

Sri Lanka's Mammals

Naturetrek Tour Report

27th June – 13th July 2025



Asian Elephants



Leopard



Indian Giant Flying Squirrel



Brown Fish Owl

Tour report by Saman Kumara



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Tour Highlights

Our Naturetrek Mammal Tour through Sri Lanka was a journey filled with unforgettable wildlife encounters, breathtaking landscapes, and glimpses into the island's ancient culture.

From the very first evening in Sigiriya, the group was immersed in the magic of the wild with sightings of Grey Slender Loris, civets, chevrotains, and Chital on our night safaris. Climbing the iconic Sigiriya Rock Fortress brought encounters with monkeys and raptors alongside sweeping views, while afternoons at tanks and sanctuaries revealed Grey-headed Fish Eagles, Jacanas, and Baya Weavers busily at work.

At Polonnaruwa, history and wildlife blended seamlessly as playful macaques animated the ancient ruins. Night drives added yet more excitement, with unforgettable sightings of Asian Elephant, Golden Jackal, and porcupine under the stars. Minneriya National Park was a standout highlight, where over 100 Asian Elephants gathered in a majestic display on the open plains.

In Kandy, cultural wonders like the Temple of the Tooth were paired with encounters of Giant Flying Squirrel and Golden Palm Civet, while the Peradeniya Botanical Gardens offered rich birdlife and spectacular bat colonies. Continuing into the highlands, Nuwara Eliya and Horton Plains revealed Bear Monkeys, Yellow-eared Bulbuls, Dull-blue Flycatchers, and herds of Sambar Deer against a backdrop of misty mountains and waterfalls.

Descending south, the dramatic Ravana Falls and stunning Ella landscapes paved the way to Yala and Lunugamvehera, where safaris brought herds of Chital, Wild Boar, Water Buffalo, and soaring raptors. A dramatic twist came when a lone bull elephant charged and overturned a jeep—fortunately with no serious injuries—underscoring the raw unpredictability of the wild. Yet, the highlight for many followed soon afterwards: a magnificent Leopard sighting in Yala, accompanied by elephants, jackals, and colourful birdlife.

The journey concluded with a visit to the vast bat colony at Tissamaharama, a mesmerizing natural spectacle against the backdrop of ancient tanks. For those who continued to Sinharaja Rainforest, the rewards included encounters with Sri Lanka's rarest endemics: the Red-faced Malkoha, Green-billed Coucal, Blue Magpie, and Sri Lanka Frogmouth, along with dazzling butterflies and reptiles.

This tour combined thrilling safaris, cultural treasures, and rich biodiversity, leaving every participant with memories of an extraordinary Sri Lankan adventure.

Day 1

Friday 27th June

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

Day 2

Saturday 28th June

Our Naturetrek Mammal Tour group touched down at the airport around 2:30 pm, brimming with anticipation for the adventures ahead. After a warm welcome, we gathered together and set off towards the historic city of Sigiriya.

Along the way, we paused at a charming restaurant in Kurunegala, nestled beside a tranquil paddy field. What began as a simple tea break soon turned into our very first wildlife encounter of the tour—a majestic Giant Squirrel and the ever-energetic Indian Palm Squirrel, both delighting the group and setting an exciting tone for the days ahead.

By sunset, we arrived at the welcoming Sigiriya Hotel, where we had time to settle in before regrouping at 7:30 pm for a detailed briefing on the following day's program. With everyone well-prepared and anticipation running high, we then gathered for a delicious dinner at 8:00 pm. Over shared stories and lively conversation, the group quickly bonded, their excitement building for the evening's first adventure.

At 9:00 pm, we set off into the Sigiriya Sanctuary on our night safari, the forest alive with the mystery of the dark. Our patience was rewarded with sightings of the enchanting Grey Slender Loris, the elusive Northern Palm Civet, Small Indian Civet, White-spotted Chevrotain, Indian Hare, and a graceful herd of Chital. Returning to the hotel by midnight, the group retired for the night, filled with awe at such an extraordinary beginning to the journey.

Day 3

Sunday 29th June

Our day began with a cheerful breakfast at 7:00 am, setting the tone for an exhilarating adventure. Soon after, we made our way to the iconic Sigiriya Lion Rock, a magnificent blend of nature, history, and legend. The climb itself became a wildlife spectacle—along the way we encountered Tufted Langurs, Purple-faced Leaf Monkeys, and playful Toque Macaques. The birdlife was equally rewarding, with a Peregrine Falcon circling high above, Little Swifts darting effortlessly across the sky, dazzling Green Bee-eaters flashing emerald hues, and sightings of Indian Robins and Little Cormorants. On the grounds below, near a tranquil pond, we were treated to the sight of a Tikiri Keelback snake gliding smoothly through the water, a reminder of the fortress's rich and varied wildlife.

At the summit, we were rewarded with sweeping panoramic views of the surrounding landscape, a breathtaking scene that seemed to stretch endlessly. We also paused to admire the famed frescoes, their timeless artistry etched into the rock face, a vivid link to the island's ancient past.

