Sri Lanka - Endemic Birds

Naturetrek Tour Report

7 - 16 November 2015





Sri Lanka Blue Magpie

Round-snout Pygmy Frog



Pygmy Lizard



Close encounter with an Asian Elephant during Udawalawe Safari

Report compiled by Chaminda Dilruk & Saman Kumara Images courtesy of Saman Kumara



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Tour Participants: Chaminda Dilruk & Saman Kumara (leaders) together with seven Naturetrek clients

Highlights

We suffered from heavy rain and gloomy conditions during the tour but this didn't stop a determined group from following their leaders and spotting the 33 endemic birds, along with a rare sighting of Citrine Wagtail, and the discovery of a new roosting site for Serendib Scops Owl. The elusive Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush was spotted twice, while Sri Lanka Myna came to greet us on our last day at Singharaja. A very rare sighting of a Pygmy Lizard and a Round-snout Pygmy Frog in Horton Plains was a bonus for this tour.

Day 1

Saturday 7th November

Group members started their Sri Lanka endemic birding tour with an overnight flight from the UK to Sri Lanka.

Day 2

Sunday 8th November

The group arrived at Colombo Airport at 12.40pm, and by 1.35pm we were on our way to Kithulgala. We stopped en route at a nearby field where we encountered lots of birds including Indian Pond Heron, Wood Sandpiper, Lesser Whistling-duck, Intermediate Egret, White-throated Kingfisher, Barn Swallow, Black-headed Ibis, Red-wattled Lapwing, Common Myna, White-bellied Drongo, Grey Hornbill, Sri Lanka Swallow, Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot, Legge's Flowerpecker, Pale-billed Flowerpecker, Asian Palm Swift, Indian Swiflet, Red-vented Bulbul, Jungle Crow and Asian Brown Flycatcher. We also encountered a Torque Macaque.

We reached Kithulgala at 4.40pm, and were greeted with a hot cup of tea. After tea we went in search of a Sri Lanka Frogmouth roosting site which Chaminda had found a few days ahead of the group's arrival. The bird was found and everybody had a good, clear sighting. During the rest of the evening we did more birding around the hotel premises where we found Crested Serpent Eagle, Tickell's Blue Flycatcher, Greenish Warbler and a Palm Squirrel. The distance call of the Brown Wood Owl was also heard as we returned to the hotel.

We arrived back at the hotel at 6.30pm and met for the checklist at 7pm. After a briefing about the next day we had dinner

Day 3

Monday 9th November

We started the day with tea at 5.15am, and set off at 5.30am for some pre-breakfast birding. After walking for about three kilometres we crossed a hanging bridge towards a small village. Sightings included Sri Lanka Junglefowl, Black-capped Bulbul, Yellow-fronted Barbet, Lesser Yellownape, Black-rumped Flameback, Oriental White-eye, Green Imperial Pigeon, Spot-winged Thrush, Oriental Magpie Robin and Orange-billed Babbler. We returned to the hotel at 8.30am for breakfast.

After breakfast the rain was getting pretty heavy, and later Saman led the group to Mahakandarawo Rainforest where we had to cross a swollen river in dug-out canoes to get to the entrance of the forest. We encountered Dark-fronted Babbler, Malabar Trogon, Black Eagle and Grey Wagtail amongst many other birds which we had seen the day before. We also saw a wide variety of butterflies including Grey Pansy, White Four-ring and Blue Oak Leaf. Kangaroo Lizard, Green Garden Lizard and Giant Millipede were also seen.

We returned to the hotel for lunch and a break. At 4.30pm the rain had eased a bit and we left for some birding in Kithulgala village. Chestnut-backed Owlet and Lesser Hill Myna were the new birds seen this evening.

We headed back to the hotel at 6pm and met up for the checklist at 7pm. After dinner, group members retired to their rooms to be ready for another early start the following day.

Day 4

Tuesday 10th November

We started our day at 5.15am with tea, and then headed out for another pre-breakfast birding session. Our target species was Green-billed Coucal which we managed to see, along with Asian Koel, Grey Hornbill and Black Bulbul. We returned to the hotel at 7.30am for breakfast. Chaminda had located the roosting site of Serendib Scops Owl so after breakfast Saman escorted the group into the forest. The site was rather difficult to access with the adverse weather affecting the forest, but everybody made it and had excellent views of this beautiful bird. We also saw White-bellied Sea Eagle, Oriental Honey-buzzard and Sri Lanka Crested Drongo.

