Sri Lanka - Endemic Birds

Naturetrek Tour Report

2 - 10 November 2014



Serendib Scops Owl by Kevin Button



Chestnut-backed Owlet by Kevin Button



Sri Lanka Scaly Thrush by Christopher Glanfield



Rufous Woodpecker by Christopher Glanfield

Report compiled by Mukesh Hirdaramani



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Day 1

Sunday 2nd November

The group arrived at Colombo Airport at 12.45pm where we met our local guides before heading off. In a nearby field we spotted White-throated Kingfisher, Common Myna, Greater Coucal, Cattle Egret and Indian Pond Heron. After a further 3kms we stopped at another field and saw Whiskered Tern, Asian Openbill, Intermediate Egret, White-breasted Waterhen, Spotted Dove, and a Crested Serpent Eagle perched on an electric fence. A massive Water Monitor was also spotted in a nearby field with a couple of Red-wattled Lapwing in the background.

As we proceed to Kithulgala via Nittambuwa we spot our first endemic, a Crimson-fronted Barbet perched high on a branch next to two Red-vented Bulbuls. Also on a tree branch overhanging the road we saw two Purple Face Monkeys and further down a Torque Monkey along with Blue-tailed Bee-eater, Large-billed Crow, Barn Swallow, Ashy Wood Swallow, White-bellied Drongo, Yellow-billed Babbler, White-rumped Munia, Scaly-breasted Munia and Oriental Magpie Robin.

We reached Plantation Hotel in Kithulgala at 4.35pm and were greeted with a hot cup of tea. After settling in we started birding around the hotel where we saw Tickell's Blue Flycatcher. As we stepped out on to the road we saw Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill, Green Imperial Pigeon, Chestnut Headed Bee-eater, and the third endemic for the day Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot.

We returned to the hotel at 6.00pm and then met again at 7.00pm to do our checklists. Dinner was served at 7.45pm after which the group got to know each other before retiring ready for an early start the next day.

Number of birds seen today - 35

Day 2

Monday 3rd November

The group assembled at the lobby at 5.45am for a hot cup of tea then headed out at 6.00am. Nearby we encounter Orange-billed Babbler and Black-hooded Oriole, and further on we saw White-throated Kingfisher and Yellow-browed Bulbul together. Tapping on a coconut tree we saw Black-rumped Flameback and to our delight we heard the call of Chestnut-backed Owlet which we followed to a nearby hotel and found it perched on a branch. Overhead a restless Grizzled Giant Squirrel kept prancing around the branches. Moving on we

found Greenish Warbler, Brown-breasted Flycatcher, Orange-billed Babbler, Black Bulbul, Layard's Parakeet, Yellow-fronted Barbet, Purple-rumped Sunbird, Long-billed Sunbird, Brown-headed Barbet, Shikra and Spotwinged Thrush. We headed back to the hotel for breakfast and on our way saw a large Crimson Rose butterfly. Just as we arrive at the hotel it started to rain and happily it stopped as we finished breakfast in time for us to head out to the Kithulgala Makandawa forest to start the rest of the day's birding.

We encounter Legge's Flowerpecker and Pale-billed Flowerpecker, then when we reach the Kelani river which we were to cross in a dugout canoe, we saw a Crested Serpent Eagle hovering whilst a Little Cormorant dried its feathers on a nearby rock.

After entering Makandawa Forest Reserve we saw a couple of Sri Lanka Crested Drongos and we heard the distant call of a Sri Lankan Spurfowl. We headed to a nearby hut where we saw Black-capped Bulbul and we encounter a couple of Green Garden Lizards on a leafy patch. Whilst heading back to the entrance we saw a Millipede and a Kangaroo lizard. As we exit the forest we were lucky to spot six Dark-fronted Babblers just a few feet ahead of us. The rarest sighting for the day was a Rufous Woodpecker which was on a dead branch of a coconut tree.

