.

We returned to the hotel by midday and enjoyed some rest before lunch. Later in the afternoon, we visited a turtle hatchery dedicated to sea turtle conservation, learning about ongoing protection efforts to safeguard vulnerable species along the southern coast of Sri Lanka.

The day concluded with an exploration of the historic Galle Fort, a UNESCO World Heritage Site first built by the Portuguese in the 16th century and later extensively fortified by the Dutch. Walking along the ramparts and through its narrow streets offered a glimpse into the region's colonial past, with its well-preserved architecture, small cafes, and lively atmosphere providing a fitting end to the day's activities.

## Day 18

## Tuesday 10th February

With a picnic breakfast in hand, we departed the hotel at 5:30 a.m. for our second day of whale watching along the southern coast of Sri Lanka.

While at sea, we encountered a pod of Spinner Dolphins, actively feeding and performing impressive acrobatic displays. Later, we also observed Common Bottlenose Dolphins. In addition, a Green Turtle was spotted, adding further interest to the morning's marine wildlife experience.

After lunch, we continued our exploration with a visit to Kirala Kele Sanctuary, a protected wetland area known for its mangrove habitats and rich birdlife. During our walk, we observed Black Bittern, Yellow Bittern, Striated Weaver, Common Moorhen, and Zitting Cisticola, along with many bird species that had been recorded earlier during the tour, providing excellent opportunities for further observation.

We met again at 7:00 p.m. for the checklist session to review the day's sightings, followed by dinner, bringing another rewarding day of wildlife exploration to a close.

## Day 19

## Tuesday 11th February

Spending the morning at leisure, we met for lunch at 12:00 noon before checking out and travelling to Vivanta Colombo Airport Garden. The drive back marked the final leg of our journey across Sri Lanka, giving everyone time to reflect on the many memorable wildlife encounters and landscapes experienced throughout the tour.

In the evening, we gathered for dinner at 7:00 p.m., sharing a final meal together as a group. It was a pleasant and relaxed occasion, with conversations recalling highlights from the trip, the many species recorded, and the friendships formed along the way. The evening served as a fitting close to an enriching journey before the tour's conclusion the following day.

## Day 20

## Wednesday 12th February

After breakfast at 9:30 a.m., the group were transferred to Bandaranaike International Airport for their onward departures. This marked the official conclusion of the tour in Sri Lanka, bringing to a close an unforgettable journey through the island's remarkable landscapes and wildlife habitats.

As the group said their farewells, there was time to reflect on the many highlights experienced throughout the trip—from the rich birdlife of the rainforests and wetlands to memorable encounters with elephants and other wildlife across the national parks. The tour had also offered glimpses into the island's cultural heritage and scenic beauty, from misty hill country landscapes to coastal ecosystems.

The journey ended with warm goodbyes, a strong species list, and lasting memories of Sri Lanka's extraordinary biodiversity and natural charm. Guests departed with a deep appreciation for the island and the shared experiences that made the tour both rewarding and memorable.

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## Species lists

Birds (H = Heard only)

E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic I=Introduced	
Common name	Scientific name
Lesser Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>
Garganey	<i>Spatula querquedula</i>
Indian Peafowl	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>
Sri Lanka Spurfowl - E	<i>Galloperdix bicalcarata</i>
Sri Lanka Junglefowl - E	<i>Gallus lafayettii</i>
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
Green-billed Coucal - E	<i>Centropus chlororhynchos</i>
Greater Coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>
Sirkeer Malkoha	<i>Taccocua leschenaultii</i>
Red-faced Malkoha - E	<i>Phaenicophaeus pyrrhocephalus</i>
Blue-faced Malkoha - N	<i>Phaenicophaeus viridirostris</i>
Jacobin Cuckoo	<i>Clamator jacobinus</i>
Asian Koel	<i>Eudynamys scolopaceus</i>
Grey-bellied Cuckoo	<i>Cacomantis passerinus</i>
Indian Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus micropterus</i>
Spotted Dove	<i>Spilopelia chinensis</i>
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>
Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon - E	<i>Columba torringtoniae</i>
Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>
Common Emerald Dove	<i>Chalcophaps indica</i>
Orange-breasted Green Pigeon	<i>Treron bicinctus</i>
Sri Lanka Green Pigeon - E	<i>Treron pompadora</i>
Green Imperial Pigeon	<i>Ducula aenea</i>
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
Purple Swamphen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>
Watercock	<i>Gallicrex cinerea</i>
White-breasted Waterhen	<i>Amauornis phoenicurus</i>
Great Stone-curlew	<i>Esacus recurvirostris</i>
Indian Stone-curlew	<i>Burhinus indicus</i>
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>
Pacific Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis fulva</i>
Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>
Little Ringed Plover	<i>Thinornis dubius</i>
Yellow-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus malabaricus</i>
Red-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>
Tibetan Sand Plover	<i>Anarhynchus atrifrons</i>
Kentish Plover	<i>Anarhynchus alexandrinus</i>
Pheasant-tailed Jacana	<i>Hydrophasianus chirurgus</i>
Eurasian Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>
Pin-tailed Snipe	<i>Gallinago stenura</i>
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
Red-necked Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>

