

Wild Sri Lanka in Style

Naturetrek Tour Report

6th – 19th November 2023



Black-backed Dwarf Kingfisher



Sri Lanka Blue Magpie



Red-faced Malkoa



Aukana Budu Pilimaya

Tour report by Dodan Arachchige



Naturetrek

Mingledown Barn

Wolf's Lane

Chawton

Alton

Hampshire

GU34 3HJ

UK

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

E: info@naturetrek.co.uk

W: www.naturetrek.co.uk

Tour participants: Suminda Dodangoda Arachchige (leader) with three Naturetrek clients

Highlights

The enchanting journey through Sri Lanka unfolded over 13 days, offering a perfect blend of natural wonders, wildlife encounters, and cultural exploration. The expedition took our group on a mesmerizing tour, creating lasting memories and fostering a deep appreciation for the diverse landscapes and vibrant heritage of this island nation.

The 13-day expedition through Sri Lanka was a kaleidoscope of experiences, blending the wonders of nature with the richness of culture. From the misty landscapes of Horton Plains to the vibrant cultural performances in Kandy and the thrilling wildlife encounters in Yala, each day brought forth new surprises and left an indelible mark on our collective memory. This journey not only showcased the biodiversity and cultural heritage of Sri Lanka but also fostered a deep appreciation for the delicate balance between tradition and the natural world.

Overall, we recorded 146 species of birds, 22 species of mammals and 17 species of reptiles, which all contributed to the success of this tour.

Day 1

Monday 6th November

The tour started for most with a flight from London to Colombo, the capital of Sri Lanka.

Day 2

Tuesday 7th November

Kandalama

Upon arrival, your group embarked on a journey from the airport to Kandalama Hotel. The journey to Dambulla was not just a transfer but an opportunity to appreciate the diverse avian life. The stop at a rice field provided a unique chance to spot male and female Serpent Eagles, Blue-tailed Bee-eaters, Green Bee-eaters, and Scaly-breasted Munia. The day concluded with our arrival at Kandalama Hotel in the evening.

Birds we saw along the way:

Sri Lanka Junglefowl, Asian Openbill, Indian Pond Heron, Eastern Cattle Egret, Great Egret, Little Egret, Little Cormorant, Darter, Crested Serpent Eagle, Black-winged Stilt, Red-wattled Lapwing, Whiskered Tern, Common Pigeon, Spotted Dove, House Swift, White-throated Kingfisher, Blue-tailed Bee-Eater, Brown-headed Barbet, House Crow, Red-vented Bulbul, Barn Swallow, Yellow-billed Babbler, Oriental White-Eye, Common Myna, Asian Brown Flycatcher, White-rumped Munia, Scaly-breasted Munia.

Day 3

Wednesday 8th November

Kandalama

After a satisfying breakfast, the group ventured towards Polonnaruwa, the second ancient capital, for a day of sightseeing. A delicious Sri Lankan lunch fueled our exploration, followed by a visit to the historic Sigiriya.

Birds we spotted - Lesser Whistling Duck, Painted Stork, Woolly-necked Stork, Black-headed Ibis, Purple Heron, Spot-billed Pelican, Indian Cormorant, Crested Hawk Eagle, Brahminy Kite, Green Imperial Pigeon, Asian Palm Swift, Stork-billed Kingfisher, Common Kingfisher, Green Bee-eater, Malabar Pied Hornbill, Coppersmith Barbet, Crimson-backed Goldenback, Rose-ringed Parakeet, Common Iora, Brown Shrike, Black-hooded Oriole, White-browed Fantail, White-browed Bulbul, Zitting Cisticola, Jerdon's Leafbird, Pale-billed Flowerpecker, Baya Weaver

Day 4

Thursday 9th November

Kandy

A unique morning experience awaited with a pre-breakfast bird walk. Witnessing a termite hill explosion became a breakfast spectacle for White-rumped Shama, Brown-capped Babbler, and the elusive Black-capped Bulbul. Despite rain disrupting the visit to the spice garden after the Dambulla cave temple, we made our way to Kandy by evening.

Birds seen included Shikra, Blue-faced Malkoha, Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill, Asian Paradise Flycatcher, Black-capped Bulbul, Dark-fronted Babbler, Brown-capped Babbler, White-rumped Shama, Purple-rumped Sunbird, Loten's Sunbird

Day 5

Friday 10th November

Kandy

The day began with a visit to Udawatta Kele Sanctuary, where a slow-paced walk revealed the enchanting Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher. Spot-winged Thrush added to the excitement. A visit to Peradeniya Botanic Garden, briefly interrupted by rain, preceded an evening cultural dance performance in Kandy.