We returned to our hotel for a late lunch after which we headed for a nearby rubber plantation. Here we saw a pair of Crimson-backed Woodpeckers which made a good photographic opportunity for the group. Moving along the mountain road near an open valley we saw a Sri Lanka Swallow circling above. In a nearby bush we also encountered a pair of Jungle Prinia which delighted us with their high pitched call. White-browed Fantail, Brown-capped Babbler, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch and Small Minivet were also seen before reaching the top of the mountain. We returned to our hotel and meet again at 7.00pm for checklists before dinner.

Number of birds seen today - 59

Day 3

Tuesday 4th November

We started our day at 5.45am with tea before setting off. We crossed over a suspension bridge to a nearby village where we enjoyed excellent views of the surrounding area and got some good photographs. We encountered Common Kingfisher and we managed to follow the call of a Sri Lanka Junglefowl to a tea bush. On our return journey we saw Brahminy Kite and Stork-billed Kingfisher at the suspended bridge before getting back to our hotel for breakfast.

We left for Nuwara Eliya at 9.45am and enroute stopped at a Tea Centre overlooking the Devon Waterfalls. Here we spotted Oriental White-eye, Great Tit and House Sparrow. As we wind up the mountain we spot another Brahminy Kite, Common Iora and Pied Bushchat.

We reached our second hotel at 1.30pm and headed straight for lunch. It starts raining half-way through lunch. Afterwards we leave for a nearby patch of forest and are lucky to spot Sri Lanka White-eye, Yellow-eared Bulbul and Dull-blue Flycatcher all on one tree. We also see Dusky Striped Squirrel and Black-lipped Lizard on our way back from the forest.

We arrived back at the hotel at 6.00pm and met up again at 7.00pm for our checklists before dinner.

Number of birds seen today - 50

Day 4

Wednesday 5th November

We had tea at 4.45am then left for Horton Plains at 5.00am. We used two different vehicles as the route was too narrow for our mini-coach. We reached the entrance to Horton Plains at 6.00am and proceeded to a small pond. The morning was very chilly and a lot of mist covered the area making the visibility low. We heard Whistling Thrush but were unable to spot it, however we were rewarded with Sri Lanka Bush Warbler as we started unwrapping our picnic breakfast.

We proceed in to Horton Plains National Park and on our way we got a better view of a couple of Junglefowl. After entering the national park we spotted Alpine Swift, Peregrine Falcon, Hill Swallow and Common Kestrel. We also saw Sambhar Deer as we left the park, and on our journey back to the hotel we saw Bear Monkey which is the hill-country race of the Purple Faced Leaf Monkey.

We returned to the hotel at 2.30pm and after lunch set out again. We went to Victoria Park, arriving at 3.30pm where we saw Kashmir Flycatcher, Forest Wagtail, and Indian Blackbird. We then headed to another location and as we arrived a Whistling Thrush took-off and we heard its calls until the last roosting call. We encountered Great Egret, Common Sandpiper, Zitting Cisticola, Large-billed Leaf Warbler, Sri Lanka Scimitar Babbler and Black-throated Munia. We got back to our hotel at 6.15pm and after checklists we had dinner and headed to bed.

Number of birds seen today - 40

Day 5

Thursday 6th November

Today we had planned to have tea and leave at 5.45am but since the sun started coming up quite early which is unusual in Nuwara Eliya we decided to skip tea and headed out at 5.30am. This was a good decision as we spotted a Whistling Thrush barely 3 feet away; excellent after trying hard for 2 days and only hearing it. We then encounter Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon and a rare sighting of Mountain Hawk Eagle carrying a small dog which it dropped into a nearby stream when it was scared by Toque Monkeys.

At 7.00am we had breakfast at the hotel then left for Embilipitiya. On our way we stopped at Surrey Estate and saw Brown Fish Owl, Indian Blue Robin, Oriental Honey-buzzard, and Indian Black Robin. We reached Ella at 12.30pm and had lunch at the Ella Motel which overlooks a valley and is a great place for bird watching. After lunch we drove through the mountainous city of Ella spotting many Grey Langurs.