We checked out of the hotel at 11am and left for Nuwara Eliya. After two days of heavy rain it was a welcoming sight to see the sun. En route we encountered Chestnut-headed Bee-eater and Flying Fox. The scenery changed as the winding roads took us to the next hotel perched up in the mountains. We had lunch at 1.30pm and relaxed until 3pm.

Our next birding session was at Bomuruella where we encountered Dull-blue Flycatcher, Sri Lanka White-eye, Yellow-eared Bulbul, Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher, Mountain Hawk Eagle, Great Tit and Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike. We also visited Seethaeliya before returning to the hotel at 6pm. We met for the checklist at 7pm and then, after dinner, we retired to our rooms as we would be leaving for Horton Plains at 5am.

Day 5

Wednesday 11th November

After tea at 4.15am, we left for Horton Plains. We had reached the entrance by 6am and proceeded to an area outside the National Park where one of the group spotted a Crimson-back Woodpecker. Inside the park we encountered Common Buzzard, Black-winged Kite, Pied Bushchat, Hill Swallow, Sri Lanka Bush Warbler, Scimitar Babbler, Zitting Cisticola, and Common Kestrel. We also saw the very rare Pygmy Lizard and Round-Snout Pygmy Frog, together with Black-lipped Lizard, several Samba Deer and Purple-faced Leaf Monkey.

We reached the hotel at 1.30pm for lunch. We set out again at 3pm to Victoria Park, where we encountered Indian Pitta, Forest Wagtail and Indian Blue Robin. We again visited Seethaeliya and this time we spotted Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush. We came back to the hotel at 5.45pm and, after the checklist, we had dinner and went to bed.

Day 6

Thursday 12th November

We had an early start with a pre-breakfast birding session to Seethaeliya, for another look at Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush, and after that went to the Bomuruella forest where we saw Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon.

After breakfast, we checked out of the hotel and proceeded to Embilipitiya. En route we stopped at the Surrey Estate for some birding and encountered a Brown Wood Owl with her chick. Our next stop was in Ella at

12.15pm for lunch and a little birding from the picturesque garden of the Ella Motel where we spotted Ashy Prinia. On our way to Embilipitiya we saw two Elephants walking through the forest patch (Elephant Corridor), almost camouflaged by the surrounding bushes. Indian Darter, Indian Peafowl, Painted Stork, Woolly-necked Stork and Purple Swamphen were also welcome sightings. At the hotel entrance we were greeted with the sighting of a Collared Scops Owl.

We did our checklist at 7pm, and then met at the restaurant at 7.30pm for dinner before retiring to our rooms.

Day 7

Friday 13th November

With a picnic breakfast, we left the Centauria Hotel and proceeded to Udawalawe National Park for a Jeep Safari. Sri Lanka Woodshrike, Brown Fish Owl, Jerdon's Bushlark, Paddyfield Pipit, Indian Roller and Yellow-eyed Babbler were some of the birds encountered during the safari. We also saw Water Buffalo, Torque Macaque, Grey Langur, Ruddy Mongoose, Spotted Deer, Soft Shelled and Hard Shelled Terrapins, Mugger Crocodile, Land Monitor, Common Rat Snake and Common Garden Lizard.

After lunch on our way to Singharaja we were very lucky to come across a rare migrant: Citrine Wagtail. We reached Singharaja at 6.15pm and were greeted with a hot cup of tea. It was raining heavily in the evening as we sat down to do the checklist, which was followed by dinner to conclude the day.

Day 8

Saturday 14th November

After breakfast at 5.30am, we left for the Singharaja Rainforest with a picnic lunch. On our way to the forest entrance we saw Crimson-fronted Barbet, and as we proceed further we encountered White-faced Starling, Sri Lanka Blue Magpie, Ashy-headed Laughingthrush, Red-faced Malkoha and the elusive Sri Lanka Scaly Thrush.

We returned to the hotel 5pm. Whilst doing the checklist we counted 31 endemic bird species already seen: just two more to go. We had dinner at 8pm.

Day 9

Sunday 15th November

After tea at 4.45am we headed to the Kethalapatha area amidst heavy rain, where we encountered Sri Lanka Spurfowl. During breakfast at the hotel Chaminda heard the call of Sri Lanka Myna and quickly gathered the group outside to see it perched on a branch in a nearby tree. We then birded around Singharaja village and spotted Rufous-bellied Eagle. We came back to the hotel for lunch, and then checked out at 1.30pm.