Black-crowned Night Heron, Great Cormorant, White-bellied Sea Eagle, White-breasted Waterhen, Common Hawk-Cuckoo, Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher, Sri Lanka Red-backed Woodpecker, Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot, Small Minivet, White-bellied Drongo, Common Tailorbird, Spot-winged Thrush, Oriental Magpie-Robin, Brown-breasted Flycatcher, Tickell's Blue Flycatcher

Day 6

Saturday 11th November

Nuwara Eliya

Heading towards Nuwara Eliya, we paused to admire full-volume waterfalls and experienced a tea factory visit with a taste of freshly brewed tea. The Grand Hotel welcomed us for a leisurely lunch.

Crested Honey Buzzard, Oriental Honey-buzzard, Black Eagle, Common Sandpiper, Indian Pitta, Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike, Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher, Yellow-eared Bulbul, Sri Lanka White-Eye, Indian Blue Robin, Kashmir Flycatcher, House Sparrow, Forest Wagtail, Grey Wagtail

Day 7

Sunday 12th November

Horton Plains

An early morning journey to Horton Plains immersed you in misty landscapes. Various bird species, including the Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush, were spotted. The afternoon at Victoria Park featured sightings of the Pied Thrush and Kashmir Flycatcher.

Large-billed Crow, Cinereous Tit, Jerdon's Bush Lark, Hill Swallow, Sri Lanka Swallow, Blyth's Reed Warbler, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, Indian Blackbird, Black-headed Munia

Day 8

Monday 13th November

Yala

Following breakfast, we proceeded to Yala, stopping at Surrey Estate for a garden walk. Highlights included the Brown Wood Owl and Sri Lanka Scimitar Babbler. A scenic lunch in Ella offered breathtaking views of the gap and waterfall. The journey to Yala included a stop at Ravana waterfall, where a Jerdon's Nightjar perched on a dry branch captivated the group.

Eurasian Spoonbill, Grey Heron, Brown Wood Owl, Jerdon's Nightjar, Crested Treeswift, Grey-rumped Treeswift, Black-naped Monarch, Sri Lanka Scimitar Babbler, Indian Robin, Dull-blue Flycatcher, Pied Bush Chat

Day 9

Tuesday 14th November

Yala National Park

Armed with packed meals, we set off for Lunugamwehera National Park despite the rain. The day unfolded with bird sightings and a fortunate encounter with a Leopard amidst a backdrop of overcast skies.

Grey-headed Fish Eagle, Barred Buttonquail, Greater Coucal, Sirkeer Malkoha, Brown Fish Owl, Indian Roller, Plum-headed Parakeet, Alexandrine Parakeet, Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, Jungle Prinia

Day 10

Wednesday 15th November

Yala National Park

Our exploration continued at Yala National Park, where we witnessed the Golden Jackal, wild Buffalo, and a plethora of bird species. Flooded roads prompted a decision to skip the afternoon safari, allowing for a relaxing time at the hotel.

Striated Heron, Osprey, Great Thick-knee, Yellow-wattled Lapwing, Little Ringed Plover, Lesser Sand Plover, Mongolian Plover, Common Redshank, Common Greenshank, Little Stint, Gull-billed Tern, Grey-bellied Cuckoo, Plaintive Cuckoo, Oriental Skylark, Rosy Starling, Purple Sunbird, Paddyfield Pipit

Day 11

Thursday 16th November

Galle

En route to Weligama, we stopped at Debarawewa to catch a glimpse of the elusive Jungle Owlet. After lunch, we reached our hotel.

Indian Thick-knee, Common Ringed Plover, Caspian Tern, Greater Crested Tern, Lesser Crested Tern, Little Tern, Orange-breasted Green Pigeon, Asian Koel, Jungle Owlet, Pied Kingfisher

Day 12

Friday 17th November

Mirissa

A packed day commenced with whale watching in Mirissa, where a pod of Bottle-nosed Dolphins and Flying Fish delighted us. The afternoon was dedicated to exploring the historic Galle fort.

Day 13

Saturday 18th November

Mirissa/Katunayake

The final day began with a pre-breakfast walk, offering an excellent sighting of a Paradise Flycatcher. Eventually, we departed for Colombo, making stops at a turtle hatchery and a local almsgiving ceremony, where we enjoyed engaging with locals. The tour concluded at Airport Garden Hotel with a farewell dinner.

Day 14

Sunday 19th November

Departure

After breakfast the group checked out of the hotel and reached the airport in time for their return flights home, having enjoyed some of the best of Sri Lanka's wildlife.

Receive our e-newsletter

Join the Naturetrek e-mailing list and be the first to hear about new tours, additional departures and new dates, tour reports and special offers. Visit www.naturetrek.co.uk to sign up.