Before reaching our next hotel we stopped at a tank where we encounter Black-headed Ibis, Malabar Pied Hornbill, Black-winged Kite, Indian Roller, Marsh Sandpiper, Coppersmith Barbet, Green Bee-eater, Thick-billed Flowerpecker, Black-headed Munia, Purple Swamphen, Pheasant-tailed Jacana, Purple Heron, Grey Heron, Black-winged Stilt, Rock Pigeon, Little Swift, Gull-billed Tern, Yellow Bittern, Indian Peafowl, Lesser Whistling Duck, Wooly-necked Stork, Little Egret, Indian Cormorant, White-bellied Fish Eagle, Rose-ringed Parakeet, Grey-breasted Prinia, Ashy Prinia, Purple Sunbird and Collared Scops Owl. We also spotted a couple of Soft-shelled Turtles in the tank.

We met at the restaurant at 7.00pm and after dinner retired to our rooms. Number of birds seen today - 90

Day 6

Friday 7th November

At 5.30am we left Centauria Hotel and headed to Udawalawa National Park. On our way we saw Spot-billed Pelican and Painted Stork. We arrive at the National Park entrance at 6.15am and we spotted Sirkeer Malkoha, Jerdon's Bushlark, Paddyfield Pipit, Crested Hawk Eagle, Yellow-eyed Babbler, Plum-headed Parakeet, Baya Weaver, Lesser Adjutant, Pied Cuckoo, Orange-Breasted Green Pigeon, Blyth's Pipit, Booted Eagle and a gathering of Spotted Deer.

We reached our breakfast destination at 9.15am and whilst eating we watched Blyth's Reed Warbler, Sri Lanka Wood Shrike, Golden Jackal, Water Buffalo, and Great Cormorant. After finishing our breakfast we headed towards a tank in the park and on our way saw Barred Buttonquail, Indian Darter, Asian Koel, Asian Paradise Flycatcher, Grey-headed Fish Eagle and Chestnut-winged Cuckoo. We came across many single male Elephants but the highlight was finding a herd of six Elephants, including two young ones, drinking and splashing themselves with water. A very rare sighting was of a Jungle Cat; this often eludes groups. The park staff were busy clearing an invasive plant species when we encounter a Rock Python which had cleverly camouflaged itself in a newly dug mound.

We had our lunch at a nearby restaurant and left for Singharaja at 2.45pm. At the edge of the reservoir we saw Eurasian Spoonbill, Black-crowned Night Heron, Black Eagle, Brown-backed Needletail, Plain Prinia, Tawnybellied Babbler and Sri Lanka Hill Myna. We reach Singharaja at 6.10pm.

Number of birds seen today - 97

Day 7

Saturday 8th November

After a 5.30am breakfast we left for the Singharaja Rainforest in two Jeeps. On our way we saw a Dollarbird and further on near a small forest area we stopped and stayed motionless as a high pitched call revealed a pair of Sri Lanka Spurfowl which crossed the path right in front of us. We get back into the jeeps and continued. Near the Singharaja Rainforest we took a 10 minute detour to a see a couple of Serendib Scops Owls at their roosting site. We then return to the park and made our way along a path to see Sri Lanka Frogmouth in their roosting site, Jerdon's Baza and Red-faced Malkoha. We reached the Singharaja Research Centre at 1.30pm and there we saw Sri Lanka Blue Magpie, and then proceed to a nearby stream where we saw Green-billed Coucal, Ashy-headed Laughing Thrush and Malabar Trogon. We then had our picnic lunch at the Research Centre and a break. After lunch we saw Besra, Sri Lanka Green Pigeon, White-browed Bulbul and Black-naped Monarch.

We return to our hotel at 6.00pm and met again at 7.00pm. After the checklist was completed, Chaminda revealed that we were short of two endemics which can be found at Singharaja so it was decided to change plans for the next day and stay at Singharaja till lunch before going to Colombo. We then had dinner and discussed the next day's plan before we went to bed. Number of birds seen today - 49

Day 8

Sunday 9th November

Today the group met for breakfast at 5.30am with a lot of anticipation to see the last two endemics that had eluded us the day before. We left the hotel at 6.00am and went to the Singharaja Training Center where we heard White-faced Starling calling and manage to spot two perched high in a tree. We then went in to the Singharaja Research Center and searched the area for more than two hours with no luck. Chaminda, Saman and the tracker went in three directions for one last try and fortunately the efforts of the guides worked out and we finally saw Sri Lankan Scaly Thrush. On our way back we saw a Rufous-bellied Eagle, Hump-nosed Lizard, Keelback Water Snake, Green Pit Viper, Green Vine Snake and Common Rat Snake.

