# Sri Lanka - Endemic Birds

## Naturetrek Tour Report

## 17 - 27 August 2013



Changeable Hawk Eagle by Susantha Weerapulig



Red-wattled Lapwing by Susantha Weerapulige



Little Cormorant by Andrew Strouthous

Report compiled by Susantha Weerapulige Images courtesy of Susantha Weerapulige and Andy Strouthous



 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 Leader: Susantha Weerapulige

Participants:

Andy Strouthous

Ed Owen

#### Day 1

## Sunday 18 August

#### Airport / Kitulgala. Hot & Sunny

We met at 15:45 hrs at Colombo International Airport where the temperature was 32C. This was great for the clients to have nice sunny weather and a warm temperature on their first visit to Sri Lanka.

We had just left the airport at the corridor and found five Yellow-billed Babblers hopping around. This very first bird was also was a lifer for both of them. We got into the Land Rover and started the journey towards Kitulgala, making frequent stops on the way. We managed to see an Ashy Wood Swallow showing well in the sun on an electric wire. A Crested Serpent Eagle was posing nicely whilst sitting and waiting on a Rubber Tree just by the side of the road. This produced a number of good photographs which thrilled the clients. Additionally, two Sri Lanka Swallows showing for a few seconds were the highlights of the day. By the time we got to Kitulgala it was almost dark, so after doing our check list for the first day we enjoyed Sri Lankan rice & curry & went for a good night's sleep.

#### Day 2

#### Monday 19 August

#### Kitulgala / Nuwara Eliya Hot & Sunny, Cold at night

At first light we managed to find a Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill, Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot and some other birds in the hotel gardens. Then we rushed to the forest patch nearby where we could hear the Chestnut-backed Owlet but it wasn't showing. After breakfast we crossed the Kelani River in the small dug-out canoe & went to the forest reserve through the village. We managed to find a pair of Sri Lanka Spurfowls (a really skulking bird). As it has not been raining for a few days the forest was a bit dry, so it was fairly quiet.

We returned to the rest house for lunch and afterwards started our way to the hill country of Sri Lanka, to Nuwara Eliya. On the way we spotted a beautiful adult male Green Forest Lizard which was sunning itself on a concrete electricity post. As we gradually ascended the hills we came to the lush mountains that are full of Sri Lanka high grown tea plantations.

We had a break to stretch our legs and this produced a good sighting of a Jungle Prinia which was the only sighting for the entire trip.

As we were getting closer to Nuwara Eliya, we decided to have a hot cup of garden fresh tea. We stopped at a tea factory to see the processing first and then enjoyed tasting the fresh green tea. We checked in to the hotel at dusk and went to bed early as we had an early start the next day.

## Day 3

## **Tuesday 20 August**

#### Nuwara Eliya / Horton Plains Cold, Hot & Sunny, Cold again

We started the day at 05.00 am taking a picnic breakfast with us and travelling in the Land Rover to explore Horton Plain (the highest situated National Park in Sri Lanka) which is 2000m to 2300m high from mean sea level. We drove in the mist so I was able to test the fog lamps of my new vehicle, which proved to be perfectly effective in fog. On the way we spotted an Indian Hare by the side of the road. We entered the park at 06:00 am and tried for the elusive Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush first as it is one of the most difficult targets in the of the endemic list. We only managed to find a few Sri Lanka Scimitar Babblers by the famous Aranga Pool (Aranga was another name that the Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush used to be called in the past). We walked past the Aranga Pool and tried again. There was one Whistling Thrush responding to the tape but it didn't show itself as it was the busy time on the main road with vehicles entering the park.

We then drew up to the car park and had our picnic breakfast there while watching a group of 27 Sambur Deer grazing on the plain. Afterwards we started walking on the trail and saw Sri Lanka Bush Warbler, Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush, Black-shouldered Kite, Sri Lanka yellow-eared Bulbul, Sri Lanka Dull-blue Flycatcher and some other birds. We managed to see almost everything there but the clients wanted to have better views of the Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon and the Dull-blue Flycatcher. Gradually we made our way to the place called World's End, where there is a deep vertical drop from the plateau down to the lowland below. We were lucky to have a clear view - which is not always easy as it is mostly covered with mist.

