

Sri Lanka's Mammals (and Sinharaja extension)

Naturetrek Tour Report

26th June – 12th July 2026



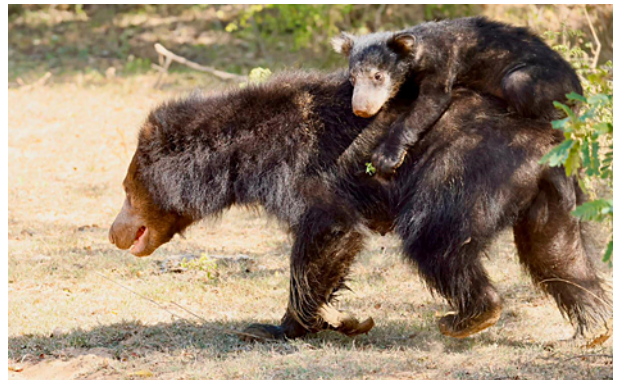
Purple-faced Langur



Leopard



Asian Elephants



Sloth Bears

Tour report by Saman Kumara and Dhanushka Perera
Photos by Caroline and Jim Biscoe



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: Saman Kumara and Dhanushka Perera (leaders) with eight Naturetrek clients

Summary

This tour provided a varied and rewarding journey through some of Sri Lanka's most important wildlife habitats, combining dry-zone National Parks, highland forests, cultural sites, wetlands, and the exceptional biodiversity of the Sinharaja rainforest.

The tour began in Sigiriya, where the group explored the famous ancient rock fortress and its surrounding habitats. A night safari also provided opportunities to observe nocturnal wildlife, including Jerdon's Nightjar and several reptiles. The ancient city of Polonnaruwa provided an interesting combination of history and wildlife, with the group exploring its impressive ruins. At Minneriya National Park, one of the major highlights was the sighting of more than a hundred Asian Elephants gathered around the reservoir. This impressive gathering demonstrated the importance of the ancient Minneriya Tank and surrounding grasslands as a refuge for elephants.

The journey then continued into the central highlands around Kandy and Nuwara Eliya. Cultural highlights included the Dambulla Cave Temple and the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic, while wildlife experiences included walks at Udawatta Kele Sanctuary and the Royal Botanic Gardens at Peradeniya. Moving higher into the mountains, Nuwara Eliya and Horton Plains National Park provided a very different environment. Visits to a working tea plantation and Hakgala Botanical Gardens also provided an insight into Sri Lanka's tea-growing heritage and highland landscapes.

The southern part of the tour brought some of the most memorable mammal encounters. At Yala National Park, some of the group were fortunate to experience a particularly rare sighting of a Sloth Bear with a cub. The safari also produced several Asian Elephants, Chital and Water Buffalo, together with the highly rewarding sighting of Nilame, a well-known male Leopard. The unpredictable nature of Leopard encounters made this a particularly memorable sighting for the group.

The final section of the tour was spent in the Sinharaja rainforest, one of Sri Lanka's most important areas for endemic wildlife. Over several days, the group explored the forest and surrounding villages, recording an impressive selection of endemic birds, mammals, reptiles, butterflies and freshwater species, while visits to local villages and home gardens offered a more intimate experience of the wildlife living alongside forest-edge communities.

Overall, the tour provided an excellent cross-section of Sri Lanka's wildlife and landscapes. The combination of Leopards, Sloth Bear, Asian Elephants, Giant Squirrels, civets, primates and an exceptional range of endemic birds made for a highly successful wildlife experience. The additional Sinharaja extension further strengthened the tour, giving the group the opportunity to explore one of the country's most important rainforest ecosystems and encounter many of Sri Lanka's endemic species at close quarters.

The tour concluded with a final evening together, giving the group an opportunity to reflect on the many memorable wildlife encounters, cultural experiences and landscapes encountered during their journey through Sri Lanka.

Day 1

Friday 26th June

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

Day 2

Saturday 27th June

The group arrived at Bandaranaike International Airport at around 2.00pm, marking the beginning of the tour. After meeting the group and completing the airport formalities, we set off towards the historic area of Sigiriya.

Our journey took us through Kurunegala, an important town in north-western Sri Lanka. Kurunegala was once the capital of Sri Lanka during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and the area is known for its prominent rocky hills and rich agricultural landscape. We stopped at a small restaurant beside a paddy field for a tea break. While enjoying a short rest, the group had its first wildlife sightings of the tour. A Sri Lankan Giant Squirrel was seen moving through the surrounding vegetation, while several Indian Palm Squirrels were actively feeding nearby. An Asian Water Monitor was also observed, along with a Common Kingfisher perched close to the water. These early sightings provided an encouraging start to the mammal tour.

