

# Sri Lanka

Naturetrek Tour Report

3 – 12 November 2012

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Report compiled by Susantha Weerappuli

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## Day 1

**Saturday 3rd November**

Travel from the UK

## Day 2

**Sunday 4th November**

A group of 11 clients arrived to Colombo air port in the morning, at around 08.50am. We set off to Kitulgala which was going to be our first destination on the tour. The journey took us mainly across the countryside, where we could encounter two endemic species; Crimson-fronted Barbet and Sri Lanka Swallow along with some other common species. Spotting Ashy Wood Swallow was also a good encounter as it is not that common in southern Sri Lanka. After about three and a half hours drive we arrived at Kitulgala Rest House which used to be the accommodation for the film crew of "Bridge over the River Kwai" in the 1960s. We enjoyed the buffet style lunch as we were all hungry by that time. After lunch, we checked in to the rooms for a short break.

At 14.30 hours we all got together to explore the Kitulgala Forest or Makandawa Reserve in search of endemic and other bird species. We crossed the Kelani River (the third longest river in Sri Lanka) which runs behind the Kitulgala Rest House, in a narrow dugout canoe, and walked through the village about half a mile and entered the forest reserve - a dense lowland rainforest. The bird life in the village was abundant; we saw the Orange-billed Babbler and Sri Lanka Hanging Parrots which are endemics. Inside the forest we saw the Sri Lanka Crested Drongo, Scarlet Minivet, and Malabar Trogon amongst others, and heard the skulking Sri Lanka Spurfowl and Chestnut-backed Owlet. We left the forest and arrived back at the hotel at around 7.30 pm.

## Day 3

## Monday 5th November

With the first light of the day we found some good birds within the hotel garden, including Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill and Yellow Fronted Barbet. In a short while, we set off for the nearby local path in search of Chestnut-backed Owlet and other target species from Kitulgala. We heard the Owlet close to us but missed it this time also. It was a successful morning with a few more endemics including Black-capped Bulbul, Sri Lanka Green Pigeon, Layard's Parakeet, Spot-winged Thrush and some other sought after species. We returned to the hotel for breakfast and set off for another forest patch where we saw the Indian Pitta, Indian Robin, Chestnut-headed Bee-eater etc. Again we returned to the Kitulgala Rest House for lunch.

After lunch we checked out and started our journey to the second destination; Nuwara Eliya. It was mainly a winding uphill drive all the way up to Nuwara Eliya and the surroundings were scenic with tea plantations. We had a short break in one of the tea factories where we spotted our first Hill Swallow of the trip. By the time we arrived to Nuwara Eliya it was raining and we had to postpone our Victoria Park visit to the next afternoon instead. We enjoyed the late afternoon in the Leisure Village Hotel, our accommodation in Nuwara Eliya.

## Day 4

## Tuesday 6th November

We had our first tea/coffee for the day at the hotel and set off for the Horton Plains National Park around 4.45am in the morning in the dark. It is only a 25km drive from the hotel to the park entrance but takes a little more than an hour due to the winding road conditions and uphill drive. Anyway we managed to get to the park ticketing counter for the first ticket of the day at dawn. Even before we entered the park we covered two of our main targets here, Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon and Dull Blue Flycatcher, though many clients felt the name was not appropriate as it's not dull blue! A short drive from the entrance, we played back for the elusive Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush...and without giving us a hard time as usual it appeared from a nearby bush with it's lovely whistle and showed itself for about one or two minutes. Everybody was thrilled. Then we found the Yellow-eared Bulbul which is a bright and attractive bird that utters loudly.

We had our packed breakfast there which we were given by the hotel. We proceeded along the road watching for highland species like Sambhar Deer etc. Then we saw the sacred mountain - Adams Peak - which we had a very clear view of in the distance. Next we saw a few Sri Lanka Junglefowl –the national bird of Sri Lanka. By this time we had covered almost all the target species from Horton Plains National Park but one, the Sri Lanka Bush Warbler, another skulking bird. We decided to do the 10km circular walking trail to find a Bush Warbler. Even before we passed the first kilometre post, we found our target but we continued up to three kilometres to see the “Worlds End”, a deep vertical drop by the side of the trail, which is famous. On the way back we got some bonuses, Sri Lanka Scimitar Babbler, Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher, Asian Paradise Flycatcher and Crested Honey Buzzard. We returned to the hotel for lunch and right after we set off for Victoria Park for two key birds all the birders were keen on - Kashmir Flycatcher and Pied Ground Thrush. We managed to find one individual of Kashmir Flycatcher and a pair of Pied Ground Thrushes. Kashmir Flycatcher is really a needle in the hay stack in Victoria Park so we were lucky. And two bonuses as well, Forest Wagtail and a good view of an Indian Pitta.