After this rewarding morning, we returned to the hotel for a well-deserved lunch and a leisurely afternoon, with many enjoying a refreshing dip in the pool before preparing for the adventures still to come.

At 4:00 pm, we set off for Pidurangala Tank for an afternoon of birding. The waters and surrounding scrub came alive with a flurry of activity. Among our highlights were a magnificent Grey-headed Fish Eagle, Grey-headed Swamphens striding elegantly through the reeds, and graceful Pheasant-tailed Jacanas skimming the lily pads. The trees and open skies added to the spectacle, offering sightings of Purple-rumped Sunbird, Sri Lankan Woodshrike, Spotted Dove, Grey and Purple Herons, Great Egret, Little and Indian Cormorants, and the ever-impressive Oriental Darter. Overhead, a Brahminy Kite circled, while Sri Lankan Swallows darted playfully across the tank.

We were equally thrilled to spot Baya Weavers busily at work, Coppersmith Barbets calling from the treetops, Jerdon's Bushlark, Tri-coloured Munias, and the ever-present Indian Jungle Crow.

With our bird list for the day growing impressively, we returned to the hotel at dusk. After going through our checklist together, we enjoyed a hearty dinner, our anticipation mounting for the night safari ahead.

Leaving the hotel at 9:00 pm, we set out once again into the Sigiriya Sanctuary for our night safari. The forest came alive under the cover of darkness, and our patience was rewarded with some truly memorable sightings. We encountered the Indian Crested Porcupine and were thrilled to watch an elusive Eurasian Otter by the water's edge. The Grey Slender Loris appeared in the torchlight, along with a Northern Palm Civet moving stealthily through the branches. Adding to the magic of the night, we also spotted a majestic Brown Fish Owl and heard the haunting calls of Jerdon's Nightjar echoing through the still air.

By midnight, we returned to the hotel, content and exhilarated, and called it a day.

Day 4

Monday 30th June

On the morning of Day 4, we began with a delightful breakfast at 7:00 am, fuelling ourselves for the captivating journey ahead. Our destination was the ancient city of Polonnaruwa, a UNESCO World Heritage Site steeped in history and architectural grandeur. By 10:00 am, we were wandering among its mesmerizing ruins, where centuries-old temples and statues whispered tales of a glorious past. Adding a lively contrast to the stone relics were playful Toque Macaques and elegant Gray Langurs, their antics bringing a vibrant energy to the ancient setting.

For lunch, we paused at a charming restaurant overlooking tranquil paddy fields. As we dined, the scenery came alive with birdlife, including the graceful Asian Woolly-necked Stork, a highlight for the birders in our group.

Recharged and content after this well-deserved break, we returned to the hotel around 2:00 pm, allowing everyone time to relax and rejuvenate before the evening's adventure.

At 4:00 pm we set off to the Dambulla Arboretum, a haven for nocturnal life nestled amidst tranquil forest. As evening shadows deepened, we were rewarded with fascinating sightings of the Greater Asian False Vampire and the Indian Rufous Horseshoe Bat, both sweeping gracefully through the dusk. Returning to the hotel by early evening, we gathered at 7:00 pm to go through our checklist, reliving the highlights of the day. Dinner followed soon after, a pleasant pause before preparing for the excitement of our night safari.

We departed the hotel at 9:00 pm for a night safari around Sigiriya village, where the darkness revealed a world of nocturnal wonders. In the quiet of the paddy fields, we were thrilled to spot an Asian Elephant grazing peacefully, a truly unforgettable sight. The safari continued with encounters of a Golden Jackal moving stealthily, a White-spotted Chevrotain, Northern Palm Civet, and the elusive Grey Slender Loris. Adding to the excitement, a group of Chital deer crossed our path, completing a remarkable evening of wildlife sightings. By 11:00 pm, we returned to the hotel, exhilarated and ready to call it a night.

Day 5

Tuesday 1st July

On the morning of Day 5, we began with an early breakfast at 7:00 am, energizing ourselves for a day filled with wildlife adventures. Our first stop was the Sigiriya Sanctuary, where we enjoyed a leisurely walk through the forest. The morning proved rich with sightings, including the Sri Lanka Green Pigeon, Stork-billed Kingfisher, Oriental

Honey Buzzard, Golden-fronted Leafbird, and Coppersmith Barbet, each adding vibrant colour and song to our stroll. By 10:00 am, we returned to the hotel for some relaxing downtime, reflecting on the morning's discoveries before meeting for lunch at 12:00 noon.

Recharged and ready for the afternoon, we set off at 2:00 pm for Minneriya National Park, anticipating the thrills of a classic Sri Lankan safari experience.