Social Media

We're social! Follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and be the first to hear about the launch of new tours, offers and exciting sightings and photos from our recently returned holidays.



www.facebook.com/naturetrekwildlifeholidays



www.twitter.com/naturetrektours



www.instagram.com/naturetrek_wildlife_holidays

Species lists

Birds (Bold text indicated endemic species)

Common name	Scientific name
Alexandrine Parakeet	<i>Psittacula eupatria</i>
Asian Brown Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa dauurica</i>
Asian Koel	<i>Eudynamys scolopaceus</i>
Asian Openbill	<i>Anastomus oscitans</i>
Asian Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus balasiensis</i>
Asian Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone paradisi</i>
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Barred Buttonquail	<i>Turnix suscitator</i>
Bar-winged Flycatcher-Shrike	<i>Hemipus picatus</i>
Baya Weaver	<i>Ploceus philippinus</i>
Black Eagle	<i>Ictinaetus malaiensis</i>
Black-capped Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus melanicterus</i>
Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
Black-headed Ibis	<i>Threskiornis melanocephalus</i>
Black-headed Munia	<i>Lonchura malacca</i>
Black-hooded Oriole	<i>Oriolus xanthornus</i>
Black-naped Monarch	<i>Hypothymis azurea</i>
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
Blue-faced Malkoha	<i>Phaenicophaeus viridirostris</i>
Blue-tailed Bee-Eater	<i>Merops philippinus</i>
Blyth's Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus dumetorum</i>
Brahminy Kite	<i>Haliastur indus</i>
Brown Fish Owl	<i>Ketupa zeylonensis</i>
Brown Shrike	<i>Lanius cristatus</i>
Brown Wood Owl	<i>Strix leptogrammica</i>
Brown-breasted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa muttui</i>
Brown-capped Babbler	<i>Pellorneum fuscicapillus</i>
Brown-headed Barbet	<i>Psilopogon zeylanicus</i>
Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>
Cinereous Tit	<i>Parus cinereus</i>
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
Common Hawk-Cuckoo	<i>Hierococcyx varius</i>
Common Iora	<i>Aegithina tiphia</i>
Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>
Common Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
Common Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>
Coppersmith Barbet	<i>Psilopogon haemacephalus</i>
Crested Hawk Eagle	<i>Nisaetus cirrhatus</i>
Crested Honey Buzzard, Oriental Honey-buzzard	<i>Pernis ptilorhynchus</i>
Crested Serpent Eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>
Crested Treeswift, Gray-rumped Treeswift	<i>Hemiprocne coronata</i>
Crimson-backed Goldenback	<i>Chrysocolaptes stricklandi</i>
Dark-fronted Babbler	<i>Rhopocichla atriceps</i>

Common name	Scientific name
Darter	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>
Dull-blue Flycatcher	<i>Eumyias sordidus</i>
Eastern Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus coromandus</i>
Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>
Forest Wagtail	<i>Dendronanthus indicus</i>
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>
Great Thick Knee	<i>Esacus recurvirostris</i>
Greater Coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>
Greater Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bergii</i>
Greater Racket-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus paradiseus</i>
Green Bee-eater	<i>Merops orientalis</i>
Green Imperial Pigeon	<i>Ducula aenea</i>
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>
Grey-bellied Cuckoo, Plaintive Cuckoo	<i>Cacomantis passerinus</i>
Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher	<i>Culicicapa ceylonensis</i>
Grey-headed Fish Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus ichthyaetus</i>
Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>
Hill Swallow	<i>Hirundo domicola</i>
House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
House Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>
Indian Thick Knee	<i>Burhinus indicus</i>
Indian Blackbird	<i>Turdus simillimus</i>
Indian Blue Robin	<i>Larvivora brunnea</i>
Indian Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax fuscicollis</i>
Indian Pitta	<i>Pitta brachyura</i>
Indian Pond Heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>
Indian Robin	<i>Copsychus fulicatus</i>
Indian Roller	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>
Jerdon's Bush Lark	<i>Mirafra affinis</i>
Jerdon's Leafbird	<i>Chloropsis jerdoni</i>
Jerdon's Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus atripennis</i>
Jungle Owlet	<i>Glaucidium radiatum</i>
Jungle Prinia	<i>Prinia sylvatica</i>
Kashmir Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula subrubra</i>
Large-billed Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>
Lesser Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bengalensis</i>
Lesser sand Plover, Mongolian Plover	<i>Charadrius mongolus</i>
Lesser Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>
Little Cormorant	<i>Microcarbo niger</i>
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>
Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>
Loten's Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris lotenius</i>
Malabar Pied Hornbill	<i>Anthracoceros coronatus</i>
Orange-breasted Green Pigeon	<i>Treron bicinctus</i>
Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher	<i>Ceyx erithaca</i>