Our decision to stay back in Singharaja rewarded us well as we had successfully spotted all 33 Endemics.

After lunch we headed to Colombo and reached the Gateway Hotel at 5.05pm. After checking-in the group went to the hotel garden and encountered two Brown Hawk Owls. We meet again at the lobby for the checklist and after some celebratory drinks had dinner.

Number of birds seen today - 47

Day 9

Monday 10th November

We met at 6.30am for pre-breakfast birding around the hotel garden where we encounter many of the common birds seen on the trip. We also saw a Crocodile in the nearby lagoon.

After breakfast the group checked out and headed to the Airport for departure at 12.30pm

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Tour Report Sri Lanka - Endemic Birds

Species List

Birds (Highlighted birds are endemic or near endemic)

	Common name	Scientific name
1	Barred Buttonquail	Turnix suscitator
2	Sri Lanka Spurfowl	Galloperdix bicalcarata
3	Sri Lanka Jungle fowl	Gallus lafayetii
4	Indian Peafowl	Pavo cristatus
5	Lesser Whistling-duck	Dendrocygna javanica
6	Painted Stork	Mycteria leucocephala
7	Asian Openbill	Anastomus oscitans
8	Woolly-necked Stork	Ciconia episcopus
9	Lesser Adjutant	Leptoptilos javanicus
10	Black -headed Ibis	Threskiornis melanocephalus
11	Eurasian Spoonbill	Platalea leucorodia
12	Yellow Bittern	Lxobry chussinensis
13	Black-crowned Night Heron	Nycticorax nycticorax
14	Indian Pond Heron	Ardea lagrayii
15	Grey Heron	Ardea cinerea
16	Purple Heron	Ardea purpurea
17	Cattle Egret	Bubulcus ibis
18	Great Egret	Ardea albus
19	Intermediate Egret	Mesophoyx intermedia
20	Little Egret	Egretta garzetta
21	Spot-billed Pelican	Pelecanus philippensis
22	Little Cormorant	Phalacrocorax niger
23	Indian Cormorant	Phalacrocorax fuscicollis
24	Great Cormorant	Phalacrocorax carbo
25	Darter	Anhinga melanogaster
26	Common Kestrel	Falco tinnunculus
27	Peregrine Falcon	Falco peregrines
28	Black-winged Kite	Elanus caeruleus
29	Brahminy Kite	Haliastur indus
30	White-bellied Sea Eagle (aka White-bellied Fish Eagle)	Haliaeetus leucogaster
31	Grey-headed Fish Eagle	Lethyophaga ichthyaetus
32	Jerdon's Baza	Aviceda jerdoni
33	Shikra	Accipiter badius
34	Besra	Accipiter virgatus
35	Oriental Honey-buzzard	Pernis ptilorhynchus
36	Crested Serpent Eagle	Spilornis cheela
37	Black Eagle	Letinaetus malayensis
38	Booted Eagle	Hieraaetus pennatus
39	Rufous-bellied Eagle	Lophotriorchis kienerii
40	Changeable Hawk Eagle	Spizaetus cirrhatus
41	Mountain Hawk Eagle	Spizaetus nipalensis
42	White-breasted Waterhen	Amaurornis phoenicurus
43	Purple Swamphen	Porphyrio porphyrio
44	Pheasant-tailed Jacana	Hydrophasianus chirurgus
45	Black-winged Stilt	Himantopus himantopus
46	Red-wattled lapwing	V anellus indicus
47	Marsh Sandpiper	Tringa stagnatilis
48	Common Sandpiper	Actitis hypoleucos