After a successful morning we went back to the hotel for lunch. Later we visited Victoria Park, which has been the public park of Nuwara Eliya since the British colonial time in Sri Lanka. As this was not the winter time the park is not very productive with North Indian migrants at this time of year, but it was really beautiful to see all the plants blooming at this time of the year.

Late afternoon we visited the forest patch at the far side of the town and had perfect views of a pair of Sri Lanka Wood Pigeons perched on a branch and at least five Sri Lanka Dull-blue Flycatcher showing in close proximity. The Bear Monkey, the highland race of the Sri Lanka Purple-faced Leaf Monkey (which we failed to see at Horton Plains) was seen here nicely.

#### Day 5

#### Wednesday 21 August

#### Nuwara Eliya / Embilipitiya Hot & Sunny

After breakfast at the hotel we started our journey to Embilipitiya and the dry lowlands. Descending from 2000m to 150m we experienced a big difference in the geography and climate, from cooler mountains to dry & hot lowlands. On the way we stopped by the side of the road at Ravana Ella (Ravana Falls) which is one of the most beautiful waterfalls in Sri Lanka. By proceeding all the way to the falls we found Black Eagles, three Woolynecked Storks, two Indian Rollers and some other lowland species. We had our lunch in a local restaurant on the way and arrived at the hotel earlier today as the clients wanted to have a dip in the pool and feel refreshed after a few days hardcore birding. However just before checking in we managed to see one of the dry zone target birds, the Indian Scops Owl, which was roosting in a heavily grown Thunbergia vine in the hotel car park.

#### Day 6

#### **Tour Report**

### Thursday 22 August

#### Embilipitiya / Udawalawe / Sinharaja Hot & Sunny

At 06:00am we checked out (once again with a picnic breakfast) to visit Udawalawe National Park. The park is mainly a savanna type grassland together with many sparsely bushes. There is a large man-made reservoir on the Western border of the park which is surrounded by grassland and forest cover. This is one of the best parks to see wild elephants in Sri Lanka. By taking a jeep ride we managed to see most of the dry zone targets of the trip including the endemic Sri Lanka Wood Shrike, Blue-faced Malkoha, Painted Stork, Gull-billed Tern, Malabar Pied Hornbill, Paddy field Pipit, Jordon's Bush Lark, Prinias, Parakeets and at least thirty Indian Wild Elephants. A herd of female and baby elephants were enjoying themselves in a pond in the park and we were lucky to have our breakfast watching them in a close proximity. Mugger crocodiles were also a highlight of the day. After the safari we started our journey to the pristine primary rain forest in Sri Lanka – Sinharaja Man & Biosphere Reserve. For most of the afternoon we kept driving slowly watching things along the roadside and arrived at the Blue Magpie Lodge in the late afternoon.

#### Day 7

#### Sinharaja Reserve Rainy, Hot & Sunny

We started the day early in the morning, as we were desperate to see all the rest of the endemic species of the tour. Even before we entered the forest, we found two Sri Lanka White-faced Starlings - which are not easy most of the time. Amazingly, inside the forest we were lucky to find four big mix feeding flocks, which gave us close views of a good number of endemic species without any difficulty. We saw 13 Red –faced Malkohas which was unbelievable and we also saw most of the other species. We spent the whole day inside the forest watching birds.

The day was extraordinary.

#### Day 8

#### Saturday 24 August

Friday 23 August

#### Sinharaja Reserve / Ratnapura Hot & Sunny

As we were yet to see four other endemics on the list we decided to have a second morning visit to the Sinharaja Reserve. Before entering the reserve we decided to try for the Sri Lanka Green-billed Coucal in a forest patch nearby the village and managed to see it perfectly and easily within just a few minutes.

