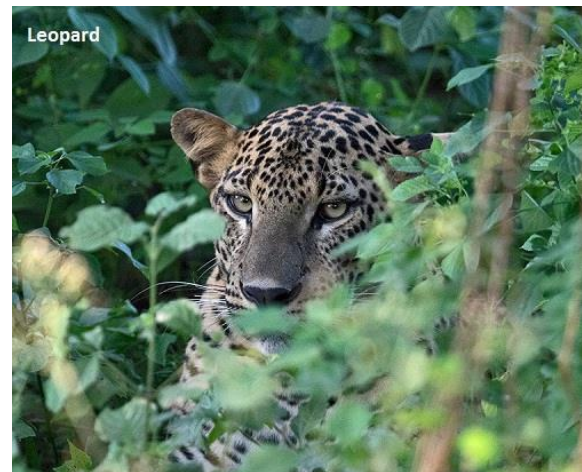


Sri Lanka - Blue Whales & Leopards

Naturetrek Tour Report

7 -16 March 2015



Report compiled by Upul Wickremasinghe & Saman Kumara Gamage
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Day 1

Saturday 7th March

The group met at the airport and boarded a flight to Sri Lanka for their 10-day Blue Whale & Leopard watching tour.

Day 2

Sunday 8th March

The flight arrived at Colombo airport at 12.50pm on a hot and humid day. We left the airport at 2pm and went to Talangama tank via the Katunayakae expressway. At the tank we saw Painted Stork, Black-headed Ibis, Indian Pond Heron, Grey Heron, Purple Heron, Cattle Egret, Intermediate Egret, Little Egret, Spot-billed Pelican, Little Cormorant, Brahminy Kite, Shikra, Whiskered Tern, Rock Pigeon, Spotted Dove, Rose-ringed Parakeet, Asian Palm Swift, Blue-tailed Bee-eater, White-throated Kingfisher, House Crow, Barn Swallow, Sri Lanka Swallow, White-bellied Drongo, Yellow-billed Babbler and Common Myna.

We reached our hotel at 5pm and after checking-in, met again in the restaurant at 8pm for dinner.

Day 3

Monday 9th March

We started the day at 6am with tea/coffee and then went to Mirissa pier for a whale watching tour, taking our picnic breakfast with us. It was a bright and clear morning as we set out to sea. We eventually spotted a pod of 20 Spinner Dolphins and a few Flying Fish. Although the captain and crew searched the entire horizon there was no sign of any whales and we returned to the pier at 1pm.

We returned to our hotel for lunch, and then at 3.30pm we left to go to Kamburugamuwa tank for some birding. Here we encounter Lesser Whistling Duck, Cotton Pygmy-goose, Little Grebe, Indian Cormorant, White-

breasted Waterhen, Purple Swamphen, Pheasant-tailed Jacana, Little Tern, Large-billed Crow, Red-vented Bulbul, Purple-rumped Sunbird and Loten's Sunbird.

We headed back to the hotel at 6pm and met for the checklist at 7.30pm. We had our dinner at 8.00pm after the next day's briefing.

Day 4

Tuesday 10th March

Once again we had tea/coffee at 6am before going to the pier for our second day of whale watching. We were again greeted by a pod of Spinner Dolphins, and enjoyed an exciting sighting of a Whale Shark which was quite close to the boat. After a few more hours at sea we returned to the pier. Again there were no sightings of the Blue Whales. It was believed we were unlucky because a cyclone which was occurring near New Zealand appeared to have affected the whales feeding habit. Local fishermen were also keeping away from the seas as the water had turned murky and fish were scarce. We reach the pier at 1.30pm and again returned to our hotel for lunch.

At 3.30pm we visited the Galle Fort. En route we stopped to watch the Stilt Fisherman who continue their age-old traditional fishing style perched on a stilt. We encountered Striated Heron, Asian Koel, Common Tailorbird, Oriental Magpie Robin and House Sparrow at the Galle ramparts.

We headed back to the hotel by 7pm and after a briefing had dinner at 8pm. During dinner a cultural mask dance was performed, and a performer presented one of our group with a cake as it was her birthday. The party continued with more dances until 10pm.

Day 5

Wednesday 11th March

Today we had tea/coffee at 6.15am and reached the pier at 7am to board our boat. Our first sighting was a Green Sea Turtle followed by some Flying Fish. We enjoyed the boat trip but alas, after more searching, we didn't spot any whales and returned to the pier.

We returned to the hotel for lunch, and then at 4pm we left for some birding at Kirala Forest. Here we encountered Indian Peafowl, Great Egret, Great Cormorant, Black Eagle, Black-winged Stilt, House Swift, Chestnut-headed Bee-eater, Stork-billed Kingfisher, Common Kingfisher, Black-hooded Oriole and Asian Paradise Flycatcher.

Back at the hotel we did the checklist at 8pm before dinner.

