

Sri Lanka - Elephants & Other Wildlife (including Yala extension)

Naturetrek Tour Report

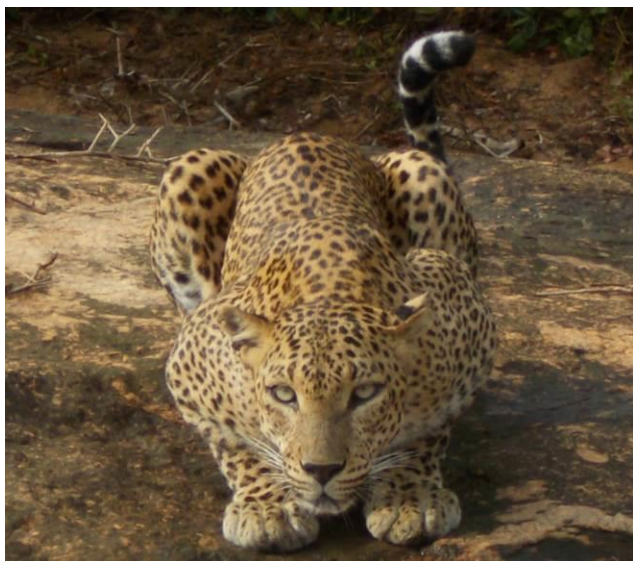
15 – 28 October 2016



Ruddy Mongoose



Asian Elephants



Leopard



Sri Lanka Junglefowl

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Tour participants: Saman Kumara Gamage (leader) with three Naturetrek clients

Highlights

The tour started with good sightings of Elephants in Kaudulla National Park, along with Toque Macaque, Grey Langur and Purple-faced Leaf Monkey. Kandy yielded a beautiful sighting of a pair of Giant Grey Flying Squirrels. Yala National Park was full of Leopards and we enjoyed a number of sightings; one being a sleeping male under a rock cavern. The Sloth Bear showed itself twice on our safaris, and birds and reptiles were also plentiful. This tour normally lasts for 11 days, however on this occasion it included a pre-arranged extension at Yala National Park.

Day 1

Saturday 15th October

The tour started with a direct flight from London Heathrow to Sri Lanka.

Day 2

Sunday 16th October

Sigiriya

The overnight flight landed at 12.15pm and we left the airport at 1pm on a gloomy day. On the way to our hotel we stopped at a restaurant for a snack. During the journey we saw many troops of Toque Macaques and Indian Flying Fox. We reached our hotel at 6pm and did our checklist at 7.30pm before having dinner at 8pm.

Day 3

Monday 17th October

Kaudulla National Park

We had an early start and left the hotel at 5.40am with packed breakfast and lunch for our first safari in Kaudulla National Park. En route to the park we encountered Grey Mongoose, Sri Lanka Junglefowl and Indian Peafowl.

During the morning session we encountered Purple-faced Leaf Monkey, Grey Langur, Toque Macaque, Giant Squirrel, Crested Serpent Eagle, Changeable Hawk-Eagle, Grey-headed Fish Eagle and White-bellied Sea Eagle, along with other birds. We had our packed lunch in the company of an Elephant and her young calf which came right up to our jeep.

During the afternoon session we encountered Golden Jackal, Spotted Deer and many herds of Elephants, with two tuskers. Lesser Adjutant, Barred Buttonquail, Indian Stone-curlew, Great Stone-curlew, Blue-faced Malkoha, Small Minivet, Oriental Skylark and many other birds also graced our presence during the safari.

We returned to the hotel at 6.15pm and did our checklist followed by dinner.

Day 4

Tuesday 18th October

Lions Rock

Today we had breakfast at 6.30am and then visited the Sigiriya Lions Rock at 7.30am. We encountered many monkeys along with Indian Palm Squirrel, Land Monitor, Common Bronzeback Tree Snake, Common Skink, Common Garden Lizard, Green Vine Snake, Black-headed Oriole, Crimson-backed Flameback, Woolly-necked Stork, Brahminy Kite and Little Swift during our time at the Sigiriya fortress area.