The safari experience at Minneriya was beyond words. Over the course of the afternoon, we were mesmerized by a gathering of more than 100 Asian Elephants, moving gracefully across the park's open plains. Alongside them, herds of Chital added movement and life to the landscape, while the skies and wetlands showcased an impressive array of birdlife. Highlights included the Great Stone-curlew, Black-winged Stilt, Kentish Plover, Whiskered Tern, Asian Openbill, Lesser Adjutant, Painted Stork, Great Cormorant, and Black-headed Ibis, each sighting adding to the richness of the safari.

By evening, we returned to the hotel, and at 7:15 pm gathered for our checklist, reliving every thrilling encounter. Dinner followed, filled with animated conversation and reflections on the majesty of the elephants, bringing the day to a perfect close.

Day 6

Wednesday 2nd July

The day began with a sumptuous breakfast as we bade farewell to our previous hotel, ready for the next chapter of our Naturetrek Mammal Tour on the journey to Kandy. En route, we made a cultural stop at the iconic Dambulla Cave Temple, where ancient paintings and statues dating back to the 1st century BC offered a fascinating glimpse into Sri Lanka's rich artistic and spiritual heritage.

Our next stop was a Spice Garden in Matale, where we enjoyed a delicious lunch followed by an immersive spice tour. The aromatic scents and vibrant displays of cinnamon, cardamom, cloves, and other spices brought Sri Lanka's culinary traditions vividly to life.

Upon reaching our new accommodations, The Tree of Life in Kandy, we took some leisure time to relax before an evening stroll through the hotel gardens at 6:00 pm. Nature was on our side, gifting us with sightings of a magnificent Giant Flying Squirrel and a Golden Palm Civet — enchanting encounters that left the group spellbound.

As night fell, we gathered for a delightful dinner, sharing stories of the day's adventures and wildlife encounters. Hearts full of excitement, we retired to our rooms, eagerly anticipating the discoveries that the coming days of the Naturetrek Mammal Tour would bring.

Day 7

Thursday 3rd July

Our day commenced with an early breakfast, setting the tone for a morning filled with exploration and wildlife encounters. Our first stop took us to Udawatta Kele, where the forest came alive with activity. We were delighted to spot the vibrant Malabar Red Muntjac, playful Toque Macaques, and the colourful Sri Lankan Hanging Parrot, alongside Common Tailorbird, Yellow-billed Babbler, Spot-winged Thrush, and Pale-billed Flowerpecker.

Leaving the forest behind, we visited the revered Temple of the Tooth, a sacred site that houses Lord Buddha's left canine tooth. The temple's cultural and spiritual significance left a profound impression, deepening our appreciation of Sri Lanka's rich religious heritage.

After lunch, we ventured to the Peradeniya Botanical Gardens, where the lush flora impressed at every turn. Among the greenery, we spotted a vast colony of Giant Fruit Bats (Indian Flying Foxes) resting in the treetops. Our birdwatching was equally rewarding, with sightings of Loten's Sunbird, Southern Hill Myna, White-bellied Drongo, and Plum-headed Parakeet adding to the morning's delights.

Returning to the hotel by 5:30 pm, we freshened up before taking an evening stroll in the hotel gardens, where a Giant Flying Squirrel made a magical appearance. The day concluded with our checklist at 7:30 pm, followed by dinner. Later, at 9:00 pm, we ventured to the Maha Weli River in hopes of spotting the elusive Fishing Cat; though it remained unseen, the anticipation and experience added to the adventure. By 10:30 pm, we retired for the night, hearts full of memories and excitement for the days ahead.

Day 8

Friday 4th July

After a satisfying breakfast, we bade farewell to our previous hotel and set off on a scenic journey to Nuwara Eliya. Along the way, we visited a working tea plantation, where an enlightening factory tour revealed the intricate art of tea production. The tea tasting offered a chance to savour the fresh flavours of Ceylon tea while enjoying breathtaking views of the surrounding mountains.

Arriving at our next destination, The Heaven Seven, at 1:00 pm, we enjoyed a delicious lunch before heading out at 3:00 pm for an adventure to Hakgala Botanical Gardens. The gardens came alive with activity as we encountered the captivating Purple-faced Leaf Monkeys of the montane race, fondly known as Bear Monkeys. Over ten monkeys, including mothers with their young, delighted us with playful antics and charming interactions. Amidst these moments, our birdwatching proved rewarding as well, with sightings of Yellow-eared Bulbul, Sri Lanka White-eye, Dull-blue Flycatcher, and Great Tit adding to the day's excitement.

Returning to the hotel, we gathered for the checklist, reflecting on the remarkable wildlife encounters and the beauty of the highlands. The day concluded with a delightful dinner, leaving us with lasting memories of Nuwara Eliya's rich biodiversity and scenic wonders. As the Naturetrek Mammal Tour continues, anticipation for more extraordinary experiences grows ever stronger.

Day 9

Saturday 5th July

Our tour commenced with a refreshing start at 5:00 am, accompanied by a hot cup of tea and packed breakfast, setting the tone for an exciting day of exploration. Our destination was Horton Plains National Park, where the morning greeted us with clear skies and a pleasant chill as we ascended into the highlands.