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Common name	Scientific name
Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>
Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>
Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>
Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>
Terek Sandpiper	<i>Xenus cinereus</i>
Barred Buttonquail	<i>Turnix suscitator</i>
Bridled Tern	<i>Onychoprion anaethetus</i>
Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>
Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>
Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>
Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>
Greater Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bergii</i>
Lesser Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bengalensis</i>
Asian Woolly-necked Stork	<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>
Asian Openbill	<i>Anastomus oscitans</i>
Lesser Adjutant	<i>Leptoptilos javanicus</i>
Painted Stork	<i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>
Oriental Darter	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>
Little Cormorant	<i>Microcarbo niger</i>
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
Indian Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax fuscicollis</i>
Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>
Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>
Black-headed Ibis	<i>Threskiornis melanocephalus</i>
Spot-billed Pelican	<i>Pelecanus philippensis</i>
Black Bittern	<i>Botaurus flavicollis</i>
Yellow Bittern	<i>Botaurus sinensis</i>
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
Little Heron	<i>Butorides atricapilla</i>
Indian Pond Heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>
Medium Egret	<i>Ardea intermedia</i>
Eastern Cattle Egret	<i>Ardea coromanda</i>
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Jerdon's Nightjar - N	<i>Caprimulgus atripennis</i>
Sri Lanka Frogmouth	<i>Batrachostomus moniliger</i>
Crested Treeswift	<i>Hemiprocne coronata</i>
Asian Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus balasiensis</i>
Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>
Indian Swiftlet - N	<i>Aerodramus unicolor</i>
Brown Boobook	<i>Ninox scutulata</i>
Jungle Owlet	<i>Glaucidium radiatum</i>
Chestnut-backed Owlet - E	<i>Glaucidium castanotum</i>
Indian Scops Owl	<i>Otus bakkamoena</i>

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Common name	Scientific name
Brown Fish Owl	<i>Ketupa zeylonensis</i>
Brown Wood Owl	<i>Strix leptogrammica</i>
Crested Honey Buzzard	<i>Pernis ptilorhynchus</i>
Crested Serpent Eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>
Legge's Hawk-Eagle	<i>Nisaetus kelaarti</i>
Changeable Hawk-Eagle	<i>Nisaetus cirrhatous</i>
Black Eagle	<i>Ictinaetus malaiensis</i>
Shikra	<i>Tachyspiza badia</i>
Brahminy Kite	<i>Haliastur indus</i>
White-bellied Sea Eagle	<i>Ichthyophaga leucogaster</i>
Grey-headed Fish Eagle	<i>Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus</i>
Malabar Trogon - N	<i>Harpactes fasciatus</i>
Common Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>
Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill - E	<i>Ocyroceros gingalensis</i>
Malabar Pied Hornbill - N	<i>Anthracoceros coronatus</i>
Indian Roller	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>
Chestnut-headed Bee-eater	<i>Merops leschenaulti</i>
Asian Green Bee-eater	<i>Merops orientalis</i>
Blue-tailed Bee-eater	<i>Merops philippinus</i>
Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
Black-backed Dwarf Kingfisher	<i>Ceyx erithaca</i>
Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>
Stork-billed Kingfisher	<i>Pelargopsis capensis</i>
White-throated Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>
Crimson-fronted Barbet - E	<i>Psilopogon rubricapillus</i>
Coppersmith Barbet	<i>Psilopogon haemacephalus</i>
Brown-headed Barbet	<i>Psilopogon zeylanicus</i>
Yellow-fronted Barbet - E	<i>Psilopogon flavifrons</i>
Red-backed Flameback - E	<i>Dinopium psarodes</i>
Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker	<i>Yungipicus nanus</i>
Yellow-crowned Woodpecker	<i>Leiopicus mahrattensis</i>
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
Alexandrine Parakeet	<i>Psittacula eupatria</i>
Rose-ringed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>
Plum-headed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula cyanocephala</i>
Layard's Parakeet - E	<i>Psittacula calthrapae</i>
Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot - E	<i>Loriculus beryllinus</i>
Indian Pitta	<i>Pitta brachyura</i>
Scarlet Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus flammeus</i>
Small Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus cinnamomeus</i>
Black-headed Cuckooshrike	<i>Lalage melanopectera</i>
Ashy Woodswallow	<i>Artamus fuscus</i>
Common Iora	<i>Aegithina tiphia</i>
Marshall's Iora	<i>Aegithina nigrolutea</i>
Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike	<i>Hemipus picatus</i>
Sri Lanka Woodshrike - E	<i>Tephrodornis affinis</i>
Black-hooded Oriole	<i>Oriolus xanthornus</i>
White-browed Fantail	<i>Rhipidura aureola</i>
Sri Lanka Drongo - E	<i>Dicrurus lophorinus</i>