We continued towards Sigiriya, one of Sri Lanka's most important historical and archaeological sites. Sigiriya is famous for its ancient rock fortress, built during the reign of King Kashyapa I in the fifth century. The site was once a royal palace and fortified complex, and today it is recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The surrounding area also contains forest, scrub and wetlands, providing suitable habitat for a variety of mammals and birds.

We arrived at the Sigiriya Hotel in the evening and had some time to settle in and relax. At 7.30pm, we gathered for a detailed briefing covering the following day's programme, including the planned wildlife activities and travel arrangements. Dinner was served at 8.00pm. Over dinner, the group had an opportunity to get to know one another and discuss the experiences ahead. With the first wildlife sightings already recorded, everyone was looking forward to the days of exploration that would follow.

Day 3

Sunday 28th June

Our day began with breakfast at 7.00am, before we set off for Sigiriya Lion Rock. The climb to the summit provided good opportunities for wildlife and birding. Along the way, we encountered Purple-faced Leaf Monkeys and Toque Macaques. The birdlife recorded around Sigiriya included Stork-billed Kingfisher, Asian Green Bee-eater, Little Swift, Black-headed Ibis, Great and Little Egrets, Little Cormorant, Peregrine Falcon, Pale-billed Flowerpecker, Great Thick-knee, Sri Lanka Woodshrike, and Black-capped and Red-vented Bulbuls.

After reaching the summit, we spent some time taking in the views across the surrounding dry zone landscape. We also viewed the famous Sigiriya frescoes, which are among the best-known examples of ancient Sri Lankan art. The frescoes are believed to date back to the period of King Kashyapa, and form an important part of the site's historical significance. On the lower grounds, we also observed a Bengal Monitor and an Oriental Garden Lizard. We returned to the hotel for lunch and spent the early afternoon relaxing.

At 3.30pm, we set off for Halmilla Tank for an afternoon birding session. The tank and surrounding scrub

provided a different habitat from Sigiriya Rock and produced a good selection of wetland and dry-zone species. We recorded fourteen species: Shikra, Sri Lanka Swallow, Spotted Dove, White-breasted Waterhen, Painted Stork, Medium Egret, Purple Heron, Crested Treeswift, Asian Palm Swift, Coppersmith Barbet, Plain Prinia, Purple-rumped Sunbird, and White-rumped and Tricoloured Munias.

We returned to the hotel at dusk and went through the day's checklist before dinner. Later in the evening, we prepared for the night safari in the Sigiriya Sanctuary. We left the hotel at 9.00pm and entered the sanctuary for a night drive. The nocturnal activity was good, and we recorded several mammals, birds and reptiles. The highlights included Grey Slender Loris, Indian Hare, Chital, Indian Spotted Chevrotain, Small Indian Civet and Golden Jackal. We also recorded a Jerdon's Nightjar. Among the reptiles seen during the night drive were a Green Forest Lizard, Bark Gecko and Indian Flapshell Turtle. We returned to the hotel around midnight, bringing the day's activities to an end.

Day 4

Monday 29th June

We began the morning with breakfast at 8.00am, before departing for the ancient city of Polonnaruwa. Polonnaruwa was the medieval capital of Sri Lanka from the eleventh to the thirteenth century, and is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The ancient city is known for its well-preserved ruins, temples, stupas, statues and irrigation systems, which reflect the importance of the city during Sri Lanka's medieval period.

We arrived at around 10.00am and spent the morning exploring the site. The ruins included ancient temples, monuments and stone statues, providing an insight into the history and architecture of the former capital. The wildlife around the ruins added an interesting element to the visit. We observed Toque Macaques and a Ruddy Mongoose moving through the archaeological area. Birding around Polonnaruwa produced several species, including White-bellied Sea Eagle, Asian Palm Swift, Changeable Hawk-Eagle, Brahminy Kite and Shikra.

For lunch, we stopped at a restaurant overlooking the surrounding paddy fields. After lunch, we returned to the hotel at around 3.30pm, allowing some time to relax before the evening activities. At 5.00pm, we went for a bird walk around the hotel gardens. The gardens produced Sri Lanka Green Pigeon, Crimson-fronted Barbet, Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill, Purple Sunbird, Yellow-billed Babbler, White-bellied Drongo, Indian Cormorant, Pale-billed Flowerpecker and Indian Robin, and we also observed a Purple-faced Langur.

