## Sri Lanka - Endemic Birds

# Including Blue Whales Extension Naturetrek Tour report

30 January - 11 February 2016



Sri Lanka White-Eye



Yellow-fronted Barbet



Black-capped Bulbul



Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon

Report compiled by Chaminda Dilruk and Thushara Seneviratne Images courtesy of Chaminda Dilruk



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Tour Participants: Chaminda Dilruk and Thushara Seneviratne together with 15 Naturetrek clients

#### **Highlights**

All 33 species of endemic birds were seen on the tour. We also had a new sighting for this tour in Udawalawe National Park; the locally very rare Eurasian Hobby. In the same area we had a rare mammal sighting when a Slender Loris was spotted. At Nuwara Eliya the group saw a Golden Jackal, which was unusual as it was not its normal habitat. Overall 208 species of birds, 21 species of mammals and 11 reptile species were seen.

#### Day 1

Saturday 3oth January

The tour started with an overnight flight from the UK to Sri Lanka.

#### Day 2

## **Sunday 31st January**

Our flight landed at Colombo Airport at 12.40pm, and by 1.30pm we had left the airport and were heading towards Kithulgala. En route we encountered Indian Pond Heron, Cattle, Intermediate and Great Egrets, Little Cormorant, Brahminy Kite, White-breasted Waterhen, Red-wattled Lapwing, Spotted Dove, Red-vented Bulbul and Asian Openbill.

When we arrived at Kithulgala we were greeted with a cup of tea, and after checking in we did a bit of birding around the hotel premises. Sightings included Sri Lanka Green Pigeon, Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot, Alexandrine Parakeet, Yellow-fronted and Crimson-fronted Barbets, Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill, Spot-winged Thrush, Indian Pitta, Sri Lanka Swallow, White-bellied Drongo, Black-capped and Black Bulbuls, Common Tailorbird, Yellow-billed Babbler, White-throated Kingfisher and Chestnut-headed Bee-eater. We had seen 49 bird species of which five were endemic! We also encountered Torque Macaque, Indian Grey Mongoose, Indian Palm Squirrel and Grizzled Giant Squirrel.

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

#### Day 3

## **Monday 1st February**

We started the day with tea at 5am and then headed out at 5.30am for some pre-breakfast birding. We walked towards Kithulgala village and crossed over a hanging bridge into the interior of the small village. During the walk we saw Sri Lanka Junglefowl, Shikra, Besra, Crested Serpent Eagle, Black Eagle, Rufous-bellied Hawk-Eagle, Rose-ringed Parakeet, Layard's Parakeet, Common Hawk-Cuckoo, Brown-capped Babbler and Chestnut-backed Owlet.

We returned to the hotel at 8.30am and sat down for breakfast. As there was good sunlight we quickly ate our breakfast and set off to the Mahakandarawo rainforest before it got too hot. Inside the rainforest we encountered the famous Serendib Scops Owl along with Legge's Flowerpecker, Oriental White-Eye, Greyheaded Canary-Flycatcher, Brown-breasted Flycatcher, Asian Brown Flycatcher, Southern (Lesser) Hill Myna, Dark-fronted Babbler, Black-naped Monarch, Greenish Warbler, Grey Wagtail, Golden-fronted Leafbird,

Malabar Trogon and Brown-backed Needletail. We also saw Purple-faced Leaf Monkey, Sri Lanka Kangaroo Lizard, Common Garden Lizard, Green Garden Lizard, Common Skink and a Keelback Water Snake.

We returned to the hotel for lunch and relaxed till late afternoon before heading out for another birding walk where we encountered many of the birds seen in the morning. Back at the hotel we met for the checklist at 7pm, and then after dinner we retired to our rooms to be ready for another early start the following day.

#### Day 4

#### **Tuesday 2nd February**

We started our day at 5.15am with tea and then headed out for another pre-breakfast birding session, encountering White-bellied Sea Eagle, Green-billed Coucal, Crimson-backed Flameback, Alpine Swift, Slatylegged Crake and Crested Treeswift.