We returned to the hotel at 11am and enjoyed the hotel facilities before having lunch at 1.30pm. After relaxing in the hotel till 5pm, we did some birding around the Sigiriya sanctuary, encountering Brown Shrike, Asian Brown Flycatcher, Purple-rumped Sunbird, White-throated Kingfisher, Common Kingfisher, Rose-ringed Parakeet, Black-headed Oriole, Oriental White-Eye and Common Myna.

We returned to the hotel at 6pm and did our checklist followed by dinner at 8pm.

Day 5

Wednesday 19th October

Kandy

We had breakfast at 7am and checked out of the hotel at 8am. It was a nice sunny day. A Trinket Snake crossed our path during our drive and we quickly got out to get a closer look. En route to Kandy we visited a Spice Garden and had a guided tour inside the garden.

By 11am we were in Peradeniya Rest House where we enjoyed a nice Sri Lankan meal while witnessing a traditional Kandian-style wedding. At 2pm we visited Peradeniya Botanical Gardens and encountered large colonies of Indian Flying Foxes, along with Brown-headed Barbet, Alexandrine Parakeet, White-browed Fantail, Indian Jungle Crow and Common Tailorbird.

We reached the Tree of Life Hotel in Kandy at 5pm and did some birding around the hotel garden. We encountered Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill, Yellow-browed Bulbul, Tickell's Blue Flycatcher, Sri Lanka Scimitar Babbler and Bar-winged Flycatcher-Shrike. After checking into our rooms, we returned to the garden at 6.45pm to search for the Giant Grey Flying Squirrel. We found two after following their trail to a fruit tree where they stayed for around 30 minutes. We returned to the hotel and did the checklist followed by a late dinner.

Day 6

Thursday 20th October

Nuwara Eliya

Today we had breakfast at 7am and checked out of the hotel at 8am on another bright and sunny morning.

En route to Nuwara Eliya we stopped at a working tea factory and enjoyed some fresh Ceylon Tea. We also saw many waterfalls and tasted some local fruits during our drive to the picturesque mountain city.

We reached our hotel, Heaven Seven, at 1pm and enjoyed a hot meal. The weather had changed from sunny to gloomy, and during a visit to Victoria Park it started to rain. In the park we encountered Indian Pitta, Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher, Forest Wagtail, Grey Wagtail and Common Sandpiper. After returning to the hotel, we did the checklist and then had dinner at 8pm.

Day 7

Friday 21st October

Yala

We had our breakfast at 7.15am and then checked out of the hotel at 8am. En route to Yala we visited the Surrey Estate sanctuary and encountered Brown Wood Owl and Brown-capped Babbler. We reached Ella at 11.50am

and had lunch at the picturesque Ella Rest House restaurant. Here we encountered Stripe-necked Mongoose, Brown Mongoose and Rufous-bellied Hawk-Eagle.

Next we stopped at the Debara wewa tank to do some birding, spotting Grey-headed Swamphen, Grey Heron, Purple Heron, White-breasted Waterhen, Red-wattled Lapwing, Pheasant-tailed Jacana, Jacobin Cuckoo, Grey-bellied Cuckoo and Indian Roller.

We reached the Cinnamon Wild Hotel at 6.15pm and did the checklist at 7.30pm followed by dinner.

Day 8

Saturday 22nd October

Yala National Park

We had tea/coffee at 5.15am and left the hotel with picnic breakfast and lunch for our jeep safari. Our first encounter for the day was a Sloth Bear, followed by a Leopard crossing the road ahead of us. Another Leopard sleeping inside cave was an exciting sight. We stopped for breakfast at 8.30am and were soon disturbed by the disgruntled calls of monkeys, and an exploration brought us face to face with a very big Leopard!

In the afternoon we encountered a large herd of Elephants along with Spotted Deer, Wild Boar, Water Buffalo, Golden Jackal, Ruddy Mongoose, Mugger Crocodile and another Leopard. Birds included Eurasian Spoonbill, Black-headed Ibis, Black-necked Stork, Crested Honey Buzzard, Pacific Golden Plover, Common Redshank and many more.

We returned to the hotel at 6.10pm and did our checklist followed by dinner.

Day 9

Sunday 23rd October

Yala National Park

Once again, we left the hotel early with our packed meals and encountered many of the species seen before including four Leopard sightings, two Sloth Bear sightings, and two Elephants.

We returned to the hotel at 6pm and once again followed our usual evening routine of checklists and dinner.