## Day 5

## Wednesday 7th November

Today we set off to the lowlands after two nights stay at Nuwara Eliya. On the way our first stop was at a small home garden off the main road called Surrey Estate. The key bird there is Brown Wood Owl. There also, we achieved our target without much effort. Then we proceeded to the place called Ravana Ella (Ravana Waterfalls). We had a break there, enjoying the fascinating waterfall just by the side of the main road. Then gradually we arrived to the lowlands where the dry zone is. Up to this point we were in the wet zone and in the highlands and now we were changing climatic zone.

After having lunch from a restaurant on the way at Udawalawe we made a short walk up to open grassland where we could see the Udawalawe Reservoir from the main road. By roaming around we managed to see a good number of dry zone species including Woolly-necked Stork, Blue-faced Malkoha, Yellow-wattled Lapwing, Spot-billed Pelican and Jordon's Bush Lark. We spent about one and a half hours there and started our journey again to Centauria Tourist Hotel at Embilipitiya. Before we checked in we went to the hotel car park where there is a day roosting site of a pair of Indian Scops Owls. We had a good view of the roosting pair and then checked in to the luxury hotel Centauria to stay overnight.

## Day 6

## Thursday 8th November

We had early start, again at 5.45am, with a packed breakfast. After about 45 minutes we got to the Udawalawe Park entrance and there we had two open roofed safari jeeps for the safari in Udawalawe Park. The park is mainly an open grassland, as we entered we encountered a number of wild Asian Elephants. We had a safari for about four hours there and got some good sightings of Sri Lanka Wood Shrike, Sirkeer Malkoha, Lesser Adjutant, Plum-headed Parakeet, Barred Button Quail, Malabar Pied Hornbill, Marshall's Iora and Jacobin Cuckoo.

After the safari in the morning, we started our journey to the next destination, Sinharaja Man and Biosphere Reserve. On the way we stopped at a nesting site of Black-crowned Night Herons on a large tree in the middle of a three way junction in a busy place. Later we watched a day roosting site of Indian Flying Foxes by the side of the road. All the way up to Sinharaja Rainforest we had frequent stops for bird sightings. By the time we arrived at Blue Magpie Lodge it was around 4.30pm in the afternoon. We had a warm cup of coffee and had a late afternoon walk into the nearby forest patch targeting the Sri Lanka Frogmouth. Though a single Frogmouth responded to the call, we couldn't spot it.

## Day 7

## Friday 9th November

After breakfast at the hotel, we set off for Sinharaja for a full day excursion with a packed lunch. We had spotted a Sri Lanka Myna and had a brief view of a Sri Lanka Spurfowl on the way to the forest. We came across a mixed feeding flock, and spotted endemics one by one along the main trail of the forest. Once we found the feeding flock most of the target species were there...especially a pair of Red-faced Malkohas that showed themselves extremely well. The Sri Lanka Blue Magpies gave very good photo opportunities. A Sri Lanka Scaly-thrush on its nest was a big relief rather than looking for it for hours in the muddy ditches! We returned to the hotel after a long but exciting day full of endemics.

## Day 8

## Saturday 10th November

We returned to the forest in the morning as there were three more endemic and the Sri Lanka Frogmouth to be spotted. To start the day we had a superb view of a day roosting pair of Sri Lanka Frogmouths on the way in a dense patch. Before lunch break we covered all the target species except one, the Chestnut-backed Owlet. We had our lunch from the Blue Magpie Lodge and made our way to the next destination - Rathnaloka Tourist Inn, in Ratnapura, the gem city.

## Day 9

## Sunday 11th November

After breakfast we checked out and started the journey to the next site - Bodinagala Monastery site. There we had good view of a pair of Oriental Dwarf Kingfishers along with some other species. Later we made our way to the next site via Colombo, the Muturajawela Mangrove Marsh. There we saw the Yellow Bittern, Striated Heron, Stork-billed Kingfisher and Indian Cormorant. Finally we arrived to the Gateway Hotel nearby the airport to spend the last night of the tour...