We checked out of the hotel after breakfast and left for Nuwara Eliya. It was a rather hot morning as we drove to Nuwara Eliya but as we climbed higher into the mountains the weather changed from hot to cool. We reached our next hotel in time for lunch and then relaxed till 3pm before setting out again.

In the afternoon we visited Bomuruella where we encountered Dull Blue Flycatcher, Sri Lanka White-Eye, Pied Bushchat, Indian Robin, Brown Shrike, Small Minivet and Blue-tailed Bee-eater. Continuing on to Seethaeliya we spotted the elusive Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush.

We headed back to the hotel at 6pm and met to do the checklist at 7pm. After dinner we returned to our rooms as we would be leaving for Horton Plains at 5am.

#### Day 5

## Wednesday 3rd February

After tea at 4.15am we left for Horton Plains. En route to the park entrance we had a very rare sighting of a Golden Jackal on the road. This was one of the first sightings of the jackal outside its normal habitat. Inside the National Park we encountered Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon, Chestnut-winged Cuckoo, Hill Swallow, Richard's and Paddyfield Pipits, Blyth's Reed Warbler and Sri Lanka Scimitar Babbler. We also saw Sambar Deer, Muntjac and Dusky Squirrel.

We returned to the hotel for lunch and set out again at 3pm to Victoria Park where we encountered Forest Wagtail, Kashmir Flycatcher, Pied Thrush, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, Yellow-eared Bulbul, Sri Lanka Bush Warbler, and Indian Blue Robin.

We came back to the hotel at 5.45pm, and in the evening did our checklist and had dinner before bed.

#### Day 6

## Thursday 4th February

We started with a pre-breakfast birding session to Bomuruella where we saw many of the birds we had already encountered. We returned to the hotel by 7.30am for breakfast. Afterwards we checked out and headed to Embilipitiya. En route we visited the Surrey estate where we spotted Brown Wood Owl. At 12.30pm we stopped for lunch and did a little birding from the picturesque restaurant which overlooked the valley below.

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On our journey today we spotted Asian Elephant, Grey Langur, Spotted Deer, Indian Hare, Indian Flying Fox and a Land Monitor. Amongst the birds we encountered were Lesser Whistling Duck, Painted Stork, Eurasian Spoonbill, Purple Heron, Spot-billed Pelican, Indian Cormorant, Darter, Peregrine Falcon, Black-winged Kite, Gray-headed Fish Eagle, Booted Eagle, Grey-headed Swamphen, Pheasant-tailed Jacana, Black-winged Stilt, Yellow-wattled Lapwing, Pacific Golden Plover, Little Ringed Plover, Lesser Sand Plover, Marsh Sandpiper, Whiskered Tern, Indian Nightjar, Indian Roller, Pied Kingfisher, Coppersmith Barbet, Sri Lanka Woodshrike, Jungle Prinia, Purple Sunbird and Yellow-eyed Babbler. Before we reached our next hotel we were surprised with another rare sighting, this time of a Slender Loris just outside Udawalawe. This nocturnal mammal is usually very difficult to spot in this area but we were lucky to be there at the right time.

We reached the hotel by 7pm and the evening was spent doing the checklist and having dinner.

#### Day 7

#### Friday 5th February

We left the Centauria Hotel with a picnic breakfast and proceeded to Udawalawe National Park for a Jeep Safari. Inside the park, bird sightings included Barred Buttonquail, Woolly-necked Stork, Lesser Adjutant, Green Sandpiper, Gull-billed Tern, Plum-headed Parakeet, Jacobin Cuckoo, Collared Scops Owl, Sirkeer Malkoha, Ashy Drongo, Oriental Skylark, Gray-breasted Prinia, Zitting Cisticola, Baya Weaver, Black-headed Munia, Scaly-breasted Munia and Jerdon's Leafbird. We also saw a Mugger Crocodile and a Soft-shelled Terrapin in a water hole. In the afternoon, as we were heading towards the park exit, Chaminda spotted a very rare Eurasian Hobby which was the first record in this area. It was an exciting end to our park visit.

We reached Sinharaja by 5.30pm and were greeted with a welcome cup of tea. We did a little birding in the vicinity of the hotel and encountered Sri Lanka Blue Magpie. Later we did our checklist before dinner.