Day 10

Monday 24th October

Yala National Park

During our early morning tea in the hotel lobby, a Common Palm Civet was spotted climbing onto the hotel roof.

Today we left with a packed breakfast for a half day safari. Although we didn't see Leopard this morning, we did encounter many of the usual mammals. Bird sightings included Brahminy Starling, Intermediate Egret, Black-winged Stilt, Lesser Sand Plover, Common Redshank, Gull-billed Tern, Greater Crested Tern, Orange-breasted Green Pigeon, Greater Coucal and Sirkeer Malkoha.

We returned to the hotel at 11.45am for lunch, afterwards relaxing and enjoying the hotel facilities. In the evening we had a stroll along Yala beach and enjoyed the surrounding views. We did the checklist at 7pm followed by dinner at 8pm.

Day 11

Tuesday 25th October

Udawalawe National Park

We had breakfast at 7am and checked out of the hotel at 8am. En route to Embilipitiya we visited the Elephant transit home, which is an Elephant orphanage and veterinary care centre for displaced and injured Elephants. Here we also encountered a pair of Indian Scops Owl.

After lunch we went on a jeep safari to the Udawalawe National park and encountered Malabar Pied Hornbill, Little Ringed Plover, Jerdon's Bushlark, Marsh Sandpiper, Pied Kingfisher, Barn Swallow, Indian Robin and Paddyfield Pipit, along with Elephants, Grey Mongoose, Spotted Deer, Wild Boar, Water Buffalo and Mugger Crocodiles.

We checked in at Hotel Centauria at 6.40pm, and later did our briefing and checklist, followed by dinner.

Day 12

Wednesday 26th October

We had breakfast at 7am and left the hotel with a packed lunch to visit the Turtle hatchery in Koggala, where we encountered Green, Loggerhead, Hawksbill and Olive Ridley Turtles.

We returned to the hotel at 4pm and relaxed till 7pm, when we did our checklist before dinner at 8pm.

Day 13

Thursday 27th October

Today we had breakfast at 7am and then did some birding around the hotel before checking out at 11am. En route to Katunayake, we stopped at Ratnapura for lunch.

At 5.30pm we reached the Airport Garden Hotel. We did the checklist at 7pm followed by dinner at 8pm.

Day 14

Friday 28th October

We had a pre-breakfast birding session in the hotel grounds before breakfast at 8.30am. Then we checked out of the hotel and proceeded to the airport in time to catch our flight to London. We landed back at Heathrow airport where another Naturetrek adventure came to an end.

Species Lists: Previous/alternative names in brackets; Endemics in bold

Mammals (21 species)

Toque Macaque, *Macaca sinica*
 Purple-faced Leaf Monkey, *Trachypithecus (Presbytis) vetulus*
 Sloth Bear, *Melursus ursinus*
 Grey Mongoose, *Herpestes edwardsii*
 Stripe-necked Mongoose, *Herpestes vitticollis*
 Leopard, *Panthera pardus kotiya*
 Wild Boar, *Sus scrofa*
 Water Buffalo, *Bubalus Bubalis*
 Grizzled Giant Squirrel, *Ratufa macroura*
 Indian Flying Fox, *Pteropus gigantean*
 Giant Grey Flying Squirrel, *Petaurista petaurista*

Grey Langur, *Semnopithecus (Presbytis) entellus*
 Golden Jackal, *Canis aureus*
 Common Palm Civet, *Paradoxurus hermaphroditus*
 Ruddy Mongoose, *Herpestes smithii*
 Brown Mongoose, *Herpestes fuscus*
 Asian Elephant, *Elephas maximus*
 Spotted Deer, *Cervus axis*
 Indian Palm Squirrel, *Funambulus palmarum*
 Indian Hare (Black-naped Hare), *Lepus nigricollis*
 Greater False Vampire Bat, *Megaderma hyra*

Reptiles & Amphibians (20 species)

Green Vine Snake, *Ahaetulla nasuta*
 Common Bronzeback Tree Snake, *Dendrelaphis tristis*
 Indian Cobra, *Naja naja*
 Asian Water Monitor, *Varanus salvator*
 Green Garden Lizard, *Calotes calotes*
 Mugger Crocodile, *Crocodylus palustris*
 Hard shelled Terrapin, *Melanochelys trijuga parkeri*
 Loggerhead Turtle, *Caretta caretta*
 Olive Ridley Sea Turtle, *Lepidochelys olivacea*
 Common House Gecko, *Hemidactylus frenatus*