We found the Chestnut-backed Owlet inside the reserve but Sri Lanka Scaly Thrush was still proving difficult. Although we heard two of them in a muddy area, we couldn't spot them. On the way back from the forest there was a beautiful Green Vine Snake showing nicely in a low bush, which made some beautiful pictures.

Later in the day we made our way to Ratnapura – the gem city of Sri Lanka, where today's accommodation was. There we spotted our first pair of Golden -fronted Leaf Birds and two pairs of Little Minivets for the trip.

#### Day 9

#### Ratnapura / Bodinagala Monastery site / Colombo

After breakfast we made our way to Bodinagala Forest Reserve which is a Buddhist Monastery site providing an ideal habitat for wet zone birds and other wildlife where they are least disturbed. Here we managed to see two pairs of Chestnut-headed Bee eaters and the wet zone race of the Purple-faced Leaf Monkeys. We heard the Green-billed Coucal but were unable to see it here.

Hot & Sunny

Later we drove towards the Muturajawela Wetland which was our final birding site of the tour. There we had a nice boat ride through the Mangrove Forest in the lagoon. Striated Heron, Purple Swamphen, Purple Heron and the Stork-billed Kingfisher were the highlights here. A number of Water Monitors were also seen in varies different sizes from small babies of one foot in length to the big ones of about six or seven feet.

#### **Day 10**

#### Monday 26 August

#### Colombo / Airport Hot & Sunny

Today was the last day of the tour, however as we still had some spare time before travelling to the airport we decided to take a walk in the spacious hotel gardens and managed to add a Common Moorhen to the trip list together with a few other birds. By 10:00am the clients said goodbye to Sri Lanka with happy smiling faces after a successful bird tour.

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## Sunday 25 August

## **Species List**

Birds ( $\checkmark$  = recorded but not counted; H = heard only)

			August								
	Common name	Scientific name	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
1	Spot-billed Pelican	Pelecanus philippensis				✓					
2	Great Cormorant	Phalacrocorax carbo								✓	
3	Indian Cormorant	Phalacrocorax fuscicollis				✓				~	
4	Little Cormorant	Phalacrocorax niger	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	~	✓
5	Darter	Anhinga melanogaster					✓			✓	
6	Grey Heron	Ardea cinerea				✓	✓		✓	~	
7	Purple Heron	Ardea purpurea					✓			~	
8	Great White Egret	Ardea alba				✓	✓			~	✓
9	Intermediate Egret	Egretta intermedia	✓	✓			✓		~	✓	
10	Little Egret	Egretta garzetta		✓			✓				
11	Cattle Egret	Bubulcus ibis	✓	✓		✓					
12	Indian Pond Heron	Ardeola grayii	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			~	
13	Striated Heron	Butorides striata								~	
14	Black-crowned Night Heron	Nycticorax nycticorax				✓	✓				
15	Painted Stork	Mycteria leucocephala					✓				
16	Asian Openbill	Anastomus oscitans	✓	✓		✓					
17	Woolly-necked Stork	Ciconia episcopus				✓					
18	Black-headed Ibis	Threskiornis melanocephalus	✓			✓	✓			✓	
19	Eurasian Spoonbill	Platalea leucorodia				✓					
20	Lesser Whistling-Duck	Dendrocygna javanica				~				~	
21	Crested Honey Buzzard	Pernis ptilorhynchus				✓		✓		✓	
22	Black-shouldered Kite	Elanus caeruleus			✓	✓	✓				
23	Brahminy Kite	Haliastur indus		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
24	White-bellied Sea Eagle	Haliaeetus leucogaster				✓	✓				
25	Crested Serpent Eagle	Spilornis cheela	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	
26	Shikra	Accipiter badius								✓	
27	Black Eagle	Ictinaetus malayensis		✓		✓	✓		✓		
28	Rufous-bellied Eagle	Hieraaetus kienerii		✓							
29	Changeable Hawk-Eagle	Spizaetus cirrhatus					✓	✓	✓		
30	Peregrine Falcon	Falco peregrinus				✓					
31	Sri Lanka Spurfowl	Galloperdix bicalcarata		✓					н		
32	Sri Lanka Junglefowl	Gallus lafayetii		н	~			✓			
33	Indian Peafowl	Pavo cristatus				✓	✓				
34	White-breasted Waterhen	Amaurornis phoenicurus		~	~		✓	✓	~	~	✓
35	Purple Swamphen	Porphyrio porphyrio				~				~	
36	Moorhen	Gallinula chloropus									✓
37	Pheasant-tailed Jacana	Hydrophasianus chirurgus				~					