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Common name	Scientific name
Greater Racket-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus paradiseus</i>
White-bellied Drongo	<i>Dicrurus caerulescens</i>
Ashy Drongo	<i>Dicrurus leucophaeus</i>
Black Drongo	<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>
Indian Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone paradisi</i>
Brown Shrike	<i>Lanius cristatus</i>
Sri Lanka Blue Magpie - E	<i>Urocissa ornata</i>
House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>
Large-billed Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>
Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher	<i>Culicicapa ceylonensis</i>
Cinereous Tit	<i>Parus cinereus</i>
Ashy-crowned Sparrow-Lark	<i>Eremopterix griseus</i>
Jerdon's Bush Lark - N	<i>Plocealauda affinis</i>
Oriental Skylark	<i>Alauda gulgula</i>
Common Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>
Grey-breasted Prinia	<i>Prinia hodgsonii</i>
Jungle Prinia	<i>Prinia sylvatica</i>
Ashy Prinia	<i>Prinia socialis</i>
Plain Prinia	<i>Prinia inornata</i>
Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>
Blyth's Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus dumetorum</i>
Clamorous Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus stentoreus</i>
Sri Lanka Bush Warbler - E	<i>Elaphrornis palliseri</i>
Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>
Hill Swallow - N	<i>Hirundo domicola</i>
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Sri Lanka Swallow - E	<i>Cecropis hyperythra</i>
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>
Green Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus nitidus</i>
Black-capped Bulbul - E	<i>Rubigula melanictera</i>
White-browed Bulbul - N	<i>Pycnonotus luteolus</i>
Yellow-eared Bulbul - E	<i>Pycnonotus penicillatus</i>
Red-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>
Yellow-browed Bulbul - N	<i>Acritillas indica</i>
Square-tailed Bulbul - N	<i>Hypsipetes ganeesa</i>
Yellow-eyed Babbler	<i>Chrysomma sinense</i>
Sri Lanka White-eye - E	<i>Zosterops ceylonensis</i>
Indian White-eye	<i>Zosterops palpebrosus</i>
Tawny-bellied Babbler	<i>Dumetia hyperythra</i>
Dark-fronted Babbler - N	<i>Dumetia atriceps</i>
Sri Lanka Scimitar Babbler - E	<i>Pomatorhinus melanurus</i>
Brown-capped Babbler - E	<i>Pellorneum fuscocapillus</i>
Ashy-headed Laughingthrush - E	<i>Argya cinereifrons</i>
Orange-billed Babbler - E	<i>Argya rufescens</i>
Yellow-billed Babbler - N	<i>Argya affinis</i>
Velvet-fronted Nuthatch	<i>Sitta frontalis</i>
Sri Lanka Hill Myna - E	<i>Gracula ptilogenys</i>
Southern Hill Myna - N	<i>Gracula indica</i>
Rosy Starling	<i>Pastor roseus</i>

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Common name	Scientific name
White-faced Starling - E	<i>Sturnornis albofrontatus</i>
Brahminy Starling	<i>Sturnia pagodarum</i>
Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>
Sri Lanka Thrush - E	<i>Zoothera imbricata</i>
Pied Thrush	<i>Geokichla wardii</i>
Spot-winged Thrush - E	<i>Geokichla spiloptera</i>
Orange-headed Thrush	<i>Geokichla citrina</i>
Indian Blackbird - N	<i>Turdus simillimus</i>
Indian Robin	<i>Copsychus fulicatus</i>
Oriental Magpie-Robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>
Sri Lanka Shama - E	<i>Copsychus leggei</i>
Asian Brown Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa dauurica</i>
Brown-breasted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa muttui</i>
Dull-blue Flycatcher - E	<i>Eumyias sordidus</i>
Tickell's Blue Flycatcher	<i>Cyornis tickelliae</i>
Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush - E	<i>Myophonus blighi</i>
Indian Blue Robin	<i>Larvivora brunnea</i>
Kashmir Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula subrubra</i>
Pied Bush Chat	<i>Saxicola caprata</i>
Thick-billed Flowerpecker	<i>Pachyglossa agilis</i>
Legge's Flowerpecker - E	<i>Pachyglossa vincens</i>
Pale-billed Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum erythrorhynchos</i>
Purple-rumped Sunbird	<i>Leptocoma zeylonica</i>
Purple Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris asiaticus</i>
Loten's Sunbird - N	<i>Cinnyris lotenius</i>
Jerdon's Leafbird - N	<i>Chloropsis jerdoni</i>
Golden-fronted Leafbird	<i>Chloropsis aurifrons</i>
Streaked Weaver	<i>Ploceus manyar</i>
Baya Weaver	<i>Ploceus philippinus</i>
Indian Silverbill	<i>Euodice malabarica</i>
Scaly-breasted Munia	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>
White-rumped Munia	<i>Lonchura striata</i>
Tricoloured Munia	<i>Lonchura malacca</i>
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Forest Wagtail	<i>Dendronanthus indicus</i>
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>
Western Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>
Blyth's Pipit	<i>Anthus godlewskii</i>
Paddyfield Pipit	<i>Anthus rufulus</i>