We reached our final hotel at 4.40pm and did a little birding in the hotel garden where we saw Black Bittern. Our final dinner was at 8pm and we celebrated having seen Sri Lanka's 33 endemic bird species.

Day 10

Monday 16th November

After breakfast, we headed to the airport for our return flight. Back in the UK, another Naturetrek adventure came to an end.

Species Lists

Birds (Bold text indicates an endemic or near endemic species)

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	Common name	Scientific name
1	Barred Buttonquail	Turnix suscitator
2	Sri Lanka Spurfowl	Galloperdix bicalcarata
3	Sri Lanka Junglefowl	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	Black Bittern	Dupetor flavicollis
13	Black-crowned Night Heron	Nycticorax nycticorax
14	Indian Pond Heron	Ardeola grayii
15	Grey Heron	Ardea cinerea
16	Purple Heron	Ardea purpurea
17	Cattle Egret	Bubulcus ibis
18	Great Egret	casmerodius albus
19	Intermediate Egret	Mesophoyx intermedia
20	Little Egret	Egretta garzetta
21	Spot-billed Pelican	Pelecanus philippensis
22	Little Grebe	Tachybaptus ruficollis
23	Little Cormorant	Phalacrocorax niger
24	Indian Cormorant	Phalacrocorax fuscicollis
25	Darter	Anhinga melanogaster
26	Common Kestrel	Falco tinnunculus
27	Black-winged Kite	Elanus caeruleus
28	Brahminy Kite	Haliastur indus
29	White-bellied Sea Eagle (White-bellied Fish Eagle)	Haliaeetus leucogaster
30	Gray-headed Fish Eagle	Lcthyophaga ichthyaetus
31	Shikra	Accipiter badius
32	Besra	Accipiter virgatus
33	Oriental Honey-buzzard	Pernis ptilorhynchus
34	Himalayan Buzzard (Common Buzzard)	Buteo (buteo) burmanicus
35	Crested Serpent Eagle	Spilornis cheela
36	Black Eagle	Lctinaetus malayensis
37	Rufous-bellied Eagle	Lophotriorchis kienerii
38	Changeable Hawk Eagle	Spizaetus cirrhatus
39	Mountain Hawk Eagle	Spizaetus nipalensis
40	White-breasted Waterhen	Amaurornis phoenicurus
41	Purple Swamphen	Porphyrio porphyrio
42	Pheasant-tailed Jacana	Hydrophasianus chirurgus
43	Indian Thick-knee (Eurasian Thick-knee)	Burhinus(oedicnemus) indicus
44	Great Thick-knee	Esacus recurvirostris
45	Yellow-wattled Lapwing	Vanellus malabaricus
46	Red-wattled Lapwing	Vanellus indicus
47	Green Sandpiper	Tringa ochropus
48	Wood Sandpiper	Tringa glareola
		ga g.a.cola