The park soon revealed its diverse inhabitants, offering a series of remarkable wildlife sightings. Our first encounter was a Eurasian Otter gliding through a pond, followed by elegant Sambar Deer, lively Indian Palm Squirrels, and the swift Indian Hare. The air was alive with song as Yellow-eared Bulbuls, melodious Sri Lanka Bush Warblers,

charming Pied Bush Chats, Indian Blackbirds, and graceful Paddyfield Pipits accompanied us along the trails leading to the breathtaking Mini World's End. From this viewpoint, the group marveled at the sweeping landscapes that stretched into the distance, a truly awe-inspiring sight.

After a rewarding morning, we returned to the hotel for a delicious lunch and a well-earned break. In the afternoon, we ventured to Bomuru Ella, a small forest patch alive with activity. Here, we encountered Dusky-striped Squirrels, Grey-headed Canary Flycatchers, Dull-blue Flycatchers, Cinereous Tits, and the delightful Sri Lanka White-eye, each sighting adding to the day's rich tapestry of wildlife.

As the day drew to a close, our evening routine commenced with drinks, followed by the checklist and a satisfying dinner. Stories of the day's encounters flowed freely as we savoured the unique experiences with Sri Lanka's remarkable wildlife and scenic landscapes. The Naturetrek Mammal Tour continues to captivate, leaving us eager for the adventures and discoveries that lie ahead in this extraordinary country.

Day 10

Sunday 6th July

Our day commenced with a leisurely breakfast, setting the tone for a day filled with delightful discoveries and wildlife encounters. At 9:00 am, we bade farewell to our hotel and embarked on a picturesque journey towards Ella, eager for the adventures that lay ahead.

During our lunch stop in Ella, we were treated to breathtaking views of the Ella Gap, where the lush green valleys stretched endlessly beneath the misty mountains, creating a stunning natural panorama. The ambiance of the restaurant was further enlivened by the presence of House Sparrows flitting about, adding a touch of charm to our meal. A short drive brought us to the famous Ravana Falls, cascading gracefully over rugged cliffs into a serene pool below. The roar of the water and the verdant surroundings made it a perfect spot for photographs and a moment to soak in the natural beauty of this iconic landmark.

Upon reaching the Cinnamon Wild Hotel at 4:00 pm, we spent the remainder of the afternoon at leisure, enjoying the scenic surroundings and reflecting on the day's journey. At 7:00 pm, we gathered for the daily checklist and briefing, followed by a satisfying dinner at 8:00 pm, where stories of the day's encounters and observations were enthusiastically shared. As night fell, we retired to our rooms, hearts full of anticipation for the wildlife discoveries that awaited us in the coming days of our Naturetrek Mammal Tour.

Day 11

Monday 7th July

Our day began with an early start at 5:15 am, packed meals in hand, ready for an exhilarating adventure. By 6:30 am, we had arrived at Lunugamvehera National Park, where a day brimming with wildlife encounters awaited. Even before entering the park, excitement surged as we encountered a magnificent wild Asian Elephant standing calmly in the middle of the road—a moment that left the entire group in awe.

Inside the park, herds of Spotted Chital greeted us, and the skies and treetops were alive with a vibrant array of bird species. About an hour into our safari, the thrill reached its peak when fresh pug marks of a Leopard were discovered. While only one group was fortunate enough to catch a glimpse of this elusive predator, the chase added a layer of suspense and anticipation to our journey.

Throughout the day, we were treated to remarkable sightings of Chital, Wild Boar, and Water Buffalo, as well as occasional Asian Elephants along the return drive, each encounter immersing us deeper into the wonders of the park. Overhead, the skies were dominated by the commanding presence of White-bellied Sea Eagles, Grey-headed Fish Eagles, and Crested Serpent Eagles, completing the perfect picture of the park's rich biodiversity.

We returned to the hotel at 5:30 pm, followed by our 7:30 pm checklist, and gathered for dinner at 8:00 pm, reflecting on a day filled with unforgettable wildlife encounters. The Naturetrek Mammal Tour continues to enthrall, leaving us eager for the adventures that lie ahead.

Day 12

Tuesday 8th July

Our day commenced with an early start as we entered Yala National Park at 6:00 am, packed meals in tow, eager for the adventures ahead. The park greeted us with a vibrant display of wildlife: Grey Langurs, Toque Macaques, Ruddy Mongoose, Spotted Chital, Water Buffalo, Indian Palm Squirrels, and a Golden Jackal all made appearances, creating a thrilling start to our safari.

At one of Yala's well-known watering holes, often frequented by leopards, our group had an unexpected encounter that added a touch of drama to the day. As we paused to watch the scene unfold, a lone male elephant emerged from the bushes. Instead of heading straight for the water, he made a sudden charge at our jeep, which tipped over in the commotion.

Thankfully, everyone was safe, with only a few minor cuts and bruises, and one participant sustaining a small collarbone fracture. We were quickly assisted, transferred to another jeep, and taken to the hospital for routine check-ups. The doctors gave us the all-clear, ensuring peace of mind for the rest of the journey.