After dinner, at 9.00pm, we departed for a night safari around Sigiriya village. The night drive provided an opportunity to look for nocturnal mammals, and we recorded Grey Slender Loris, Small Indian Civet, Indian Hare and Indian Crested Porcupine.

Day 5

Tuesday 30th June

We began the morning with breakfast at 8.00am, before setting out for the day's activities. Our first stop was the Dambulla Arboretum, where we focused on bats and other wildlife. Dambulla is located within Sri Lanka's dry zone, and provides suitable habitats for a variety of mammals, reptiles, amphibians and birds. During our visit, we recorded several bat species, including Lesser False Vampire and Schneider's Leaf-nosed. We also observed a Lowland Kangaroo Lizard, Indian Paradise Flycatcher and an Hourglass Tree Frog.

After lunch, we departed at 2.00pm for Minneriya National Park. The park was established in 1997, and is centred around the ancient Minneriya Tank, a large reservoir built by King Mahasen during the third century. The tank and surrounding grasslands and forests provide important habitat for Elephants and a wide variety of wetland and dry-zone wildlife.

The afternoon safari was particularly rewarding, with more than a hundred Asian Elephants gathered around the reservoir and surrounding open areas. This large gathering is a feature of the dry season here, when elephants congregate around the tank to feed and drink. We also observed several herds of Chital, while the wetlands and surrounding areas produced a good selection of birdlife. Highlights included Great Stone-curlew, Black-winged Stilt, Asian Openbill, Painted Stork, Great Cormorant, Spot-billed Pelican and Black-headed Ibis.

We returned to the hotel in the evening and gathered at 7.15pm to go through the day's checklist. We reviewed the highlights of the safari, particularly the impressive gathering of Elephants, before having dinner. At 9.30pm, we set out once again for a night safari around Sigiriya village. The drive produced several nocturnal mammals, including Grey Slender Loris, Indian Hare and Small Indian Civet.

Day 6

Wednesday 1st July

We began the day with breakfast, before checking out of our hotel and departing for Kandy. Our first stop was the Dambulla Cave Temple, one of Sri Lanka's most important cultural and religious sites. The temple complex comprises five caves, containing numerous Buddha statues and ancient murals. The earliest paintings and religious activity at the site date back to around the first century BCE, while much of the present artwork and restoration was carried out during later periods. The caves provided an interesting insight into Sri Lanka's Buddhist heritage and artistic traditions.

We continued our journey towards Kandy, stopping in Matale at a spice garden. After lunch, we were given a tour of the garden, where we learned about several of Sri Lanka's important spices, including cinnamon, cardamom and cloves. The visit also provided an introduction to the traditional cultivation and uses of these spices.

We arrived at our new accommodation, The Tree of Life in Kandy, and had some time to relax before our evening activity. At 6.30pm, we went for a walk around the hotel gardens. The surrounding vegetation provided suitable habitat for several nocturnal species, and we were fortunate to observe an Indian Giant Flying Squirrel and a Golden Palm Civet. Both were excellent mammal sightings, and were among the highlights of the day. We also recorded Brown Wood Owl and Yellow-browed Bulbul during the evening walk.

Day 7

Thursday 2nd July

We began the day with an early breakfast, before setting out for Udawatta Kele Sanctuary, located in the hills above Kandy. The sanctuary was once part of the royal forest reserve associated with the Kandyan Kingdom, and was protected as a forest area for the use of the royal court. Today, it is an important patch of forest within the Kandy area, and provides habitat for a variety of birds, mammals and other wildlife. During our walk through the forest, we recorded Malabar Red Muntjac, and Toque Macaques, along with Black-backed Dwarf Kingfisher, Brown-capped Babbler, Grey-headed Fish Eagle, Southern Hill Myna, Tickell's Blue Flycatcher, Golden-fronted Leafbird, Yellow-fronted Barbet and Sri Lanka Shama.

We left the forest and visited the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic, commonly known as the Temple of the Tooth. Located in the centre of Kandy, the temple is one of Sri Lanka's most important Buddhist sites, and houses what is believed to be a tooth relic of the Buddha. The relic has played an important role in the religious and political history of Sri Lanka, particularly during the period of the Kandyan Kingdom.