49 Common Sandpiper Actitis hypoleucos 50 Gull-billed Tern Gelochelidon nilotica 51 Common Pigeon (Rock Pigeon) Columba livia 52 Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon Columba torringtoniae 53 Spotted Dove Stigmatopelia chinensis 54 **Emerald Dove** Chalcophaps indica 55 Orange-breasted Green Pigeon Treron bicinctus 56 Sri Lanka Green Pigeon Treron (Pompadora) pompadora 57 Green Imperial Pigeon Ducula aenea Loriculus beryllinus 58 Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot 59 Alexandrine Parakeet Psittacula eupatria 60 Rose-ringed Parakeet Psittacula krameri 61 Plum-headed Parakeet Psittacula cyanocephala 62 Layard's Parakeet Psittacula calthropae 63 Jacobin Cuckoo (Pied Cuckoo) Clamator jacobinus 64 Banded Bay Cuckoo Cacomantis sonneratii Grey-bellied Cuckoo (Plaintive Cuckoo) 65 Cacomantis passerines 66 Asian Koel Endynamys scolopacerus 67 Blue-faced Malkoha Rhopodytes viridirostris 68 Sirkeer Malkoha Taccocua leschenaultia 69 Red-faced Malkoha Phaenicophaeus pyrrhocephalus 70 Greater Coucal Centropus sinensis 71 **Green-billed Coucal** Centropus chlororhynchos 72 Sri Lanka Frogmouth Batrachostomus moniliger 73 Serendib Scops Owl Otus thilohoffmanni 74 Collared Scops Owl Otus bakkamoena 75 Glaucidium castanotum **Chestnut-backed Owlet** 76 Brown Fish Owl Ketupa zeylonensis 77 Brown Wood Owl Strix leptogrammica 78 Indian Swiftlet Collocalia unicolor 79 Brown-backed Needletail Hirundapus giganteus 80 Asian Palm Swift Cypsiurus balasiensis 81 House Swift (Little Swift) Apus affinis Crested Treeswift (Gray-rumped Treeswift) 82 Hemiprocne coronate 83 Indian Roller Coracias benghalensis Green Bee-eater (Little Green Bee-eater) 84 Merops orientalis 85 Blue-tailed Bee-eater Merops philippinus 86 Chestnut-headed Bee-eater Merops leschenaultia 87 Stork-billed Kingfisher Pelargopsis capensis 88 White-throated Kingfisher Halcyon smyrnensis 89 Common Kingfisher Alcedo atthis 90 Pied Kingfisher Ceryle rudis 91 Malabar Trogon Harpactes fasciatus 92 Brown-headed Barbet Megalaima zeylanica 93 Yellow-fronted Barbet Megalaima flavifrons 94 **Crimson-fronted Barbet** Megalaima rubricapillus 95 Coppersmith Barbet Megalaima haemacephala 96 Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill Ocyceros gingalensis 97 Malabar Pied Hornbill Anthracoceros coronatus 98 Lesser Yellownape Picus chlorophus 99 Lesser Goldenback (Black-rumped Flameback) Dinopium benghalense Crimson-backed Goldenback (Crimson-back Woodpecker) Chrysocolaptes(lucidus) stricklandi

101	Indian Ditta	Ditta brachuuran
101 102	Indian Pitta Sri Lanka Woodshrike	Pitta brachyuran
_		Tephrodornis (pondicerianus) affinis
103	Black-headed Cuckooshrike	Coracina melanoptera
104	Small Minivet	Pericrocotus cinnamomeus
105	Scarlet Minivet (Flame Minivet)	Pericrocotus flammeus
106	Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike	Hemipus picatus
107	Brown Shrike	Lanius cristatus
108	Common Iora	Aegithina tiphia
109	Marshall's Iora	Aegithina nigrolutea
110	Jerdon's Leafbird	Chloropsis jerdoni
111	Golden-fronted Leafbird	Chloropsis aurifrons
112	Black-hooded Oriole	Oriolus xanthornus
113	Sri Lanka Blue Magpie	Urocissa ornate
114	House Crow	Corvus splendens
115	Large-billed Crow	Corvus macrorhynchos
116	Barn Swallow	Hirundo rustica
117	Hill Swallow	Hirundo(tahitica) domicola
118	Sri Lanka Swallow	Cecropis (daurica) hyperythra
119	White-bellied Drongo	Dicrurus caerulescens
120	Sri Lanka Drongo (Sri Lanka Crested Drongo)	Dicrurus (paradiseus) lophorhinus
121	Forest Wagtail	Dendronanthus indicus
122	Yellow Wagtail	Motacilla flava
123	Grey Wagtail	Motacilla cinerea
124	Citrine Wagtail	Motacilla citreola
125	Paddyfield Pipit	Anthus rufulus
126	Jerdon's Bushlark	Mirafra affinis
127	Oriental Skylark	Alauda gulgula
128	Black-capped Bulbul (Black-headed Yellow Bulbul)	Pycnonotus melanicterus
129	Red-vented Bulbul	Pycnonotus cafer
130	Yellow-eared Bulbul	Pycnonotus penicillatus
131	White-browed Bulbul	Pycnonotus luteolus
132	Yellow-browed Bulbul	Acritillas indica
133	Black Bulbul	Hypsipetes leucocephalus
134	Gray-breasted Prinia	Prinia hodgsonii
135	Jungle Prinia	Prinia sylvatica
136	Ashy Prinia	Prinia socialis
137	Plain Prinia	Prinia inornoata
138	Common Tailorbird	Orthotomus sutorius
139	Zitting Cisticola	Cisticola juncidis
140	Sri Lanka Bush Warbler	Bradypterus palliseri
141	Blyth's Reed Warbler	Acrocephalus dumetorum
142	Greenish Warbler	Phylloscopus trochiloides
143	Large-billed Leaf Warbler	Phylloscopus magnirostris
144	White-browed Fantail	Rhipidura aureola
145	Black-naped Monarch	Hypothymis azurea
146	Asian Paradise-flycatcher	Terpsiphone paradise
147	Brown-capped Babbler	Pellorneum fuscocapillus
148	Sri Lanka Scimitar Babbler	Pomatorhinus melanurus
149	Dark-fronted Babbler	Rhopocichla atriceps
150	Yellow-eyed Babbler	Chrysomma sinense
151	Orange-billed Babbler	Turdoides rufescens
152	Yellow-billed Babbler	Turdoides affinis