Though surprised by the incident, the group's enthusiasm never wavered. The experience became a unique story to share—a testament to both the unpredictability of the wild and the spirit of adventure that brought us to Yala in the first place.

That evening, four of our clients returned to Yala National Park and were rewarded with a truly memorable encounter—a Leopard! Alongside this majestic predator, they also spotted Asian Elephants, a Golden Jackal, Eurasian Wild Pig, Water Buffalo, and Chital. Birdlife added further delight, including Ashy-crowned Sparrow Lark, Indian Paradise Flycatcher, Sri Lankan Woodshrike, Yellow-crowned Woodpecker, and Common Kingfisher.

Back at the hotel, the group continued the evening tradition of the checklist, followed by dinner. Stories of the day's adventures were shared, with everyone reflecting on the thrilling leopard sighting and other remarkable encounters that had made the day unforgettable.

Day 13

Wednesday 9th July

Our day began with a relaxed morning, allowing the group to enjoy the refreshing pool, explore the serene beach, or wander through the hotel gardens, soaking in the tranquil surroundings. At 12:00 pm, we bade farewell to our current hotel and set off towards Tissa for a delightful lunch around 1:00 pm.

The group had lunch together at Kithala Resort in Tissamaharama. Soon after, the group split, with only one guest choosing to continue with the tour extension to Sinharaja. She and our guide proceeded to Blue Magpie Lodge at Kudawa, our base for the next two days, eagerly anticipating the opportunity to explore the biodiversity of the Sinharaja World Heritage Site. We arrived at the secluded forest lodge shortly after sunset, had dinner, and retired for the night to recover from the long journey and prepare for an exciting day in the forest.

After lunch, the group visited the remarkable bat colony in Tissamaharama, one of Sri Lanka's most spectacular wildlife sights. Nestled near the Tissa Tank, which dates back to the reign of King Kavantissa in the 3rd century BC, the colony is home to thousands of Indian Flying Foxes. As we watched the bats roosting and later taking flight, the sheer scale and synchronicity of their movement was breathtaking. These magnificent creatures play a vital role in pollination and seed dispersal, and observing them amidst such a historic setting provided a memorable blend of wildlife and culture.

By late afternoon, we continued our journey to the Airport Garden Hotel, conveniently located near the airport, arriving around 6:00 pm. In the evening, we gathered for a final dinner together, sharing stories of the tour and reminiscing over the incredible wildlife encounters that had filled our days. Laughter, camaraderie, and gratitude for the unforgettable experiences marked a perfect conclusion to our remarkable Naturetrek Mammal Tour.

Day 14

Thursday 10th July

With breakfast behind us, we said farewell to the lush landscapes and unforgettable wildlife of Sri Lanka. Our Naturetrek Mammal Tour had come to a close, leaving hearts full of memories and cameras brimming with incredible encounters. We departed for the airport in good time, reflecting on the extraordinary journey as we prepared for our flights back to London, carrying with us stories of elephants, leopards, monkeys, and countless other wonders that had made this adventure truly unforgettable.

Sinharaja Extension

Day 1

Thursday 10th July

Sinharaja Rainforest

Our day began at 6:30 am with an early breakfast, accompanied by the echoing calls of the Sri Lanka Myna and a view of rainforest-clad mountains forming our backdrop. By 7:00 am, we set off by jeep into the heart of the Sinharaja Rainforest, passing through its lush buffer zone.

Climbing uphill, we made a brief stop at a home garden on the forest's edge—an excellent spot to observe the endemic Layard's Striped Squirrel and the elusive Sri Lanka Spurfowl. This location also offered great views of other endemic birds found in Sri Lanka's rainforests, including Layard's Parakeet, the Orange-billed Babbler, and Legge's Flowerpecker.

After a fulfilling hour, we continued our journey uphill and were soon greeted by a busy feeding flock at the forest entrance. Leading the flock was the majestic Sri Lanka Drongo, joined by other iconic endemics such as the Ashy-headed Laughingthrush, Sri Lanka Scimitar Babbler, and Black-naped Monarchs.

We then ventured deeper into the forest on foot, following the Sinharaja Research Centre access road. Walking through this virgin rainforest offered a truly immersive experience. Our guest, who had a keen interest in flowering plants, was thrilled to witness a diversity of flora—nearly 75% of which is endemic to Sri Lanka. Our slow pace allowed us to observe several forest wonders, including the endemic Sri Lanka Kangaroo Lizard, the Green Vine Snake, the Spot-winged Thrush, and Emerald Doves feeding quietly along the trail.

Further along, we encountered another bird flock that included the striking Malabar Trogon and the Sri Lanka Red-backed Flameback. By noon, we reached the Sinharaja Research Station, where we took a short break and enjoyed some refreshments. In the open sunny space, we were treated to sightings of charismatic butterflies such as the Sri Lanka Birdwing, Sri Lanka Tree Nymph, and the Clipper.