#### Day 8

## Saturday 6th February

After breakfast at 5.30am we left with a picnic lunch for the Singharaja Rainforesth. Inside the rainforest we encountered Ashy-headed Laughingthrush, Sri Lanka Hill Myna, White-faced Starling, Sri Lanka Scaly Thrush, Changeable Hawk-Eagle and Black-headed Cuckooshrike, along with many other birds seen on previous days. We also spotted Water Monitor and Bronzeback Tree Snake.

We returned to the hotel at 5.30pm and in the evening followed our usual routine of checklist, dinner and bed.

## Day 9

## **Sunday 7th February**

We started the day at 5am and, after a cup of tea, headed out to look for two more endemic birds which would complete the total of 33. Around 6am we visited a local house garden and waited patiently until we saw the shy and elusive Sri Lanka Spurfowl which showed itself from a thick bush. We also managed to see the last endemic, the Red-faced Malkoha, along with Sri Lanka Frogmouth and Black-throated Munia.

We came back to the hotel for lunch and then checked out at 1.30pm. The group now split as half of us were returning to the UK to finish the main tour, whilst the others were continuing on the Blue Whale tour extension.

The returning group went on to Colombo for their flight the next day, while the extension group proceeded to Mirissa, reaching the hotel at 5.30pm.

#### Day 10 (main tour) Day 1 (tour extension)

#### **Monday 8th February**

The 'main tour' group caught a flight from Colombo back to the UK where their tour ended. Those of us staying on left our hotel at 6.30am with a picnic breakfast and headed for the pier for our first day of whale watching. We set off and 18 nautical miles into the ocean we encountered a pod of over 100 Spinner Dolphins in a feeding frenzy. After spending some time watching them, we sailed southward and saw our first Blue Whale.

We returned to the hotel by noon for lunch and to relax. In the afternoon we visited the Galle Fort and walked inside the old city, enjoying its architecture and sights. In the evening we did our checklist and had dinner.

#### **Extension Day 2**

#### **Tuesday 9th February**

This morning we again left the pier at 7am and set out to sea for our second day of whale watching. The sea was rough yet we were able to see a pod of 50 Spinner Dolphins as we sailed south. A very active Blue Whale was spotted and we patiently followed it as it did many 'tail up' dives before completely vanishing into the depths of the ocean. On our return to the pier we spotted many terns.

At 3.30pm we visited the Kirala Kele area for birding and encountered many egrets, Brahminy Kite, Lesser Whistling Duck, Wood and Green Sandpipers, and a Shikra been chased by three White-bellied Drongos. We returned to the hotel at 6pm and later did our checklist followed by dinner.

#### **Extension Day 3**

## Wednesday 10th February

In the morning we birded around the hotel and came across Sri Lanka Swallow, Common Iora, Asian Koel and Black-hooded Oriole.

After lunch we proceeded to our hotel in Katunayake, arriving at 4.30pm. We walked in the hotel garden before going for dinner and finishing the day with the checklist.

## **Extension Day 4**

## **Thursday 11th February**

After breakfast we checked out and headed to the airport. We caught a flight back to the UK where another Naturetrek adventure came to an end.

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## **Species Lists**

Birds (Bold text is endemic or near endemic)