Day 6

Thursday 12th March

As the previous days had not yielded any sightings of Blue Whales we changed the schedule to give us one last try before heading to Yala and continuing with the program. We left the pier at 7.30am and after some time we spotted a huge Hammerhead Shark which stayed on the surface for a very long time. We also saw more Spinner Dolphins and a Hawksbill Turtle before returning to the pier. Alas the whales were missing.

We had lunch en route Yala and stopped at Bundala National Park for some birding. Here we saw Sri Lanka Junglefowl, Garganey, Asian Openbill, Yellow Bittern, Darter, Watercock, Red-wattled Lapwing, Greater Coucal and Pied Kingfisher.

We reach our hotel in Yala at 7.30pm, had dinner at 8pm then headed to our rooms for the night.

Day 7

Friday 13th March

We left the hotel at 5.30am after tea/coffee for our first safari. We took a picnic breakfast and lunch with us. On the safari mammal sightings included Toque Macaque, Sloth Bear, Ruddy Mongoose, Leopard, Indian Wild Elephant, Spotted Deer, Sambar, Water Buffalo, and Indian Hare. The birding was also good and we saw Woolly-necked Stork, Black-necked Stork, Lesser Adjutant, Eurasian Spoonbill, White-bellied Sea Eagle, Changeable Hawk Eagle, Great Thick-knee, Yellow-wattled Lapwing, Common-ringed Plover, Pin-tailed Snipe, Common Snipe, Common Redshank, Wood Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper, Ruddy Turnstone, Little Stint, Gull-billed Tern, Caspian Tern, Sandwich Tern, Orange-breasted Green Pigeon, Crested Treeswift, Indian Roller, Green Bee-eater, Malabar Pied Hornbill, Sri Lanka Woodshrike, Common Iora, Paddyfield Pipit, Jerdon's Bushlark, Oriental Skylark, Ashy-crowned Sparrow Lark, Plain Prinia, White-browed Fantail and Indian Robin.

We returned to the hotel at 5.30pm amidst heavy rain. We met for the check list at 7.30pm then had dinner at 8pm.

Day 8

Saturday 14th March

We left the hotel 5.30am, again with picnic breakfast and lunch, and entered the Yala park at 6am. We encounter Grey Langur, Golden Jackal and Asian Wild Elephant together with more birds including Green Imperial Pigeon, Grey-bellied Cuckoo, Blue-faced Malkoha, Indian Nightjar, Common Hoopoe and Scaly Munia.

It started raining around 11am but we continued the safari until late evening and headed back to the hotel at 6pm. We met again for the checklist at 8pm before dinner.

Day 9

Sunday 15th March

We left the hotel at 8.45am after breakfast and proceeded to Colombo via Tissamaharama. We saw many Giant Fruit Bats roosting in a tree and we also saw a few ancient temples in the vicinity. We stopped for lunch at Udawalawe and then proceeded straight to Katunayake.

We reached the airport hotel at 6.45pm and had dinner soon afterwards.

Day 10

Monday 16th March

We left the hotel at 9.30am and drove to the airport where goodbyes were said to Upul and Saman before catching a flight back to the UK.

Species Lists

Mammals

	Common name	Scientific name
1	Toque Macaque	<i>Macaca sinica</i>
2	Grey Langur	<i>Presbytis entellus</i>
3	Golden Jackal	<i>Canis aureus</i>
4	Sloth Bear	<i>Melursusur sinus</i>
5	Ruddy Mongoose	<i>Herpestes smithii</i>
6	Leopard	<i>Panther apardus</i>
7	Indian Elephant	<i>Elephas maximus</i>
8	Spotted Deer (Chital)	<i>Cervus axis</i>
9	Sambar	<i>Cervus unicolor</i>
10	Water Buffalo	<i>Bubalus arnee</i>
11	Indian Palm Squirrel	<i>Funambulus palmarum</i>
12	Indian Hare	<i>Lepus nigricollis</i>
13	Indian Flying Fox	<i>Pteropus gigantean</i>
14	Spinner Dolphin	<i>Stenella longirostris</i>

Birds (bold text = endemic)

1	Barred Buttonquail	<i>Turnix suscitator</i>
2	Sri Lanka Junglefowl	<i>Gallus lafayetii</i>
3	Indian Peafowl	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>
4	Lesser Whistling-duck	<i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>
5	Cotton Pygmy-goose	<i>Nettapus coromandelianus</i>
6	Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>
7	Painted Stork	<i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>
8	Asian Openbill	<i>Anas tomusoscitans</i>
9	Woolly-necked Stork	<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>
10	Black-necked Stork	<i>Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus</i>
11	Lesser Adjutant	<i>Leptoptilos javanicus</i>
12	Black-headed Ibis	<i>Threskiornis melanocephalus</i>
13	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>
14	Yellow Bittern	<i>Lxobrychus sinensis</i>
15	Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>
16	Indian Pond Heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>
17	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
18	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
19	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
20	Great Egret	<i>Casmerodius albus</i>
21	Intermediate Egret	<i>Mesophoyx intermedia</i>
22	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
23	Spot-billed Pelican	<i>Pelecanus philippensis</i>
24	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
25	Little Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax niger</i>
26	Indian Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax fuscicollis</i>
27	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
28	Darter	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>
29	Brahminy Kite	<i>Haliastur indus</i>
30	White-bellied Sea Eagle, White-bellied Fish Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>
31	Gray-headed Fish Eagle	<i>Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus</i>
32	Shikra	<i>Accipiter badius</i>
33	Crested Serpent Eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>
34	Black Eagle	<i>Ictinaetus malayensis</i>