On our return journey, we paused at a pond filled with endemic freshwater fish species, including the Combtail, Stone Sucker, Walking Catfish, and the semi-aquatic Boulenger's Keelback. A highlight of the walk back was spotting a pair of Sri Lanka Frogmouths dozing off in a roadside shrub, perfectly camouflaged among the dry leaves. We also encountered a troop of Toque Macaques along the way.

We returned to the lodge for a late lunch around 2:00 pm and spent a relaxed afternoon. In the evening, we visited the Sinharaja ticket office area, where we strolled for about two hours and observed the southern subspecies of the endemic Purple-faced Langur, lazily feeding in the tall canopy while well hidden among the foliage.

At 7:00 pm, we gathered for our daily checklist session, only to be interrupted by the call of the endemic Chestnut-backed Owlet from the hotel garden. A quick look outside rewarded us with a brief yet satisfying view of this elusive species. Over dinner, we shared our highlights and made plans for the next day, eager to discover what other forest wonders awaited us.

Day 2

Friday 11th July

Sinharaja Rainforest

Our day began at 6:30 am, just like the previous day, with an early breakfast before setting off by jeep into the forest at 7:00 am. Our first stop was at another forest lodge in hopes of spotting the Sri Lanka Blue Magpie. Unfortunately, the species didn't make an appearance—likely due to its breeding season, which tends to limit its movement.

We continued uphill to the forest and were fortunate to encounter another mixed-species feeding flock en route. This time, we had our first sighting of the striking endemic Red-faced Malkoha and the elusive Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon. Nearby, we also enjoyed good views of the Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill, the endemic Whistling Lizard, and a resting Hump-nosed Pit Viper.

Next, we began our forest walk along the Giant Nawada Tree Trail, passing through impressive stands of tall Shorea trees. The trail brought us more forest treasures, including the endemic Crimson-backed Flameback and the Dark-fronted Babbler, with occasional high-pitched calls betraying the presence of the shy and secretive Sri Lanka Thrush. Along the way, we also came across an Oriental Rat Snake, an Indian Black Terrapin, and a variety of butterflies including the Southern Duffer, Red Helen, Blue Admiral, Commander, and Brown King Crow.

We finished the forest trail a bit earlier than the previous day, allowing us to enjoy a refreshing cup of Ceylon tea and sample authentic local snacks with Kitul jaggery at a small boutique near the forest edge. We returned to the hotel for a late lunch and spent a relaxed afternoon before gathering again for an evening birding session from the hotel balcony.

The view overlooking the forest-village interface proved rewarding. Perched atop tall palms were the colourful Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot, Crimson-fronted Barbet, Yellow-fronted Barbet, Layard's Parakeet, and Sri Lanka Green Pigeon. We were also lucky to spot the uncommon Black-throated Munia. The evening sky was alive with the graceful flight of Crested Treeswifts, Indian Swiftlets, Asian Palm Swifts, and the endemic Sri Lanka Swallow.

It was another truly fulfilling day, and dinner was spent recounting the day's highlights and making plans for our final day in this remarkable corner of the forest.

Day 3

Saturday 12th July

Katunayake

It was our final day in Sinharaja, and we set off early at 6:00 am with packed breakfast to visit the nearby forest village of Ketalapatala. We arrived at a secluded home garden just as the morning was coming to life. The tranquil setting rewarded us with sightings of the elusive Sri Lanka Spurfowl, along with Sri Lanka Junglefowl, Spot-winged Thrush, Ashy-headed Laughingthrush, and Yellow-browed Bulbul. The air was filled with the noisy calls of Layard's Parakeets flying overhead and the far-reaching drumming call of the Crimson-backed Flameback, which later appeared in full view.

We enjoyed our breakfast peacefully, surrounded by this forest spectacle. Shortly after, we were treated to a close encounter with a pair of Red-faced Malkohas—usually high-canopy dwellers—coming down to near eye-level. Another highlight was spotting the elusive endemic Sri Lanka Green-billed Coucal, carefully gathering nesting material within the same garden.

The morning passed quickly, and by 9:30 am we began our journey back to the hotel. With ample time before departure, we packed leisurely and had time to freshen up. At 12:00 pm, we gathered for our final checklist session, followed by a delicious lunch featuring a traditional Sri Lankan rice and curry spread.

We left the hotel at 1:00 pm and began our journey to Katunayake. By 4:15 pm, we arrived at our final accommodation—the Airport Garden Hotel in Katunayake. The day concluded with our last dinner together at 7:00 pm, an early and warm gathering filled with laughter and stories, reflecting on the many memorable moments from our journey across Sri Lanka.

Day 4

Sunday 13th July

Fly back to UK

Following a satisfying breakfast, we completed the check-out process at the hotel and made our way to the airport by 9:30 am for our return flight to the UK, marking the conclusion of yet another remarkable Naturetrek adventure.