Common name	Scientific name
Oriental Magpie-Robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>
Oriental Skylark	<i>Alauda gulgula</i>
Oriental White-Eye	<i>Zosterops palpebrosus</i>
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
Paddyfield Pipit	<i>Anthus rufulus</i>
Painted Stork	<i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>
Pale-billed Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum erythrorhynchos</i>
Pied Bush Chat	<i>Saxicola caprata</i>
Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>
Plum-headed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula cyanocephala</i>
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
Purple Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris asiaticus</i>
Purple-rumped Sunbird	<i>Leptocoma zeylonica</i>
Red-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>
Red-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>
Rose-ringed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>
Rosy Starling	<i>Pastor roseus</i>
Scaly-breasted Munia	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>
Shikra	<i>Accipiter badius</i>
Sirkeer Malkoha	<i>Taccocua leschenaultii</i>
Small Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus cinnamomeus</i>
Spot-billed Pelican	<i>Pelecanus philippensis</i>
Spotted Dove	<i>Spilopelia chinensis</i>
Spot-winged Thrush	<i>Geokichla spiloptera</i>
Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill	<i>Ocyeros gingalensis</i>
Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot	<i>Loriculus beryllinus</i>
Sri Lanka Junglefowl	<i>Gallus lafayettii</i>
Sri Lanka Red-backed Woodpecker	<i>Dinopium psarodes</i>
Sri Lanka Scimitar Babbler	<i>Pomatorhinus melanurus</i>
Sri Lanka Swallow	<i>Cecropis hyperythra</i>
Sri Lanka White-Eye	<i>Zosterops ceylonensis</i>
Stork-billed Kingfisher	<i>Pelargopsis capensis</i>
Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>
Tickell's Blue Flycatcher	<i>Cyornis tickelliae</i>
Velvet-fronted Nuthatch	<i>Sitta frontalis</i>
Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>
White-bellied Drongo	<i>Dicrurus caerulescens</i>
White-bellied Sea Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>
White-breasted Waterhen	<i>Amauornis phoenicurus</i>
White-browed Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus luteolus</i>
White-browed Fantail	<i>Rhipidura aureola</i>
White-rumped Munia	<i>Lonchura striata</i>
White-rumped Shama	<i>Copsychus malabaricus</i>
White-throated Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smymensis</i>
Woolly-necked Stork	<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>
Yellow-billed Babbler	<i>Turdoides affinis</i>
Yellow-eared Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus penicillatus</i>
Yellow-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus malabaricus</i>
Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>

Mammals

Common name	Scientific name
Toque Macaque	<i>Macaca sinica</i>
Grey Langur	<i>Semnopithecus (Presbytis) entellus</i>
Purple-faced Leaf Monkey	<i>Trachypithecus (Presbytis) vetulus</i>
Golden Jackal	<i>Canis aureus</i>
Sloth Bear	<i>Melursus ursinus</i>
Ruddy Mongoose	<i>Herpestes smithii</i>
Stripe-necked Mongoose	<i>Herpestes vitticollis</i>
Brown Mongoose	<i>Herpestes fuscus</i>
Leopard	<i>Panthera pardus kotiya</i>
Asian Elephant	<i>Elephas maximus</i>
Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>
Muntjac	<i>Muntiacus muntjac</i>
Spotted Deer	<i>Cervus axis</i>
Sambar	<i>Cervus unicolor</i>
Water Buffalo	<i>Bubalus Bubalis</i>
Indian Palm Squirrel	<i>Funambulus palmarum</i>
Grizzled Giant Squirrel	<i>Ratufa macroura</i>
Dusky Striped Squirrel	<i>Funambulus sublineatus</i>
Indian Hare- Black-naped Hare	<i>Lepus nigricollis</i>
Indian Flying Fox	<i>Pteropus gigantea</i>
Blue Whale	<i>Balaenoptera musculus</i>
Spinner Dolphin	<i>Stenella mulla</i>

Reptiles & Amphibians

Common name	Scientific name
Common Rat Snake	<i>Ptyas mucosus maximus</i>
Bengal (Land) Monitor	<i>Varanus bengalensis</i>
Asian Water Monitor	<i>Varanus salvator</i>
Oriental (Common) Garden Lizard	<i>Calotes versicolor</i>
Green Garden Lizard	<i>Calotes calotes</i>
Mugger Crocodile	<i>Crocodylus palustris</i>
Hard Shelled Terrapin	<i>Melanochelys trijuga parkeri</i>
Green Turtle	<i>Chelonia mydas</i>
Loggerhead Turtle	<i>Caretta caretta</i>
Hawksbill Sea Turtle	<i>Eremochelys imbricata</i>
Olive Ridley Sea Turtle	<i>Lepidochelys olivacea</i>
Leatherback Sea Turtle	<i>Dermochelys croiaea</i>
Common House Gecko	<i>Hemidactylus frenatus</i>
Common Skink	<i>Eutropis carinata</i>
Indian Black Terrapin	<i>Melanochelys trijuga</i>
Star Tortoise	<i>Geochelone elegans</i>
Forsten's Cat Snake	<i>Boiga forsteni</i>