## Day 10

## Sunday 12th November

Arrival back in the UK

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## Bird List

<b>Species name</b>	<b>Scientific name</b>
Ceylon Spurfowl	<i>Galloperdix bicalcarata</i>
Sri Lanka Junglefowl	<i>Gallus lafayetii</i>
Indian Peafowl	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>
Lesser Whistling-duck	<i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>
Painted Stork	<i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>
Asian Openbill	<i>Anastomus oscitans</i>
Woolly-necked Stork	<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>
Lesser Adjutant	<i>Leptoptilos javanicus</i>
Black-headed Ibis	<i>Threskiornis melanocephalus</i>
Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>
Yellow Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus sinensis</i>
Black-crowned Night-heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>
Indian Pond-heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>
Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
Great Egret	<i>Casmerodius albus</i>
Intermediate Egret	<i>Mesophoyx intermedia</i>
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
Spot-billed Pelican	<i>Pelecanus philippensis</i>
Little Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax niger</i>
Indian Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax fuscicollis</i>
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
Oriental Darter	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
Oriental Honey-buzzard	<i>Pernis ptilorhyncus</i>
Black-winged Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>
Brahminy Kite	<i>Haliastur indus</i>
White-bellied Fish-eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>
Crested Serpent-eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>
Shikra	<i>Accipiter badius</i>
Besra	<i>Accipiter virgatus</i>
Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>
Changeable Hawk-eagle	<i>Spizaetus cirrhatus</i>
Mountain Hawk-eagle	<i>Spizaetus nipalensis</i>
White-breasted Waterhen	<i>Amauornis phoenicurus</i>
Purple Swamphen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>
Barred Buttonquail	<i>Turnix suscitator</i>

Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
Yellow-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus malarbaricus</i>
Red-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
Gull-billed Tern	<i>Sterna (Gelocheledon) nilotica</i>
Little Tern	<i>Sterna albifrons</i>
Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>
Rock Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>
Sri Lanka Wood-pigeon	<i>Columba torringtoniae</i>
Spotted Dove	<i>Stigmatopelia (Streptopelia) chinensis</i>
Emerald Dove	<i>Chalcophaps indica</i>
Orange-breasted Green-pigeon	<i>Treron bicinctus</i>
Pompadour Green-pigeon	<i>Treron pompadora</i>
Green Imperial-pigeon	<i>Ducula aenea</i>
Sri Lanka Hanging-parrot	<i>Loriculus beryllinus</i>
Alexandrine Parakeet	<i>Psittacula eupatria</i>
Rose-ringed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>
Plum-headed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula cyanocephala</i>
Layard's Parakeet	<i>Psittacula calthropae</i>
Jacobin Cuckoo	<i>Clamator jacobinus</i>
Asian Koel	<i>Eudynamys scolopaceus</i>
Blue-faced Malkoha	<i>Phaenicophaeus viridirostris</i>
Sirkeer Malkoha	<i>Phaenicophaeus leschenaultii</i>
Red-faced Malkoha	<i>Phaenicophaeus pyrrhocephalus</i>
Greater Coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>
Green-billed Coucal	<i>Centropus chlororhynchus</i>
Serendib Scops-owl	<i>Otus thilohoffmanni</i>
Collared Scops-owl	<i>Otus bakkamoena</i>
Brown Wood-owl	<i>Strix leptogrammica</i>
Chestnut-backed Owlet	<i>Glaucidium castanonotum</i>
Sri Lanka Frogmouth	<i>Batrachostomus moniliger</i>
Indian Swiftlet	<i>Collocalia unicolor</i>
Brown-backed Needletail	<i>Hirundapus giganteus</i>
Asian Palm-swift	<i>Cypsiurus balasiensis</i>
Alpine Swift	<i>Tachymarptis melba</i>
Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>
Crested Treeswift	<i>Hemiprocne coronata</i>
Malabar Trogon	<i>Harpactes fasciatus</i>
Indian Roller	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>
Stork-billed Kingfisher	<i>Pelargopsis (Halcyon) capensis</i>
White-throated Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>
Black-backed Kingfisher	<i>Ceyx erithaca</i>