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Species lists

Mammals

Common name	Scientific name
Asian Elephant	<i>Elephas maximus</i>
Grey Slender Loris	<i>Loris lydekkerianus</i>
Toque Macaque	<i>Macaca sinica</i>
Tufted Grey Langur	<i>Semnopithecus priam</i>
Purple-faced Langur	<i>Semnopithecus vetulus vetulus</i>
Bear Monkey	<i>Semnopithecus vetulus monticola</i>
Indian Gerbil	<i>Tatera indica</i>
Indian Crested Porcupine	<i>Hystrix indica</i>
Indian Giant Flying Squirrel	<i>Petaurista philippensis</i>
Sri Lankan Giant Squirrel	<i>Ratufa macroura</i>
Dusky Striped Squirrel	<i>Funambulus sublineatus</i>
Indian Palm Squirrel	<i>Funambulus palmarum</i>
Indian Hare	<i>Lepus nigricollis</i>
Indian Flying Fox	<i>Pteropus medius</i>
Greater Asian False-vampire	<i>Lyroderma lyra</i>
Indian Rufous Horseshoe Bat	<i>Rhinolophus rouxi</i>
Indian Pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus coromandra</i>
White-spotted Chevrotain	<i>Moschiola meminna</i>
Malabar Red Muntjac	<i>Muntiacus malabaricus</i>
Chital	<i>Cervus axis</i>
Sambar	<i>Rusa unicolor</i>
Eurasian Wild Pig	<i>Sus scrofa</i>
Leopard	<i>Panthera pardus kotiya</i>
Small Indian Civet	<i>Viverricula indica</i>
Northern Palm Civet	<i>Paradoxurus hermaphroditus</i>
Golden Palm Civet	<i>Paradoxurus zeylonensis</i>
Ruddy Mongoose	<i>Urva smithii</i>
Stripe-necked Mongoose	<i>Urva vitticollis</i>
Indian Grey Mongoose	<i>Urva edwardsii</i>
Golden Jackal	<i>Canis aureus</i>
Eurasian Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>

Birds

E = endemic, N = Near endemic	
Common name	Scientific name
Lesser Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>
Indian Peafowl	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>
Sri Lanka Spurfowl - E	<i>Gallus bicalcaratus</i>
Sri Lanka Junglefowl - E	<i>Gallus lafayetii</i>
Jerdon's Nightjar - N	<i>Caprimulgus atripennis</i>
Sri Lanka Frogmouth	<i>Batrachostomus moniliger</i>
Crested Treeswift	<i>Hemiprocne coronata</i>
Asian Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus balasiensis</i>

E = endemic, N = Near endemic	
Common name	Scientific name
Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>
Green-billed Coucal - E	<i>Centropus chlororhynchos</i>
Greater Coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>
Red-faced Malkoha - E	<i>Phaenicophaeus pyrrhocephalus</i>
Asian Koel	<i>Eudynamys scolopaceus</i>
Fork-tailed Drongo-Cuckoo	<i>Sumiculus dicruroides</i>
Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>
Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon - E	<i>Columba torringtoniae</i>
Spotted Dove	<i>Spilopelia chinensis</i>
Common Emerald Dove	<i>Chalcophaps indica</i>
Sri Lanka Green Pigeon - E	<i>Treron pompadora</i>
Green Imperial Pigeon	<i>Ducula aenea</i>
Grey-headed Swampphen	<i>Porphyrio poliocephalus</i>
White-breasted Waterhen	<i>Amauornis phoenicurus</i>
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
Great Stone-curlew	<i>Esacus recurvirostris</i>
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
Red-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>
Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>
Tibetan Sand Plover	<i>Charadrius atrifrons</i>
Pheasant-tailed Jacana	<i>Hydrophasianus chirurgus</i>
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>
Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>
Asian Openbill	<i>Anastomus oscitans</i>
Lesser Adjutant	<i>Leptoptilos javanicus</i>
Painted Stork	<i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>
Black-necked Stork	<i>Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus</i>
Asian Woolly-necked Stork	<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>
Oriental Darter	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>
Little Cormorant	<i>Microcarbo niger</i>
Indian Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax fuscicollis</i>
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
Black-headed Ibis	<i>Threskiornis melanocephalus</i>
Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>
Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
Indian Pond Heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
Spot-billed Pelican	<i>Pelecanus philippensis</i>
Crested Honey Buzzard	<i>Pernis ptilorhynchus</i>
Crested Serpent Eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>
Changeable Hawk-Eagle	<i>Nisaetus cirrhatus</i>
Brahminy Kite	<i>Haliastur indus</i>
White-bellied Sea Eagle	<i>Ichthyophaga leucogaster</i>
Grey-headed Fish Eagle	<i>Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus</i>