After lunch, we visited the Royal Botanic Gardens at Peradeniya. The gardens were established in their present form during the British colonial period, although the site has a much longer history associated with the Kandyan royal gardens. Today, the gardens are known for their extensive collection of tropical plants and large mature trees. One of the highlights of our visit was the large colony of Giant Fruit Bats, also known as Indian Flying Foxes roosting in the treetops. We also recorded several bird species, including Loten's Sunbird, White-bellied Drongo, Asian Koel, Alexandrine Parakeet, Changeable Hawk-Eagle, Black-hooded Oriole, Cinereous Tit, Indian White-eye, Small Minivet and Crested Serpent Eagle.

We returned to the hotel at around 5.30pm, and later went through our checklist before dinner at 7.30pm. After dinner, we went for a night walk around the hotel grounds. The evening walk produced an Indian Giant Flying Squirrel and several reptiles and amphibians, including Green Forest Lizard, Bark and Common House Geckos and Common Toad.

Day 8

Friday 3rd July

After breakfast, we checked out of our hotel and began our journey to Nuwara Eliya, travelling through the scenic central highlands of Sri Lanka. En route, we stopped at a working tea plantation and visited the tea factory. The factory tour provided an insight into the traditional process of producing Ceylon tea, from the processing of the freshly harvested leaves through to the finished product. We also had the opportunity to taste some freshly-prepared Ceylon tea, while enjoying views of the surrounding mountains and tea-covered slopes.

Nuwara Eliya is situated at around 1860m, and is known as Sri Lanka's main tea-growing region. The town was developed during the British colonial period in the nineteenth century, and became popular as a hill station, because of its cool climate. The surrounding area is now an important part of Sri Lanka's tea industry.

We arrived at our accommodation, The Heaven Seven, at around 1.00pm, and had lunch before setting out again at 2.30pm for Hakgala Botanical Gardens. The gardens were established during the British colonial period, and are located at an elevation of around 1745m. They contain a wide range of plants suited to the cool, wet conditions of the central highlands, and are surrounded by forest and mountain scenery. During our visit, we encountered several mammals, including Purple-faced Leaf Monkey, Dusky-striped Squirrel and Toque Macaque. The birding was also productive, with Yellow-eared Bulbul, Sri Lanka White-eye, Dull-blue Flycatcher and Cinereous Tit recorded.

We returned to the hotel later in the afternoon and went through our checklist, reviewing the day's wildlife and bird sightings. We then enjoyed dinner at the hotel, bringing another successful day of the tour to a close.

Day 9

Saturday 4th July

Our day began at 5.00am with a hot cup of tea and a packed breakfast, before we set off for Horton Plains National Park. As we climbed into the central highlands, we were greeted by mist and rain, as is common here. Horton Plains, located at an elevation of around 2000m, is one of Sri Lanka's most important highland ecosystems, and is renowned for its unique flora and fauna. The park is also home to several endemic species, and is an important habitat for mammals and highland birds. During our morning visit, we recorded several interesting mammals, including Purple-faced Langur, Sambar and Toque Macaque. The birding was equally rewarding, with sightings of Pied Bush Chat, Paddyfield Pipit, Hill Swallow, Sri Lanka White-eye, Indian Blackbird and Tricoloured Munia. After a productive morning in the park, we returned to the hotel for lunch and a well-earned break.

In the afternoon, we visited Bomuru Ella, a small forested area, which was alive with bird activity. Here we recorded Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher, Dull-blue Flycatcher, Cinereous Tit, Sri Lanka White-eye, Sri Lanka Bush Warbler, Yellow-eared Bulbul and Common Tailorbird.

As the day came to an end, we gathered for the evening checklist, followed by dinner. It had been another rewarding day of wildlife watching, combining the unique highland environment of Horton Plains with the rich birdlife of the surrounding forests.

Day 10

Sunday 5th July

Our day began with breakfast, before we checked out of the hotel at 8.30am and set off towards Ella. The journey took us through some of Sri Lanka's scenic central highlands, with beautiful views of the surrounding mountains and forests. Our first stop was at the famous Ravana Falls, where water cascades over a series of rocky cliffs into the pools below. The falls are named after the legendary King Ravana, and are traditionally associated with the Ramayana story. We took some time to enjoy the scenery and photograph this impressive natural landmark.

After a short stop for lunch en route, we continued towards Tissamaharama. Here, we visited an area supporting one of the largest colonies of roosting bats in the region. The colony provided an impressive wildlife spectacle, with large numbers of bats gathered in the trees.