			August								
	Common name	Scientific name	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
38	Black-winged Stilt	Himantopus himantopus				✓					
39	Yellow-wattled Lapwing	Vanellus malabaricus					✓				
40	Red-wattled Lapwing	Vanellus indicus	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
41	Ringed Plover	Charadrius hiaticula					✓				
42	Lesser Sand Plover	Charadrius mongolus					✓				
43	Greater Sand Plover	Charadrius leschenaultii					✓				
44	Common Sandpiper	Actitis hypoleucos			✓						
45	Wood Sandpiper	Tringa glareola					✓				
46	Gull-billed Tern	Gelochelidon nilotica					✓				
47	Whiskered Tern	Chlidonias hybrida				✓					
48	Rock Dove	Columba livia		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
49	Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon	Columba torringtoni			✓						
50	Spotted Dove	Streptopelia chinensis	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	~	✓
51	Emerald Dove	Chalcophaps indica	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		
52	Green Imperial Pigeon	Ducula aenea	✓	✓					✓	✓	
53	Alexandrine Parakeet	Psittacula eupatria					✓				
54	Rose-ringed Parakeet	Psittacula krameri		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
55	Plum-headed Parakeet	Psittacula cyanocephala					✓	✓			
56	Layard's Parakeet	Psittacula calthropae					✓	✓			
57	Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot	Loriculus beryllinus		✓			✓		✓		
58	Asian Koel	Eudynamys scolopaceus				✓				✓	
59	Blue-faced Malkoha	Phaenicophaeus viridirostris					✓				
60	Red-faced Malkoha	Phaenicophaeus pyrrhocephalus						~			
61	Greater Coucal	Centropus sinensis		Н	Н		✓		Н	✓	✓
62	Green-billed Coucal	Centropus chlororhynchus						✓	✓	н	
63	Indian Scops Owl	Otus bakkamoena				✓					
64	Brown Fish Owl	Ketupa zeylonensis					✓				
65	Chestnut-backed Owlet	Glaucidium castanonotum		н				н	✓		
66	Sri Lanka Frogmouth	Batrachostomus moniliger						✓			
67	Indian Swiftlet	Aerodramus unicolor		✓	~			✓	✓	~	✓
68	Brown-backed Needletail	Hirundapus giganteus					✓	✓			
69	Asian Palm Swift	Cypsiurus balasiensis	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		
70	Alpine Swift	Tachymarptis melba			✓						
71	Little Swift	Apus affinis					✓		✓	✓	
72	Crested Treeswift	Hemiprocne coronata					✓				
73	Malabar Trogon	Harpactes fasciatus	1					~			
74	Stork-billed Kingfisher	Pelargopsis capensis	1	~						~	✓
75	White-throated Kingfisher	Halcyon smyrnensis	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
76	Common Kingfisher	Alcedo atthis				✓	✓			✓	✓
77	Pied Kingfisher	Ceryle rudis	✓			✓					