49	Gull-billed Tern	Gelochelidon nilotica
50 V	Whiskered Tern	Chlidonias hybrid
51]	Feral Pigeon/ Rock Pigeon	Columba livia
	Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon	Columba torringtoniae
	Spotted Dove	Stigmatopelia chinensis
	Emerald Dove	Chalcophaps indica
55 (Orange-breasted Green Pigeon	Treron bicinctus
	Sri Lanka Green Pigeon	Treron (Pompadora) pompadora
	Green Imperial Pigeon	Ducula aenea
	Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot	Loriculus beryllinus
	Alexandrine Parakeet	Psittacula eupatria
	Rose-ringed Parakeet	Psittacula krameri
	Plum-headed Parakeet	Psittacula cyanocephala
	Layard's Parakeet	Psittacula calthropae
	Jacobin Cuckoo (aka Pied Cuckoo)	Clamator jacobinus
	Chestnut-winged Cuckoo	Clamator coromandus
	Asian Koel	Endynamys scolopacerus
	Sirkeer Malkoha	Taccocua leschenaultii
	Red-fasedMalkoha	Phaenicophaeus pyrrhocephalus
	Greater Coucal	Centropus sinensis
_	Green-billed Coucal	Centropus chlororhynchos
	Sri Lanka Frogmouth	Batrachostomus moniliger
	Serendib Scops Owl	Otus thilohoffmanni
	Collared Scops Owl	Otus bakkamoena
	Chestnut backed Owlet	Glaucidiumcastanotum
	Brown Fish Owl	Ketupa zeylonensis
	Brown Hawk Owl	Ninox scutulata
	Indian Swiftlet	Collocalia unicolor
	Brown-backed Needletail	Hirunda pusgiganteus
	Asian Palm Swift	Cypsiurus balasiensis
	Alpine Swift	Tachymarptis melba
	House Swift (aka Little Swift)	Apus affinis
	Indian Roller	Coracias benghalensis
	Dollarbird	
	Green Bee-eater (aka Little Green Bee-eater)	Eurystomus orientalis
	,	Merops orientalis
	Blue-tailed Bee-eater	Merops philippinus
	Chestnut-headed Bee-eater	Merops leschenaulti
	Stork-billed Kingfisher	Pelargopsis capensis
	White-throated Kingfisher	Halcyon smyrnensis
	Common Kingfisher	Alcedo atthis
	Pied Kingfisher	Ceryle rudis
	Malabar Trogon	Harpactes fasciatus
	Brown-headed Barbet	Megalaima zeylanica
	Yellow-fronted Barbet	Megalaima flavifrons
	Crimson-fronted Barbet	Megalaima rubricapillus
	Coppersmith Barbet	Megalaima haemacephala
	Sri lanka Grey Hornbill	Ocyceros gingalensis
	Malabar Pied Hornbill	Anthracoceros coronatus
	Rufous Woodpecker	Micropternus brachyurus
	Lesser Yellownape	Picus chlorophus
	Lesser Goldenback (aka Black-rumped Flameback)	Dinopium benghalense
	Crimson-backed Goldenback (aka Crimson-back Woodpecker)	Chrysocolaptes(lucidus) strickland
101]	Indian Pitta	Pitta brachyuran