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Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>
Little Green Bee-eater	<i>Merops orientalis</i>
Blue-tailed Bee-eater	<i>Merops philippinus</i>
Chestnut-headed Bee-eater	<i>Merops leschenaulti</i>
Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>
Sri Lanka Grey-hornbill	<i>Ocyroceros gingalensis</i>
Malabar Pied-hornbill	<i>Anthracoceros coronatus</i>
Brown-headed Barbet	<i>Megalaima zeylanica</i>
Yellow-fronted Barbet	<i>Megalaima flavifrons</i>
Crimson-fronted Barbet	<i>Megalaima rubricapillus</i>
Coppersmith Barbet	<i>Megalaima haemacephala</i>
Brown-capped Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos nanus</i>
Lesser Yellownappe	<i>Picus chlorolophus</i>
Black-rumped Flameback	<i>Dinopium benghalense psarodes</i>
Greater Flameback	<i>Chrysocolaptes lucidus</i>
Indian Pitta	<i>Pitta brachyura</i>
Ashy Woodswallow	<i>Artamus fuscus</i>
Common Iora	<i>Aegithina tiphia</i>
White-tailed Iora	<i>Aegithina nigrolutea</i>
Common Woodshrike	<i>Tephrodornis pondicerianus</i>
Black-headed Cuckooshrike	<i>Coracina melanoptera</i>
Small Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus cinnamomeus</i>
Scarlet Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus flammeus</i>
Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike	<i>Hemipus picatus</i>
Brown Shrike	<i>Lanius cristatus cristatus</i>
Black-hooded Oriole	<i>Oriolus xanthornus</i>
White-bellied Drongo	<i>Dicrurus caerulescens</i>
Greater Racket-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus paradiseus lophorhinus</i>
White-browed Fantail	<i>Rhipidura aureola</i>
Asian Paradise-flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone paradisi paradisi</i>
Asian Paradise-flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone paradisi ceylonicus</i>
Sri Lanka Magpie	<i>Urocissa ornata</i>
House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>
Jungle Crow	<i>Corvus leucomelas</i>
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Hill Swallow	<i>Hirundo domicola</i>
Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Hirundo daurica</i>
Jerdon's Bushlark	<i>Mirafra affinis</i>
Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>
Grey-breasted Prinia	<i>Prinia hodgsonii</i>
Ashy Prinia	<i>Prinia socialis</i>
Plain Prinia	<i>Prinia inornata</i>



Black-crested Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus melanicterus</i>
Red-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>
Yellow-eared Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus penicillatus</i>
White-browed Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus luteolus</i>
Yellow-browed Bulbul	<i>Iole indica</i>
Black Bulbul	<i>Hypsipetes leucocephalus</i>
Common Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>
Sri Lanka Bush-warbler	<i>Bradypterus palliseri</i>
Greenish Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochiloides</i>
Large-billed Leaf-warbler	<i>Phylloscopus magnirostris</i>
Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>
Brown-capped Babbler	<i>Pellorneum fuscocapillus</i>
Dark-fronted Babbler	<i>Rhopocichla atriceps</i>
Yellow-eyed Babbler	<i>Chrysomma sinense</i>
Orange-billed Babbler	<i>Turdoides rufescens</i>
Yellow-billed Babbler	<i>Turdoides affinis</i>
Ashy-headed Laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax cinereifrons</i>
Sri Lanka Scimitar-babbler	<i>Pomatorhinus melanurus</i>
Sri Lanka White-eye	<i>Zosterops ceylonensis</i>
Oriental White-eye	<i>Zosterops palpebrosus</i>
Sri Lanka Myna	<i>Gracula ptilogenys</i>
Hill Myna	<i>Gracula religiosa</i>
Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>
White-faced Starling	<i>Sturnus albofrontatus</i>
Sri Lanka Whistling-thrush	<i>Myophonus blighi</i>
Pied Thrush	<i>Zoothera wardii</i>
Spot-winged Thrush	<i>Zoothera spiloptera</i>
Sri Lanka Scaly Thrush	<i>Zoothera imbricata</i>
Eurasian Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>
Indian Blue Robin	<i>Luscinia brunnea</i>
Oriental Magpie-robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>
Indian Robin	<i>Saxicoloides fulicatus</i>
Pied Bushchat	<i>Saxicola caprata</i>
Asian Brown Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa dauurica</i>
Brown-breasted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa muttui</i>
Kashmir Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula subrubra</i>
Dull-blue Flycatcher	<i>Eumyias sordidus</i>
Tickell's Blue-flycatcher	<i>Cyornis tickelliae</i>
Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher	<i>Culicicapa ceylonensis</i>
Jerdon's Leafbird	<i>Chloropsis jerdoni</i>
Golden-fronted Leafbird	<i>Chloropsis aurifrons</i>
White-throated Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum vincens</i>
Pale-billed Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum erythrorhynchos</i>
Purple-rumped Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia zeylonica</i>

Purple Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia asiatica</i>
Long-billed Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia lotenia</i>
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Baya Weaver	<i>Ploceus philippinus</i>
White-rumped Munia	<i>Lonchura striata</i>
Black-throated Munia	<i>Lonchura kelaarti</i>
Scaly-breasted Munia	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>
Tricoloured Munia	<i>Lonchura malacca</i>
Forest Wagtail	<i>Dendronanthus indicus</i>
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>
Paddyfield Pipit	<i>Anthus rufulus</i>