We then continued to Debarawewa village, where an evening visit produced some excellent owl sightings. We recorded Indian Scops Owl, Jungle Owlet and Brown Boobook, providing a rewarding end to our afternoon wildlife watching.

We arrived at Cinnamon Wild at around 5.00pm, and had some time to relax and enjoy the surroundings. At 7.15pm, we gathered for the daily checklist and briefing, followed by dinner at 8.00pm. With the wildlife-rich areas of southern Sri Lanka ahead, we looked forward to the next day's adventures.

Day 11

Monday 6th July

Our day began with an early start at 5.15am, with packed meals prepared for a full day in the field. By 6.30am, we had arrived at Yala National Park, and began our safari, looking forward to a full day exploring one of Sri Lanka's most wildlife-rich protected areas.

We were fortunate to begin the morning with an exceptionally rare sighting of a Sloth Bear with a cub. Sloth Bears are among the more difficult mammals to encounter in Yala, as they are generally solitary, elusive, and spend much of their time in dense vegetation. Sightings are unpredictable, making an encounter with a mother and cub especially memorable. Unfortunately, since we were travelling in separate jeeps in different areas, only half of our group was able to enjoy this rare sighting. As the safari continued, we encountered several herds of Asian Elephants, along with numerous Chital and Water Buffalo. The varied habitats of Yala, from open grasslands and scrub to forest and wetlands, provided excellent opportunities for wildlife watching throughout the day.

One of the highlights of the safari was also the sighting of Nilame, a well-known local male Leopard. Nilame has become recognizable to local guides due to his distinctive appearance. Although Yala is famous for its high density of Leopards, individual animals can still be surprisingly difficult to locate, particularly when they are resting in dense vegetation, or moving through their large territories. Seeing a familiar and established male such as Nilame was therefore a particularly rewarding encounter for the group.

Birdlife was also well-represented during the safari, with White-bellied Sea Eagles and Grey-headed Fish Eagles regularly seen soaring above the park and watching over the surrounding wetlands and forest.

We remained in the park for most of the day, before returning to the hotel at around 6.15pm. The evening continued with our daily checklist at 7.15pm, followed by dinner at 7.30pm, where we reflected on the day's memorable wildlife encounters.

Day 12

Tuesday 7th July

Our day began with an early start, with the group splitting into two teams for the morning's wildlife activities. Five people accompanied Saman to Yala National Park, while three travelled with Dhanushka to Lunugamvehera National Park. Both groups were rewarded with excellent Leopard sightings. The Yala group recorded two Leopards, while the Lunugamvehera group was fortunate to encounter one Leopard, making it a highly successful morning for both teams. The safaris also produced sightings of several other important mammals, including Asian Elephants, Water Buffalo and Chital. The varied habitats of both parks provided good opportunities to observe wildlife in different settings.

The birdlife was particularly rewarding, with a diverse selection of species recorded throughout the day. Highlights included Black-necked Stork, Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker, Tibetan Sand Plover, Blue-faced Malkoha, Lesser Adjutant, Little Tern, Barred Buttonquail, Orange-breasted Green Pigeon and Yellow-wattled Lapwing.

After returning to the hotel, the group went straight to dinner. The evening was spent sharing stories from the day, with everyone reflecting on the exciting Leopard sightings and the variety of other wildlife encounters. With both groups recording Leopards, it was another highly successful day on the Naturetrek Mammal Tour.

Day 13

Wednesday 8th July

Our final day began with an early birding session in the hotel gardens, where we enjoyed the peaceful surroundings, and recorded several interesting species. Highlights included Great Crested Tern, Little Tern, Little Heron, Black-crowned Night Heron and Alpine Swift.

We returned to the hotel for breakfast at 8.00am, followed by our final checklist and tour briefing. After checking out at 11.30am, we set off towards Tissamaharama, stopping for lunch at around 12.30pm.

Following lunch, the group split into two at a service stop. Five people continued their journey towards Sinharaja for the extension, while the remaining three travelled to the Airport Garden Hotel, conveniently located close to the airport, arriving at around 6.00pm ready for their flight home

Day 14

Thursday 9th July

Main tour only clients arrived home in the UK.

Sinharaja Extension Day 1

Thursday 9th July

Our day began at 5.15am with an early breakfast, accompanied by the calls of Sri Lanka Mynas and with rainforest-clad mountains forming a spectacular backdrop. At 5.45am, we set off by jeep into the heart of the Sinharaja rainforest, travelling through the lush buffer zone towards the forest. As we climbed uphill, we made a brief stop at a garden on the edge of the forest. This proved to be an excellent location for observing the endemic Layard's Palm Squirrel and the elusive Sri Lanka Spurfowl. We also recorded several other endemic rainforest birds, including Layard's Parakeet, Sri Lanka Myna, Black-capped Bulbul and Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot.