## Mammals

E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic I=Introduced	
Common name	Scientific name
Asian Elephant	<i>Elephas maximus</i>
Leopard	<i>Panthera pardus</i>
Northern Palm Civet	<i>Paradoxurus hermaphroditus</i>
Small Indian Civet	<i>Viverricula indica</i>
Eurasian Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>

E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic I=Introduced	
Common name	Scientific name
Indian Grey Mongoose	<i>Urva edwardsii</i>
Ruddy Mongoose	<i>Urva smithii</i>
Stripe-necked Mongoose	<i>Urva vitticollis</i>
Golden Jackal	<i>Canis aureus</i>
Chital	<i>Axis axis</i>
Malabar Red Muntjac - N	<i>Muntiacus malabaricus</i>
Sambar	<i>Rusa unicolor</i>
Water Buffalo - I	<i>Bubalus bubalis</i>
Spinner Dolphin	<i>Stenella longirostris</i>
Bottle-nosed Dolphin sp	<i>Tursiops sp</i>
Schneider's Leaf-nosed Bat	<i>Hipposideros speoris</i>
Indian Pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus coromandra</i>
Indian Flying Fox	<i>Pteropus medius</i>
Toque Macaque - E	<i>Macaca sinica</i>
Tufted Gray Langur	<i>Semnopithecus priam</i>
Purple-faced Langur - E	<i>Semnopithecus vetulus</i>
Grey Slender Loris	<i>Loris lydekkerianus</i>
Indian Hare	<i>Lepus nigricollis</i>
Indian Gerbil	<i>Tatera indica</i>
Layard's Palm Squirrel - E	<i>Funambulus layardi</i>
Dusky Striped Squirrel - E	<i>Funambulus obscurus</i>
Indian Palm Squirrel	<i>Funambulus palmarum</i>
Sri Lankan Giant Squirrel	<i>Ratufa macroura</i>

## Reptiles

Common name	Scientific name
Indian Black Terrapin	<i>Melanochelys trijuga</i>
Indian Flap-shelled Turtle	<i>Lissemys punctata</i>
Green Turtle	<i>Chelonia mydas</i>
Olive Ridley Turtle	<i>Lepidochelys olivacea</i>
Oriental Garden Lizard	<i>Calotes versicolor</i>
Green Forest Lizard	<i>Calotes calotes</i>
Black-cheeked Lizard	<i>Calotes nigrilabris</i>
Sri Lankan Kangaroo Lizard	<i>Otocryptis wiegmanni</i>
Deraniyagala's Gecko	<i>Cnemaspis podihuna</i>
Common House Gecko	<i>Hemidactylus frenatus</i>
Bark Gecko	<i>Hemidactylus leschenaultii</i>
Bengal Monitor	<i>Varanus bengalensis</i>
Common Water Monitor	<i>Varanus salvator</i>
Green Vine Snake	<i>Ahaetulla nasuta</i>
Common Rough-sided Snake	<i>Aspidura trachyprocta</i>
Mugger Crocodile	<i>Crocodylus palustris</i>
Bronze-green Little Skink	<i>Eutropis macularia</i>
Hump-nosed Lizard	<i>Lyriocephalus scutatus</i>

## Butterflies

<b>Common name</b>	<b>Scientific name</b>
Crimson Rose	<i>Atrophaneura hector</i>
Common Jezebel	<i>Delias eucharis</i>
Lemon Pansy	<i>Junonia lemonias</i>
Common Tiger	<i>Danaus genutia</i>
White Four Ring	<i>Ypthima ceylonica</i>
Slate Flash	<i>Rapala manea</i>
Grass Yellow Sp	<i>Eurema sp</i>
Psyche	<i>Leptosia nina</i>
Danaid Eggfly	<i>Hypolimnas misippus</i>
Blue Mormon	<i>Papilio polymnestor</i>
Common Crow	<i>Euploea core</i>
Ceylon Rose	<i>Pachliopta jophon</i>
Sri Lanka Tree Nymph	<i>Idea iasonia</i>