Common name	Scientific name
35 Changeable Hawk Eagle	<i>Spizaetus cirrhatus</i>
36 White-breasted Waterhen	<i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i>
37 Watercock	<i>Gallicrex cinerea</i>
38 Purple Swampfen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>
39 Pheasant-tailed Jacana	<i>Hydrophasianus chirurgus</i>
40 Great Thick-knee	<i>Esactus recurvirostris</i>
41 Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
42 Yellow-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus malabaricus</i>
43 Red-wattled lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>
44 Pacific Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis fulva</i>
45 Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>
46 Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
47 Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>
48 Lesser sand Plover, Mongolian Plover	<i>Charadrius mongolus</i>
49 Pin-tailed Snipe	<i>Gallinago stenura</i>
50 Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>
51 Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>
52 Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
53 Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
54 Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>
55 Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>
56 Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
57 Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
58 Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>
59 Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelocheilidon nilotica</i>
60 Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>
61 Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>
62 Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>
63 Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>
64 Common Pigeon, Rock Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>
65 Spotted Dove	<i>Stigmatopelia chinensis</i>
66 Orange-breasted Green Pigeon	<i>Treronbic inctus</i>
67 Green Imperial Pigeon	<i>Ducula aenea</i>
68 Rose-ringed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>
69 Grey-bellied Cuckoo, Plaintive Cuckoo	<i>Cacomanti spasserinus</i>
70 Asian Koel	<i>Endynamys scolopacerus</i>
71 Blue-faced Malkoha	<i>Rhopodytes viridirostris</i>
72 Greater Coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>
73 Indian Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus asiaticus</i>
74 Asian Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus balasiensis</i>
75 House Swift, Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>
76 Crested Treeswift , Gray-rumped Treeswift	<i>Hemiprocne coronata</i>
77 Indian Roller	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>
78 Green Bee-eater, Little Green Bee-eater	<i>Merops orientalis</i>
79 Blue-tailed Bee-eater	<i>Merops philippinus</i>
80 Chestnut-headed Bee-eater	<i>Merops leschenaulti</i>
81 Stork-billed Kingfisher	<i>Pelargopsis capensis</i>
82 White-throated Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>
83 Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
84 Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>
85 Common Hoopoe, Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>
86 Coppersmith Barbet	<i>Megalaima haemacephala</i>
87 Malabar Pied Hornbill	<i>Anthracoceros coronatus</i>
88 Indian Pitta	<i>Pitta brachyuran</i>

Common name	Scientific name
89 Sri Lanka Woodshrike	<i>Tephrodornis (pondicerianus) affinis</i>
90 Large Cuckooshrike	<i>Coracina macei</i>
91 Black-headed Cuckooshrike	<i>Coracina melanoptera</i>
92 Small Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus cinnamomeus</i>
93 Brown Shrike	<i>Lanius cristatus</i>
94 Common Iora	<i>Aegithina tiphia</i>
95 Black-hooded Oriole	<i>Oriolus xanthornus</i>
96 House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>
97 Large-billed Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>
98 Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
99 Sri Lanka Swallow	<i>Cecropis (daurica) hyperythra</i>
100 White-bellied Drongo	<i>Dicrurus caeruleus</i>
101 Paddyfield Pipit	<i>Anthus rufulus</i>
102 Jerdon's Bushlark	<i>Mirafra affinis</i>
103 Oriental Skylark	<i>Alauda gulgula</i>
104 Ashy-crowned Sparrow Lark	<i>Eremopterix griseus</i>
105 Red-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>
106 White-browed Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus luteolus</i>
107 Plain Prinia	<i>Prinia inornata</i>
108 Common Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>
109 White-browed Fantail	<i>Rhipidura aureola</i>
110 Asian Paradise-flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone paradisi</i>
111 Yellow-eyed Babbler	<i>Chrysomma sinense</i>
112 Yellow-billed Babbler	<i>Turdoides affinis</i>
113 Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>
114 Brahminy Starling	<i>Sturnia pagodarum</i>
115 Oriental Magpie Robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>
116 White-rumped Shama	<i>Copsychus malabaricus</i>
117 Indian Robin, Black-backed Robin	<i>Saxicoloides fulicatus</i>
118 Purple-rumped Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia zeylonica</i>
119 Loten's Sunbird, Long-billed Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia lotenia</i>
120 Baya Weaver	<i>Ploceus philippinus</i>
121 House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
122 Indian Silverbill, White-throated Silverbill	<i>Lonchura malabarica</i>
123 Scaly-breasted Munia	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>

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