After about an hour, we continued uphill towards Martin's Lodge, where we recorded Square-tailed Bulbul, Yellow-browed Bulbul, and another Layard's Palm Squirrel. We then ventured deeper into the rainforest on foot, following the access road towards the Sinharaja Research Centre. Walking slowly through this largely undisturbed rainforest provided an excellent opportunity to observe the forest's wildlife at close quarters.

One of the highlights was an encounter with the endemic Sri Lanka Kangaroo Lizard. We also came across a large mixed flock of birds, which provided some excellent birding. Species recorded included Red-faced Malkoha, Malabar Trogon, Lesser Yellownappe, Sri Lanka Red-backed Woodpecker, Sri Lanka Drongo, Black-naped Monarch, Sri Lanka White-eye, Dark-fronted Babbler, Sri Lanka Scimitar Babbler, Ashy-headed Laughingthrush, Orange-billed Babbler, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch and Legge's Flowerpecker. Around midday, we stopped briefly for refreshments. The open sunny area was particularly productive for butterflies, with sightings of Sri Lanka Birdwing, Sri Lanka Tree Nymph and Clipper.

On our return journey, we paused at a pond supporting several endemic freshwater species. These included fishes in the forms of Ceylonese Combtail, Stone Sucker and Walking Catfish, and the semi-aquatic Boulenger's Keelback Snake. Another highlight of the walk was finding a well-camouflaged Sri Lanka Frogmouth, perched quietly among the dry leaves on the forest floor. We also had a sighting of the Serendib Scops Owl, another highly sought-after endemic of the Sinharaja forests.

We returned to the lodge at around 3.00pm. In the evening, we visited a nearby village for a leisurely walk of about an hour. Here, we observed the southern form of the endemic Purple-faced Langur, feeding quietly high in the canopy and remaining well-hidden among the foliage.

At 7.00pm, we gathered for the daily checklist, followed by dinner. We reviewed the highlights of a highly

productive day in Sinharaja, with its exceptional concentration of endemic birds, mammals, reptiles, butterflies and other rainforest wildlife. The group was looking forward to another opportunity to explore this remarkable rainforest the following day.

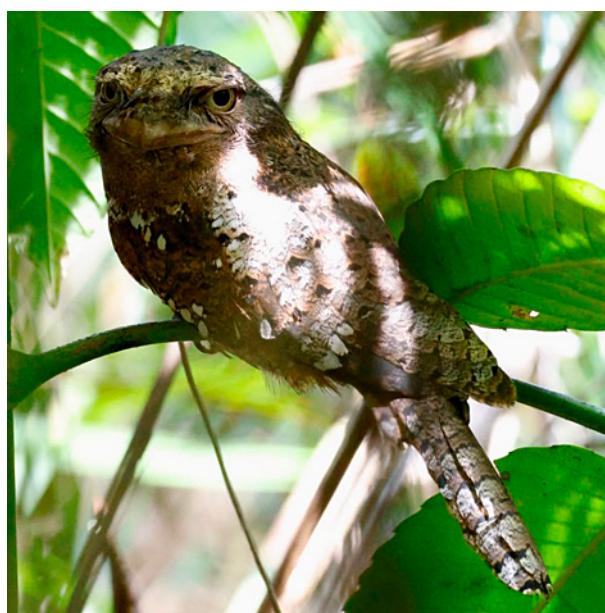
Sinharaja Extension Day 2

Friday 10th July

Our day began at 5.30am with an early breakfast before setting off by jeep into the forest at 6.00am. Our first stop was at another forest lodge, where we were fortunate to have a good sighting of the endemic Sri Lanka Blue Magpie. This striking species is one of the signature birds of Sinharaja and is always a highlight for visitors exploring the rainforest. We continued uphill towards the forest, and were fortunate to encounter another mixed-species feeding flock along the way. Among the highlights were our first good sightings of Sri Lanka Drongo, Ashy-headed Laughingthrush and Orange-billed Babbler, adding several more endemic rainforest species to our growing list.



Yerbury's Elf



Sri Lanka Frogmouth

We then began our forest walk along the Giant Nawada Tree Trail, passing through impressive stands of tall Shorea trees. The towering canopy and dense understory created the characteristic atmosphere of Sinharaja, and the slow pace of our walk allowed us to look and listen carefully for movement in the forest. We encountered several species that we had recorded on the previous day, providing further opportunities to observe their behaviour.