102	Sri Lanka Woodshrike	Tephrodornis (pondicerianus) affinis
103	Small Minivet	Pericrocotus cinnamomeus
104	Scarlet Minivet, FlameMinivet	Pericrocotus flammeus
105	Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike	Hemipus picatus
106	Brown Shrike	Lanius cristatus
107	Common Iora	Aegithina tiphia
108	Jerdon's Leafbird	Chloropsis jerdoni
109	Golden-fronted Leafbird	Chloropsis aurifrons
110	Black-hooded Oriole	Oriolus xanthornus
111	Sri Lanka Blue Magpie	Urocissa ornata
112	House Crow	Corvus splendens
113	Large-billed Crow	Corvus macrorhynchos
114	Barn Swallow	Hirundo rustica
115	Hill Swallow	Hirundo (tahitica) domicola
116	Sri Lanka Swallow	Cecropis (daurica) hyperythra
117	Ashy Woodswallow	
		Artamus fuscus Dicrurus caerulescens
118 119	White-bellied Drongo Sri Lanka Drongo (aka Sri Lanka Crested Drongo)	
	0 (Dicrurus (paradiseus) lophorhinus
120	Forest Wagtail	Dendronanthus indicus Motacilla cinerea
121	Grey Wagtail	
122	Paddyfield Pipit	Anthus rufulus
123	Blyth's Pipit	Anthus godlewskii
124	Jerdon's Bushlark	Mirafra affinis
125	Black-capped Bulbul (aka Black-headed Yellow Bulbul)	Pycnonotus melanicterus
126	Red-vented Bulbul	Pycnonotus cafer
127	Yellow-eared Bulbul	Pycnonotus penicillatus
128	White-browed Bulbul	Pycnonotus luteolus
129	Yellow-browed Bulbul	Acritillas indica
130	Black Bulbul	Hypsipetes leucocephalus
131	Grey-breasted Prinia	Prinia hodgsonii
132	Jungle Prinia	Prinia sylvatica
133	Ashy Prinia	Prinia socialis
134	Plain Prinia	Prinia inornoata
135	Common Tailorbird	Orthotomus sutorius
136	Zitting Cisticola	Cisticola juncidis
137	Sri Lanka Bush Warbler	Bradypterus palliseri
138	Blyth's Reed Warbler	Acrocephalus dumetorum
139	Greenish Warbler	Phylloscopus trochiloides
140	Large-billed Leaf Warbler	Phylloscopus magnirostris
141	White-browed Fantail	Rhipidura aureola
142	Black-naped Monarch	Hypothymis azurea
143	Asian Paradise-flycatcher	Terpsiphone paradisi
144	Brown-capped Babbler	Pellorneum fuscocapillus
145	Sri Lanka Scimitar Babbler	Pomatorhinus melanurus
146	Dark-fronted Babbler	Rhopocichla atriceps
147	Tawny-bellied Babbler	Dumetiahy perythra
148	Yellow-eyed Babbler	Chrysomma sinense
149	Orange-billed Babbler	Turdoides rufescens
150	Yellow-billed Babbler	Turdoides affinis
151	Ashy-headed Laughing-thrush	Garrulax cinereifrons
152	Sri Lanka Hill Myna (aka Sri Lanka Myna)	Gracula ptilogenys
153	Lesser Hill Myna	Gracula (religioosa) indica
154	Common Myna	Acridotheres tristis

155	White-faced Starling	Sturnornis albofrontatus
156	Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush	Myophonus blighi
157	Spot-winged Thrush	Zoothera spiloptera
158	Sri Lanka Thrush (aka Sri Lanka Scaly Thrush)	Zoothera imbricata
159	Indian Blackbird	Turdus (merula) simillimus
160	Indian Blue Robin	Luscinia brunnea
161	Oriental Magpie Robin	Copsychus saularis
162	Indian Robin (aka Black-backed Robin)	Saxicoloides fulicatus
163	Pied Bushchat	Saxicola caprata
164	Brown-breasted Flycatcher	Muscicapa muttui
165	Kashmir Flycatcher	Ficedula subrubra
166	Dull-blue Flycatcher	Eumyias sordidus
167	Tickell's Blue Flycatcher	Cyornistic kelliae
168	Gray-headed Canary Flycatcher	Culicicapacey lonensis
169	Thick-billed Flowerpecker	Dicaeum agile
170	Legge's Flowerpecker (aka White-throated Flowerpecker)	Dicaeum vincens
171	Pale-billed Flowerpecker	Dicaeum erythrorhynchos
172	Purple-rumped Sunbird	Nectarinia zeylonica
173	Purple Sunbird	Nectarinia asiatica
174	Loten's Sunbird (aka Long-billed Sunbird)	Nectarinia lotenia
175	Oriental White-eye	Zosterops palpebrosus
176	Sri Lanka White-eye	Zosterops ceylonensis
177	Velvet-fronted Nuthatch	Sitta frontalis
178	Great Tit	Parus major
179	Baya Weaver	Ploceus philippinus
180	House Sparrow	Passer domesticus
181	White-rumped Munia	Lonchura striata
182	Scaly-breasted Munia	Lonchura punctulata
183	Black-throated Munia	Lonchura kelaarti
184	Black-headed Munia	Lonchura malacca