	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	Indian Pond Heron	Ardeola grayii
13	Grey Heron	Ardea cinerea
14	Purple Heron	Ardea purpurea
15	Eastern Cattle Egret	Bubulcus coromandus
16	Great Egret	casmerodius albus
17	Intermediate Egret	Mesophoyx intermedia
18	Little Egret	Egretta garzetta
19	Spot-billed Pelican	Pelecanus philippensis
20	Little Cormorant	Phalacrocorax niger
21	Indian Cormorant	Phalacrocorax fuscicollis
22	Great Cormorant	Phalacrocorax carbo
23	Darter	Anhinga melanogaster
24	Peregrine Falcon	Falco peregrinus
25	Black-winged Kite	Elanus caeruleus
26	Brahminy Kite	Haliastur indus
27	White-bellied Sea Eagle	Haliaeetus leucogaster
28	Gray-headed Fish Eagle	Lcthyophaga ichthyaetus
29	Shikra	Accipiter badius
30	Besra	Accipiter virgatus
31	Crested Honey Buzzard	Pernis ptilorhynchus
32	Common Buzzard	Buteo buteo
33	Crested Serpent Eagle	Spilornis cheela
34	Black Eagle	Lctinaetus malayensis
35	Booted Eagle	Hieraaetus pennatus
36	Rufous-bellied Hawk-Eagle	Lophotriorchis kienerii
37	Changeable Hawk-Eagle	Nisaetus cirrhatus
38	Legge's Hawk-Eagle	Nisaetus kelaarti
39	Slaty-legged Crake	Rallina eurizonoides
40	White-breasted Waterhen	Amaurornis phoenicurus
41	Grey-headed Swamphen	Porphyrio poliocephalus
42	Pheasant-tailed Jacana	Hydrophasianus chirurgus
43	Black-winged Stilt	Himantopus himantopus
44	Yellow-wattled Lapwing	Vanellus malabaricus
45	Red-wattled lapwing	Vanellus indicus
46	Pacific Golden Plover	Pluvialis fulva
47	Little Ringed Plover	Charadrius dubius
48	Lesser Sand Plover	Charadrius mongolus
49	Pin-tailed Snipe	Gallinago stenura

#### Common name Scientific name

	Common name	Scientific flame
50	Marsh Sandpiper	Tringa stagnatilis
51	Common Greenshank	Tringa nebularia
52	Green Sandpiper	Tringa ochropus
53	Wood Sandpiper	Tringa glareola
54	Common Sandpiper	Actitis hypoleucos
55	Little Stint	Calidris minuta
56	Gull-billed Tern	Gelochelidon nilotica
57	Whiskered Tern	Chlidonias hybrida
58	Rock Pigeon	Columba livia
59	Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon	Columba torringtoniae
60	Spotted Dove	Stigmatopelia chinensis
61	Emerald Dove	Chalcophaps indica
62	Orange-breasted Green Pigeon	Treron bicinctus
63	Sri Lanka Green Pigeon	Treron pompadora
64	Green Imperial Pigeon	Ducula aenea
65	Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot	Loriculus beryllinus
66	Crimson-fronted Barbet	Psittacula eupatria
67	Rose-ringed Parakeet	Psittacula krameri
68	Plum-headed Parakeet	Psittacula cyanocephala
69	Layard's Parakeet	Psittacula calthropae
70	Jacobin Cuckoo	Clamator jacobinus
70		Clamator coromandus
72	Chestnut-winged Cuckoo Common Hawk-Cuckoo	Hierococcyx varius
73		•
-	Grey-bellied Cuckoo Asian Koel	Cacomantis passerinus
74 75		Endynamys scolopacerus
75 76	Blue-faced Malkoha	Rhopodytes viridirostris Taccocua leschenaultii
76	Sirkeer Malkoha	
77 70	Red-faced Malkoha	Phaenicophaeus pyrrhocephalus
78	Greater Coucal	Centropus sinensis
79	Green-billed Coucal	Centropus chlororhynchos
80	Sri Lanka Frogmouth	Batrachostomus moniliger
81	Indian Nightjar	Caprimulugus asiaticus Otus thilohoffmanni
82	Serendib Scops Owl	
83	Collared Scops Owl  Chestnut backed Owlet	Otus bakkamoena
84		Glaucidium castanotum
85	Brown Fish Owl	Ketupa zeylonensis
86	Brown Wood Owl	Strix leptogrammica
87	Indian Swiftlet	Collocalia unicolor
88	Brown-backed Needletail	Hirundapus giganteus
89	Asian Palm Swift	Cypsiurus balasiensis
90	Alpine Swift	Tachymarptis melba
91	Little Swift	Apus affinis
92	Crested Treeswift	Hemiprocne coronata
93	Indian Roller	Coracias benghalensis
94	Green Bee-eater	Merops orientalis
95	Blue-tailed Bee-eater	Merops philippinus
96	Chestnut-headed Bee-eater	Merops leschenaulti
97	Stork-billed Kingfisher	Pelargopsis capensis
98	White-throated Kingfisher	Halcyon smyrnensis
99	Common Kingfisher	Alcedo atthis
100	Pied Kingfisher	Ceryle rudis
101	Malabar Trogon	Harpactes fasciatus
102	Brown-headed Barbet	Megalaima zeylanica