We completed the forest trail slightly earlier than the previous day, giving us time to enjoy a refreshing cup of Ceylon tea, and to sample some authentic local snacks served with Kitul jaggery at a small boutique near the forest edge. It was a pleasant opportunity to experience some of the local flavours before returning to the hotel for a relaxed afternoon. Later in the day, we gathered for an evening birding session. This produced some excellent sightings, including Spot-winged Thrush and Chestnut-backed Owlet. We also encountered a Sri Lanka Giant Squirrel and Purple-faced Langurs, adding some interesting mammal sightings to the afternoon's birding.

It had been another rewarding day in Sinharaja, with further opportunities to experience its remarkable concentration of endemic wildlife. Over dinner, we shared the highlights of the day and looked forward to our final day in this exceptional rainforest.

Sinharaja Extension Day 3

Saturday 11th July

It was our final morning in Sinharaja, and we made an early start at 6.00am for a visit to the nearby forest village of Ketalapatala. We arrived at a secluded home garden just as the forest was becoming active for the day. The quiet setting proved very productive, and we were fortunate to encounter the elusive Sri Lanka Spurfowl, one of the most sought-after endemic birds of the Sinharaja region. We also recorded Sri Lanka Junglefowl, Green-billed Coucal, Ashy-headed Laughingthrush, Orange-billed Babbler, Emerald Dove and Sri Lanka Myna. A Sri Lanka Giant Squirrel was also seen moving through the garden, adding a further mammal highlight to our final morning in the rainforest. The morning passed quickly, and we returned to the hotel at around 9.00am. With plenty of time before departure, we packed at a relaxed pace and had an opportunity to freshen up.

At 12.00pm, we gathered for our final checklist session, reviewing the impressive range of wildlife recorded during our stay in Sinharaja. This was followed by a delicious traditional Sri Lankan rice and curry lunch. We departed the hotel at 1.00pm and began our journey towards Katunayake. By around 4.15pm, we arrived at our final accommodation, the Airport Garden Hotel, conveniently located close to the airport.

Our final dinner together was at 7.00pm. It was a warm and relaxed evening, filled with laughter, stories and reflections on the many memorable wildlife encounters experienced throughout the tour. From the dry-zone national parks and their Leopards and Elephants, to the exceptional concentration of endemic species in Sinharaja, the tour had provided a rewarding and varied journey through Sri Lanka's remarkable wildlife habitats.

Sinharaja Extension Day 4

Sunday 12th July

Following a satisfying breakfast, we completed the check-out process at the hotel, and made our way to the airport by 9.30am for our return flight to the UK, marking the conclusion of yet another remarkable Naturetrek adventure.

Receive our e-newsletter

Join the Naturetrek email list and be the first to hear about new tours, additional departures and new dates, tour reports and special offers.

naturetrek.co.uk/e-newsletter-signup

Scan to
sign up!



Social Media

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



[instagram.com/naturetrek_wildlife_holidays](https://www.instagram.com/naturetrek_wildlife_holidays)



[facebook.com/naturetrekwildlifeholidays](https://www.facebook.com/naturetrekwildlifeholidays)



[naturetrek.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/naturetrek.social)



x.com/naturetrektours (formerly Twitter)