Common Rat Snake, *Ptyas mucosus maximus*
 Trinket Snake, *Coelognathus helena*
 Bengal (Land) Monitor, *Varanus bengalensis*
 Oriental (Common) Garden Lizard, *Calotes versicolor*
 Sri Lanka Kangaroo Lizard, *Otocyrtis wiegmanni*
 Soft shelled Terrapin, *Lissemys punctata*
 Green Turtle, *Chelonia mydas*
 Hawksbill Sea Turtle, *Eremochelys imbricata*
 Indian Star Tortoise, *Geochelone elegans*
 Common Skink, *Eutropis carinata*

Birds (123 species – bold = endemic or near endemic)

Sri Lanka Junglefowl, *Gallus lafayetii*
 Little Grebe, *Tachybaptus ruficollis*
 Asian Openbill, *Anastomus oscitans*
 Black-necked Stork, *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*
 Black-headed Ibis, *Threskiornis melanocephalus*
 Indian Pond Heron, *Ardeola grayii*
 Grey Heron, *Ardea cinerea*
 Great Egret, *Ardea alba*
 Little Egret, *Egretta garzetta*
 Little Cormorant, *Microcarbo niger*
 Great Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax carbo*
 Crested Honey Buzzard, *Pernis ptilorhynchus*
 Changeable Hawk-Eagle, *Nisaetus cirrhatu*
 Shikra, *Accipiter badius*
 White-bellied Sea Eagle, *Haliaeetus leucogaster*
 White-breasted Waterhen, *Amaurornis phoenicurus*
 Indian Stone-curlew (Indian Thick Knee), *Burbinus indicus*
 Black-winged Stilt, *Himantopus himantopus*
 Red-wattled Lapwing, *Vanellus indicus*
 Little Ringed Plover, *Charadrius dubius*

Indian Peafowl, *Pavo cristatus*
 Painted Stork, *Mycteria leucocephala*
 Woolly-necked Stork, *Ciconia episcopus*
 Lesser Adjutant, *Leptoptilos javanicus*
 Eurasian Spoonbill, *Platalea leucorodia*
 Eastern Cattle Egret, *Bubulcus coromandus*
 Purple Heron, *Ardea purpurea*
 Intermediate Egret, *Egretta intermedia*
 Spot-billed Pelican, *Pelecanus philippensis*
 Indian Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax fuscicollis*
 Oriental Darter, *Anhinga melanogaster*
 Crested Serpent Eagle, *Spilornis cheela*
 Rufous-bellied Hawk-Eagle, *Lophotriorchis kienerii*
 Brahminy Kite, *Haliastur indus*
 Grey-headed Fish Eagle, *Haliaeetus ichthyaeus*
 Barred Buttonquail, *Turnix suscitator*
 Great Stone-Curlew (Great Thick Knee), *Esacus recurvirostris*
 Yellow-wattled Lapwing, *Vanellus malabaricus*
 Pacific Golden Plover, *Pluvialis fulva*
 Kentish Plover, *Charadrius alexandrinus*

Lesser sand Plover (Mongolian Plover), *Charadrius mongolus*
 Common Redshank , *Tringa tetanus*
 Common Greenshank , *Tringa nebularia*
 Common Sandpiper , *Actitis hypoleucos*
 Gull-billed Tern , *Gelochelidon nilotica*
 Whiskered Tern , *Chlidonias hybrid*
 Spotted Dove , *Spilopelia chinensis*
 Green Imperial Pigeon , *Ducula aenea*
 Sirkeer Malkoha , *Taccocua leschenaultia*
 Jacobin Cuckoo (Pied Cuckoo), *Clamator jacobinus*
 Grey-bellied Cuckoo (Plaintive Cuckoo) , *Cacomantis passerines*
 Brown Wood Owl , *Strix leptogrammica*
 Little Swift (House Swift), *Apus affinis*
 White-throated Kingfisher , *Halcyon smyrnensis*
 Pied Kingfisher , *Ceryle rudis*
 Blue-tailed Bee-eater , *Merops philippinus*
 Malabar Pied Hornbill , *Anthraccoceros coronatus*
 Brown-headed Barbet , *Psilopogon zeylanicus*
Crimson-backed Flameback (Crimson-backed Goldenback), *Chrysocolaptes stricklandi*
 Yellow-crowned Woodpecker , *Dendrocopos mabrattensis*
 Rose-ringed Parakeet , *Psittacula krameri*
 Bar-winged Flycatcher-Shrike , *Hemipus picatus*
 Orange Minivet (Scarlet Minivet)(Flame Minivet), *Pericrocotus flammeus*
 Black-hooded Oriole , *Oriolus xanthornus*
 White-browed Fantail , *Rhipidura aureola*