153	Ashy-headed Laughingthrush	Garrulax cinereifrons
154	Sri Lanka Hill Myna (Sri Lanka Myna)	Gracula ptilogenys
155	Lesser Hill Myna	Gracula (religioosa) indica
156	Common Myna	Acridotheres tristis
157	White-faced Starling	Sturnornis albofrontatus
158	Rosy Starling	Pastor roseus
159	Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush	Myophonus blighi
160	Spot-winged Thrush	Zoothera spiloptera
161	Sri Lanka Thrush (Sri Lanka Scaly Thrush)	Zoothera imbricate
162	Indian Blue Robin	Luscinia brunnea
163	Oriental Magpie Robin	Copsychus saularis
164	Indian Robin (Black-backed Robin)	Saxicoloides fulicatus
165	Pied Bushchat	Saxicola caprata
166	Asian Brown Flycatcher	Muscicapa dauurica
167	Brown-breasted Flycatcher	Muscicapa muttui
168	Kashmir Flycatcher	Ficedula subrubra
169	Dull-blue Flycatcher	Eumyias sordidus
170	Tickell's Blue Flycatcher	Cyornis tickelliae
171	Gray-headed Canary Flycatcher	Culicicapa ceylonensis
172	Thick-billed Flowerpecker	Dicaeum agile
173	Legge's Flowerpecker (White-throated Flowerpecker)	Dicaeum vincens
174	Pale-billed Flowerpecker	Dicaeum erythrorhynchos
175	Purple-rumped Sunbird	Nectarinia zeylonica
176	Purple Sunbird	Nectarinia asiatica
177	Loten's Sunbird (Long-billed Sunbird)	Nectarinia lotenia
178	Oriental White-eye	Zosterops palpebrosus
179	Sri Lanka White-eye	Zosterops ceylonensis
180	Velvet-fronted Nuthatch	Sitta frontalis
181	Great Tit	Parus major
182	Baya Weaver	Ploceus philippinus
183	House Sparrow	Passer domesticus
184	White-rumped Munia	Lonchura striata
185	Scaly-breasted Munia	Lonchura punctulata
186	Black-throated Munia	Lonchura kelaarti
187	Black-headed Munia	Lonchura Malacca

Mammal List

	Common name	Scientific name
1	Toque Macaque	Macaca sinica
2	Grey Langur	Presbytis entellus
3	Purple-faced Leaf Monkey	Presbytis vetulus
4	Ruddy Mongoose	Herpestes smithii
5	Brown Mongoose	Herpestes fuscus
6	Asian Elephant	Elephas maximus
7	Spotted Deer (Chital)	Cervus axis
8	Sambar	Cervus unicolor
9	Water Buffalo	Bubalus arnee
10	Indian Palm Squirrel	Funambulus palmarum
11	Grizzled Giant Squirrel	Ratufa macroura
12	Dusky Squirrel	Funambulus sublineatus
13	Indian Hare	Lepus nigricollis
14	Indian Flying Fox	Pteropus gigantea

Reptile & Others List

	Common name	Scientific name
1	Hump-nosed Viper	Hypnale hypnale
2	Common Rat Snake	Ptyas mucosus maximus
3	Land Monitor	Varanus bengalensis
4	Water Monitor	Varanus salvator
5	Pygmy Lizard	Cophotis ceylanica
6	Black-cheek Lizard	Calotes nigrilabris
7	Rhino-horn Lizard	Ceratophora stoddartii
8	Fan-throat Lizard	Sitana ponticeriana
9	Sri Lanka Kangaroo Lizard	Otocryptis wiegmanni
10	Common Garden Lizard	Calotes versicolor
11	Mugger Crocodile	Crocodylus palustris
12	Soft Shelled Terrapin	Lissemys punctata
13	Hard Shelled Terrapin	Melanochelys trijuga parkeri
14	Round-snout Pygmy Frog	Pseudophilautus femoralis

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