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	Common name	Scientific name	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26			
78	Little Green Bee-Eater	Merops orientalis	_			✓	✓							
79	Chestnut-headed Bee-Eater	Merops leschenaulti								✓				
80	Indian Roller	Coracias benghalensis				✓	✓							
81	Sri Lankan Grey Hornbill	Ocyceros gingalensis		✓				✓	✓	✓				
82	Malabar Pied Hornbill	Anthracoceros coronatus					✓							
83	Brown-headed Barbet	Megalaima zeylanica		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
84	Yellow-fronted Barbet	Megalaima flavifrons		✓	н			✓						
85	Crimson-fronted Barbet	Megalaima rubricapillus						✓	✓					
86	Coppersmith Barbet	Megalaima haemacephala				✓	✓							
87	Lesser Yellownape	Picus chlorolophus						✓						
88	Black-rumped Flameback	Dinopium benghalense		✓										
89	Greater Flameback	Chrysocolaptes lucidus			н		✓	✓						
90	Jerdon's Bushlark	Mirafra affinis					✓							
91	Oriental Skylark	Alauda gulgula					✓							
92	Pacific Swallow	Hirundo tahitica		✓	✓									
93	Red-rumped Swallow	Cecropis daurica	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓				
94	Paddyfield Pipit	Anthus rufulus			✓	✓	✓							
95	Small Minivet	Pericrocotus cinnamomeus							✓					
96	Scarlet Minivet	Pericrocotus flammeus			✓	✓		✓	✓					
97	Bar-winged Flycatcher-Shrike	Hemipus picatus			✓			✓						
98	Common Wood-Shrike	Tephrodornis pondicerianus					✓							
99	Black-capped Bulbul	Pycnonotus melanicterus		✓				✓						
100	Red-vented Bulbul	Pycnonotus cafer	<ul> <li>✓</li> </ul>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
101	Yellow-eared Bulbul	Pycnonotus penicillatus			✓									
102	Yellow-browed Bulbul	Acritillas indica		✓				✓	✓	✓				
103	Square-tailed Black Bulbul	Hypsipetes ganeesa						✓						
104	Golden-fronted Leafbird	Chloropsis aurifrons							✓					
105	Common Iora	Aegithina tiphia	1				✓							
106	Indian Blackbird	Turdus simillimus	1		~									
107	Spot-winged Thrush	Zoothera spiloptera	1					✓	✓					
108	Sri Lanka Scaly Thrush	Zoothera imbricata							н					
109	Sri Lanka Whistling-Thrush	Myophonus blighi			✓									
110	Oriental Magpie-Robin	Copsychus saularis		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓				
111	Indian Robin	Saxicoloides fulicatus				✓	✓							
112	Pied Bushchat	Saxicola caprata	1		~						<u> </u>			
113	Dull-blue Flycatcher	Eumyias sordidus	+		✓						<u> </u>			
114	Tickell's Blue Flycatcher	Cyornis tickelliae						✓	н					
115	Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher	Culicicapa ceylonensis		<u> </u>	✓		<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>		-			
116	White-browed Fantail	Rhipidura aureola		<u> </u>		✓	✓	<u> </u>	<u> </u>		-			
117	Black-naped Monarch	Hypothymis azurea	+	<ul> <li>✓</li> </ul>				<ul> <li>✓</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>✓</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>✓</li> </ul>	-			