 House Crow , *Corvus splendens*
 Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher , *Culicicapa ceylonensis*
 Oriental Skylark , *Alauda gulgula*
 White-browed Bulbul , *Pycnonotus luteolus*
 Barn Swallow , *Hirundo rustica*
 Common Tailorbird , *Orthotomus sutorius*
 Grey-headed Swampen (Purple Swampen), *Porphyrio poliocephalus*
 Yellow-billed Babbler , *Turdoides affinis*
 Common Myna , *Acridotheres tristis*
 Indian Robin , *Copsychus fulicatus*
 Asian Brown Flycatcher , *Muscicapa dauurica*
Dull-blue Flycatcher, *Eumyias sordidus*
 Purple Sunbird , *Cinnyris asiaticus*
 House Sparrow , *Passer domesticus*
 Scaly-breasted Munia , *Lonchura punctulata*
 Forest Wagtail , *Dendronanthus indicus*
 Paddyfield Pipit , *Anthus rufulus*

Pheasant-tailed Jacana , *Hydrophasianus chirurgus*
 Marsh Sandpiper , *Tringa stagnatilis*
 Wood Sandpiper , *Tringa glareola*
 Little Stint , *Calidris minuta*
 Greater Crested Tern , *Thalasseus bergii*
 Rock Dove (Common Pigeon), *Columba livia*
 Orange-breasted Green Pigeon , *Treron bicinctus*
 Greater Coucal , *Centropus sinensis*
 Blue-faced Malkoha , *Phaenicophaeus viridirostris*
 Asian Koel , *Eudynamis scolopaceus*
 Indian Scops Owl (Collared Scops Owl), *Otus bakamoena*
 Crested Treeswift (Gray-rumped Treeswift) , *Hemiprocne coronate*
 Indian Roller , *Coracias benghalensis*
 Common Kingfisher , *Alcedo atthis*
 Green Bee-eater (Little Green Bee-eater), *Merops orientalis*
 Eurasian Hoopoe (Common Hoopoe), *Upupa epops*
Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill, *Ocyrocus gingalensis*
 Coppersmith Barbet , *Psilopogon haemacephalus*
 Black-rumped Flameback (Lesser Goldenback), *Dinopium benghalense*
 Alexandrine Parakeet , *Psittacula eupatria*
 Indian Pitta , *Pitta brachyura*
 Small Minivet , *Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*
 Brown Shrike , *Lanius cristatus*

 White-bellied Drongo , *Dicrurus caerulescens*
 Indian Paradise Flycatcher (Asian Paradise Flycatcher), *Terpsiphone paradisi*
 Indian Jungle Crow (Large-billed Crow), *Corvus culminatus*
 Jerdon's Bush Lark , *Mirafra affinis*
 Red-vented Bulbul , *Pycnonotus cafer*
 Yellow-browed Bulbul , *Acritillas indica*
 Plain Prinia , *Prinia inornata*
Sri Lanka Scimitar Babbler, *Pomatorhinus melanurus*
Brown-capped Babbler, *Pellorneum fuscicapillus*
 Oriental White-Eye , *Zosterops palpebrosus*
 Brahminy Starling , *Sturnia pagodarum*
 Oriental Magpie-Robin , *Copsychus saularis*
 Tickell's Blue Flycatcher , *Cyornis tickelliae*
 Purple-rumped Sunbird , *Leptocoma zeylonica*
 Loten's Sunbird , *Cinnyris lotenius*
 Streaked Weaver , *Ploceus manyar*
 Tricolored Munia (Black-headed Munia), *Lonchura malacca*
 Grey Wagtail , *Motacilla cinerea*