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#### Common name

154

155

Zitting Cisticola

Sri Lanka Bush Warbler

#### Scientific name 103 Yellow-fronted Barbet Megalaima flavifrons **Crimson-fronted Barbet** 104 Megalaima rubricapillus 105 Coppersmith Barbet Megalaima haemacephala 106 Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill Ocyceros gingalensis 107 Malabar Pied Hornbill Anthracoceros coronatus 108 Yellow-crowned Woodpecker Dendrocopos mahrattensis 109 Lesser Yellownape Picus chlorophus 110 Black-rumped Flameback Dinopium benghalense 111 Crimson-backed Flameback Chrysocolaptes stricklandi 112 Eurasian Hobby Falco subbuteo 113 Indian Pitta Pitta brachyuran 114 Sri Lanka Woodshrike Tephrodornis affinis 115 Large Cuckooshrike Coracina macei Black-headed Cuckooshrike Coracina melanoptera 116 117 **Small Minivet** Pericrocotus cinnamomeus 118 **Orange Minivet** Pericrocotus flammeus Hemipus picatus 119 Bar-winged Flycatcher-Shrike 120 Brown Shrike Lanius cristatus 121 Common Iora Aegithina tiphia 122 Marshall's Iora Aegithina nigrolutea 123 Chloropsis jerdoni Jerdon's Leafbird Chloropsis aurifrons 124 Golden-fronted Leafbird 125 Black-hooded Oriole Oriolus xanthornus 126 Sri Lanka Blue Magpie Urocissa ornata 127 House Crow Corvus splendens 128 Large-billed Crow Corvus macrorhynchos Hirundo rustica 129 Barn Swallow 130 Hill Swallow Hirundo domicola 131 Sri Lanka Swallow Cecropis hyperythra Dicrurus leucophaeus 132 Ashy Drongo 133 Dicrurus caerulescens White-bellied Drongo Dicrurus Iophorhinus 134 Sri Lanka Drongo Dendronanthus indicus 135 Forest Wagtail Motacilla flava 136 Yellow Wagtail 137 **Grey Wagtail** Motacilla cinerea Anthus richardi 138 Richard's Pipit 139 Paddyfield Pipit Anthus rufulus Mirafra affinis 140 Jerdon's Bushlark 141 Alauda gulgula Oriental Skylark 142 Ashy-crowned Sparrow-Lark Eremopterix griseus 143 Black-capped Bulbul Pycnonotus melanicterus 144 Red-vented Bulbul Pycnonotus cafer 145 Yellow-eared Bulbul Pycnonotus penicillatus White-browed Bulbul Pycnonotus luteolus 146 Yellow-browed Bulbul 147 Acritillas indica 148 Black Bulbul Hypsipetes leucocephalus 149 Gray-breasted Prinia Prinia hodgsonii 150 Jungle Prinia Prinia sylvatica 151 Ashy Prinia Prinia socialis 152 Plain Prinia Prinia inornoata 153 Common Tailorbird Orthotomus sutorius