					August							
	Common name	Scientific name	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	
118	Common Tailorbird	Orthotomus sutorius		✓	н							
119	Jungle Prinia	Prinia sylvatica		✓								
120	Ashy Prinia	Prinia socialis			✓		✓					
121	Plain Prinia	Prinia inornata					✓					
122	Zitting Cisticola	Cisticola juncidis			✓							
123	Sri Lankan Bush Warbler	Elaphrornis palliseri			✓							
124	Yellow-eyed Babbler	Chrysomma sinense					✓					
125	Dark-fronted Babbler	Rhopocichla atriceps						✓	✓			
126	Tawny-bellied Babbler	Dumetia hyperythra					✓					
127	Sri Lankan Scimitar Babbler	Pomatorhinus melanurus			✓			✓				
128	Brown-capped Babbler	Pellorneum fuscocapillus						✓				
129	Orange-billed Babbler	Turdoides rufescens		✓				✓	✓			
130	Yellow-billed Babbler	Turdoides affinis	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	~	<ul> <li>✓</li> </ul>	
131	Ashy-headed Laughingthrush	Garrulax cinereifrons						✓				
132	Great Tit	Parus major			✓		✓					
133	Velvet-fronted Nuthatch	Sitta frontalis			✓			✓				
134	Purple-rumped Sunbird	Leptocoma zeylonica		✓		✓			✓	✓	✓	
135	Purple Sunbird	Cinnyris asiaticus					✓					
136	Long-billed Sunbird	Cinnyris lotenius		✓							✓	
137	White-throated Flowerpecker	Dicaeum vincens						✓	✓			
138	Pale-billed Flowerpecker	Dicaeum erythrorhynchos		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
139	Oriental White-Eye	Zosterops palpebrosus		✓			✓	✓	✓			
140	Ceylon White-Eye	Zosterops ceylonensis			✓			✓	н			
141	Black-hooded Oriole	Oriolus xanthornus				✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
142	Ceylon Crested-Drongo	Dicrurus lophorinus						✓				
143	White-bellied Drongo	Dicrurus caerulescens	~	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
144	Ashy Woodswallow	Artamus fuscus	✓							✓		
145	Ceylon Magpie	Urocissa ornata						✓	✓			
146	House Crow	Corvus splendens	✓			~	✓			~	✓	
147	Large-billed Crow	Corvus macrorhynchos	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
148	Southern Hill Myna	Gracula indica		✓								
149	Ceylon Myna	Gracula ptilogenys						✓	✓			
150	White-faced Starling	Sturnornis albofrontatus						✓				
151	Common Myna	Acridotheres tristis	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
152	House Sparrow	Passer domesticus	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓		
153	White-rumped Munia	Lonchura striata					✓	<ul> <li>✓</li> </ul>		✓		
154	Black-throated Munia	Lonchura kelaarti	_		✓					✓		
155	Nutmeg Mannikin	Lonchura punctulata			<u> </u>	<u> </u>	✓		✓			
156	Tricolored Munia	Lonchura malacca			✓		· ✓	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	-	

					A	ugus	st			
Common name	Scientific name	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

Mammals

		-									
1	Toque Macaque	Macaca sinica		✓			✓		✓	✓	
2	Grey Langur	Presbytis entellus				✓					
3	Purple-faced Leaf Monkey	Presbytis vetulus			✓			✓	✓	✓	
4	Indian Elephant	Elephas maximus				✓	✓				
5	Sambur	Cervus unicolor			✓						
6	Indian Palm Squirrel	Funambulus palmarum	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7	Grizzled Giant Squirrel	Ratufa macroura				✓		✓		✓	
8	Dusky Squirrel	Funambulus sublineatus			✓						
9	Indian Hare	Lepus nigricollis			✓						
10	Indian Flying Fox	Pteropus gigantea					✓				
11	Indian Brown Mongoose	Herpestes fuscus			✓						
12	Layard's Squirrel	Funambulus layardi						✓			

## Reptiles

1	Sri Lankan Keelback Water Snake	Xenochrophis asperrimus	<ul> <li>✓</li> </ul>					
2	Green Vine Snake	Ahaetulla nasuta				✓		
3	Green Forest Lizard	Calotes calote	<ul> <li>✓</li> </ul>		✓	✓		
4	Garden Lizard	Calotes versicolor		<ul> <li>✓</li> </ul>				
5	Sri Lankan Kangaroo Lizard	Otocryptis wiegmanni	<ul> <li>✓</li> </ul>		✓	✓		
6	Common Skink	Mabuya carinata			✓	✓		
7	Land Monitor	Varanus Bengalensis		✓		✓		
8	Water Monitor	Varanus salvator					✓	✓
9	Mugger Crocodile	Crocodylus paluster		✓				
10	Saltwater Crocodile	Crocodylus porosus		✓				

#### **Butterflies**

Blue Mormon
Psyche
Dark Evening Brown
Gladeye Bushbrown
Tailed Jay
Bluebottle
The Rustic
Ceylon Tree Brown

Clipper Grey Pansy Common Mormon Blue Glassy Tiger Tree Nymph Jezebel Common Sailor