E = endemic, N = Near endemic	
Common name	Scientific name
Chestnut-backed Owlet - E	<i>Glaucidium castanotum</i>
Brown Fish Owl	<i>Ketupa zeylonensis</i>
Malabar Trogon - N	<i>Harpactes fasciatus</i>
Malabar Pied Hornbill - N	<i>Anthracoceros coronatus</i>
Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill - E	<i>Ocyrceros gingalensis</i>
Indian Roller	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>
Stork-billed Kingfisher	<i>Pelargopsis capensis</i>
White-throated Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>
Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>
Asian Green Bee-eater	<i>Merops orientalis</i>
Yellow-fronted Barbet - E	<i>Psilopogon flavifrons</i>
Crimson-fronted Barbet - E	<i>Psilopogon rubricapillus</i>
Coppersmith Barbet	<i>Psilopogon haemacephalus</i>
Yellow-crowned Woodpecker	<i>Leiopicus mahrattensis</i>
Red-backed Flameback	<i>Dinopium psarodes</i>
Crimson-backed Flameback - E	<i>Chrysocolaptes stricklandi</i>
Peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
Plum-headed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula cyanocephala</i>
Layard's Parakeet - E	<i>Psittacula calthrapae</i>
Alexandrine Parakeet	<i>Psittacula eupatria</i>
Rose-ringed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>
Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot - E	<i>Loriculus beryllinus</i>
Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike	<i>Hemipus picatus</i>
Sri Lanka Woodshrike - E	<i>Tephrodornis affinis</i>
Small Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus cinnamomeus</i>
Orange Minivet - N	<i>Pericrocotus flammeus</i>
Black-hooded Oriole	<i>Oriolus xanthornus</i>
White-bellied Drongo	<i>Dicrurus caerulescens</i>
White-browed Fantail	<i>Rhipidura aureola</i>
Black-naped Monarch	<i>Hypothymis azurea</i>
Indian Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone paradisi</i>
House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>
Indian Jungle Crow	<i>Corvus culminatus</i>
Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher	<i>Culicicapa ceylonensis</i>
Cinereous Tit	<i>Parus cinereus</i>
Ashy-crowned Sparrow-Lark	<i>Eremopterix griseus</i>
Yellow-browed Bulbul - N	<i>Acritillas indica</i>
Black-capped Bulbul - E	<i>Rubigula melanicta</i>
White-browed Bulbul - N	<i>Pycnonotus luteolus</i>
Yellow-eared Bulbul - E	<i>Pycnonotus penicillatus</i>
Red-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>
Hill Swallow - N	<i>Hirundo domicola</i>
Sri Lanka Swallow - E	<i>Cecropis hyperythra</i>
Sri Lanka Bush Warbler - E	<i>Elaphornis palliseri</i>
Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>
Grey-breasted Prinia	<i>Prinia hodgsonii</i>
Plain Prinia	<i>Prinia inornata</i>
Common Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>

E = endemic, N = Near endemic	
Common name	Scientific name
Sri Lanka White-eye - E	<i>Zosterops ceylonensis</i>
Indian White-eye	<i>Zosterops palpebrosus</i>
Dark-fronted Babbler - N	<i>Dumetia atriceps</i>
Sri Lanka Scimitar Babbler - E	<i>Pomatorhinus melanurus</i>
Yellow-billed Babbler - N	<i>Argya affinis</i>
Velvet-fronted Nuthatch	<i>Sitta frontalis</i>
Southern Hill Myna - N	<i>Gracula indica</i>
Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>
Spot-winged Thrush - E	<i>Geokichla spiloptera</i>
Indian Blackbird - N	<i>Turdus simillimus</i>
Oriental Magpie-Robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>
Indian Robin	<i>Copsychus fulicatus</i>
Dull-blue Flycatcher - E	<i>Eumyias sordidus</i>
Tickell's Blue Flycatcher	<i>Cyornis tickelliae</i>
Pied Bush Chat	<i>Saxicola caprata</i>
Jerdon's Leafbird - N	<i>Chloropsis jerdoni</i>
Golden-fronted Leafbird	<i>Chloropsis aurifrons</i>
Purple-rumped Sunbird	<i>Leptocoma zeylonica</i>
Purple Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris asiaticus</i>
Loten's Sunbird - N	<i>Cinnyris lotenius</i>
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Black-throated Munia - N	<i>Lonchura kelaarti</i>
White-rumped Munia	<i>Lonchura striata</i>
Tricoloured Munia	<i>Lonchura malacca</i>
Paddyfield Pipit	<i>Anthus rufulus</i>

Reptiles

Common name	Scientific name
Indian Black Terrapin	<i>Melanochelys trijuga</i>
Indian Flap-shelled Turtle	<i>Lissemys punctata</i>
Oriental Garden Lizard	<i>Calotes versicolor</i>
Black-cheeked Lizard	<i>Calotes nigrilabris</i>
Sri Lankan Kangaroo Lizard	<i>Otocryptis wiegmanni</i>
Rhino-horned Lizard	<i>Ceratophora stoddartii</i>
Common House Gecko	<i>Hemidactylus frenatus</i>
Bengal Monitor	<i>Varanus bengalensis</i>
Common Bronzeback Tree Snake	<i>Dendrelaphis tristis</i>
Mugger Crocodile	<i>Crocodylus palustris</i>