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Cisticola juncidis

Bradypterus palliseri

#### Common name

208

Black-headed Munia

#### Scientific name 156 Blyth's Reed Warbler Acrocephalus dumetorum Greenish Warbler 157 Phylloscopus trochiloides 158 Green Warbler Phylloscopus nitidus 159 Large-billed Leaf Warbler Phylloscopus magnirostris 160 White-browed Fantail Rhipidura aureola 161 Black-naped Monarch Hypothymis azurea 162 Indian Paradise Flycatcher Terpsiphone paradisi 163 **Brown-capped Babbler** Pellorneum fuscocapillus 164 Sri Lanka Scimitar Babbler Pomatorhinus melanurus 165 Dark-fronted Babbler Rhopocichla atriceps 166 Tawny-bellied Babbler Dumetia hyperythra 167 Yellow-eyed Babbler Chrysomma sinense 168 **Orange-billed Babbler** Turdoides rufescens Turdoides affinis 169 Yellow-billed Babbler 170 Ashy-headed Laughingthrush Garrulax cinereifrons Sri Lanka Hill Myna 171 Gracula ptilogenys Gracula indica 172 Southern Hill Myna 173 Common Myna Acridotheres tristis 174 White-faced Starling Sturnornis albofrontatus 175 Rosy Starling Pastor roseus Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush 176 Myophonus blighi Zoothera wardii 177 Pied Thrush 178 **Spot-winged Thrush** Zoothera spiloptera Sri Lanka Thrush Zoothera imbricata 179 Turdus simillimus 180 Indian Blackbird 181 Indian Blue Robin Larvivora brunnea Copsychus saularis 182 Oriental Magpie Robin 183 White-rumped Shama Copsychus malabaricus 184 Indian Robin Copsychus fulicatus Saxicola caprata 185 Pied Bushchat 186 Asian Brown Flycatcher Muscicapa dauurica Muscicapa muttui 187 Brown-breasted Flycatcher Ficedula subrubra 188 Kashmir Flycatcher Eumyias sordidus 189 **Dull-blue Flycatcher** 190 Tickell's Blue Flycatcher Cyornis tickelliae Culicicapa ceylonensis 191 Gray-headed Canary-Flycatcher 192 Thick-billed Flowerpecker Dicaeum agile Dicaeum vincens 193 Legge's Flowerpecker Pale-billed Flowerpecker Dicaeum erythrorhynchos 194 195 Purple-rumped Sunbird Nectarinia zeylonica 196 Purple Sunbird Nectarinia asiatica 197 Loten's Sunbird Nectarinia lotenia 198 Oriental White-Eve Zosterops palpebrosus Sri Lanka White-Eye Zosterops ceylonensis 199 200 Velvet-fronted Nuthatch Sitta frontalis 201 **Great Tit** Parus major 202 Baya Weaver Ploceus philippinus 203 House Sparrow Passer domesticus Euodice malabarica 204 Indian Silverbill 205 White-rumped Munia Lonchura striata 206 Scaly-breasted Munia Lonchura punctulata 207 Black-throated Munia Lonchura kelaarti

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Lonchura malacca

#### Common name

#### Scientific name

#### Mammals

1 Slender Loris Loris tardigradus 2 Toque Macaque Macaca sinica 3 Grey Langur Presbytis entellus Presbytis vetulus 4 Purple-faced Leaf Monkey 5 Golden Jackal Canis aureus 6 Indian Grey Mongoose Herpestes edwardsii 7 Ruddy Mongoose Herpestes smithii 8 Felis chaus Jungle Cat 9 Indian Elephant Elephas maximus 10 Muntjac Muntiacus muntjac Spotted Deer (Chital) 11 Cervus axis 12 Sambar Cervus unicolor 13 Water Buffalo Bubalus arnee Indian Palm Squirrel 14 Funambulus palmarum 15 Grizzled Giant Squirrel Ratufa macroura 16 **Dusky Squirrel** Funambulus sublineatus 17 Indian Hare Lepus nigricollis Pteropus gigantea 18 Indian Flying Fox 19 Blue Whale Balaenoptera musculus 20 Spinner Dolphin Stenella longirostris 21 Lesser Short-nosed Fruit Bat Cynopterus brachyotis

#### Reptiles & Amphibians

Land Monitor 1 Varanus bengalensis 2 Water Monitor Varanus salvator 3 Black-cheeked Lizard Calotes nigrilabris 4 Sri Lanka Kangaroo Lizard Otocryptis wiegmanni 5 Common Garden Lizard Calotes versicolor 6 Mugger Crocodile Crocodylus palustris 7 Soft shelled Terrapin Lissemys punctata 8 Green Garden Lizard Calotes calotes 9 Common Skink Lankascincus fallax 10 Keelback Water Snake Xenochrophis asperrimus Common Bronzeback Tree Snake 11 Dendrelaphis tristis

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