Species lists

Mammals

E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic I=Introduced	
Common name	Scientific name
Asian Elephant	<i>Elephas maximus</i>
Toque Macaque - E	<i>Macaca sinica</i>
Tufted Grey Langur	<i>Semnopithecus priam</i>
Purple-faced Langur - E	<i>Semnopithecus vetulus</i>
Grey Slender Loris	<i>Loris lydekkerianus</i>
Indian Hare	<i>Lepus nigricollis</i>
Indian Crested Porcupine	<i>Hystrix indica</i>
Layard's Palm Squirrel - E	<i>Funambulus layardi</i>
Dusky Striped Squirrel - E	<i>Funambulus obscurus</i>
Indian Palm Squirrel	<i>Funambulus palmarum</i>
Sri Lankan Giant Squirrel	<i>Ratufa macroura</i>
Indian Giant Flying Squirrel	<i>Petaurista philippensis</i>
Little Indian Field Mouse	<i>Mus booduga</i>
Indian Pipistrelle	<i>Alionotula coromandra</i>
Greater Short-nosed Fruit Bat	<i>Cynopterus sphinx</i>
Indian Flying Fox	<i>Pteropus medius</i>
Schneider's Leaf-nosed Bat	<i>Hipposideros speoris</i>
Lesser Asian False-vampire	<i>Megaderma spasma</i>
Indian Rufous Horseshoe Bat	<i>Rhinolophus rouxii</i>
Sloth Bear	<i>Melursus ursinus</i>
Golden Jackal	<i>Canis aureus</i>
Leopard	<i>Panthera pardus</i>
Indian Grey Mongoose	<i>Urva edwardsii</i>
Indian Brown Mongoose	<i>Urva fusca</i>
Ruddy Mongoose	<i>Urva smithii</i>
Stripe-necked Mongoose	<i>Urva vitticollis</i>
Golden Palm Civet - E	<i>Paradoxurus zeylonensis</i>
Small Indian Civet	<i>Viverricula indica</i>
Water Buffalo - I	<i>Bubalus bubalis</i>
Chital	<i>Axis axis</i>
Sambar	<i>Rusa unicolor</i>
Malabar Red Muntjac - N	<i>Muntiacus malabaricus</i>
White-spotted Chevrotain - E	<i>Moschiola meminna</i>

Birds (H=heard only)

E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic I=Introduced	
Common name	Scientific name
Lesser Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>
Indian Peafowl	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>
Sri Lanka Spurfowl - E	<i>Galloperdix bicalcarata</i>
Sri Lanka Junglefowl - E	<i>Gallus lafayettii</i>
Green-billed Coucal - E	<i>Centropus chlororhynchos</i>
Greater Coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>
Sirkeer Malkoha	<i>Taccocua leschenaultii</i>
Red-faced Malkoha - E	<i>Phaenicophaeus pyrrhocephalus</i>

E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic I=Introduced	
Common name	Scientific name
Blue-faced Malkoha - N	<i>Phaenicophaeus viridirostris</i>
Asian Koel	<i>Eudynamys scolopaceus</i>
Spotted Dove	<i>Spilopelia chinensis</i>
Feral Rock Dove - I	<i>Columba livia</i>
Common Emerald Dove	<i>Chalcophaps indica</i>
Orange-breasted Green Pigeon	<i>Treron bicinctus</i>
Sri Lanka Green Pigeon - E	<i>Treron pompadora</i>
Green Imperial Pigeon	<i>Ducula aenea</i>
Purple Swampphen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>
White-breasted Waterhen	<i>Amauornis phoenicurus</i>
Great Stone-curlew	<i>Esacus recurvirostris</i>
Indian Stone-curlew	<i>Burhinus indicus</i>
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>
Yellow-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus malabaricus</i>
Red-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>
Tibetan Sand Plover	<i>Anarhynchus atrifrons</i>
Kentish Plover	<i>Anarhynchus alexandrinus</i>
Pheasant-tailed Jacana	<i>Hydrophasianus chirurgus</i>
Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
Barred Buttonquail	<i>Turnix suscitator</i>
Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>
Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>
Greater Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bergii</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>
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
Indian Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax fuscicollis</i>
Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>
Black-headed Ibis	<i>Threskiornis melanocephalus</i>
Spot-billed Pelican	<i>Pelecanus philippensis</i>
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
Little Heron	<i>Butorides atricapilla</i>
Indian Pond Heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>
Medium Egret	<i>Ardea intermedia</i>
Eastern Cattle Egret	<i>Ardea coromanda</i>
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Jerdon's Nightjar - N	<i>Caprimulgus atripennis</i>
Indian Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus asiaticus</i>
Sri Lanka Frogmouth	<i>Batrachostomus moniliger</i>

E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic I=Introduced	
Common name	Scientific name
Crested Treeswift	<i>Hemiprocne coronata</i>
Asian Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus balasiensis</i>
Alpine Swift	<i>Tachymarptis melba</i>
Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>
Indian Swiftlet - N	<i>Aerodramus unicolor</i>
Brown Hawk Owl	<i>Ninox scutulata</i>
Jungle Owlet	<i>Glaucidium radiatum</i>
Chestnut-backed Owlet - E	<i>Glaucidium castanotum</i>
Serendib Scops Owl - E	<i>Otus thilohoffmanni</i>
Indian Scops Owl	<i>Otus bakkamoena</i>
Brown Fish Owl	<i>Ketupa zeylonensis</i>
Brown Wood Owl	<i>Strix leptogrammica</i>
Crested Serpent Eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>
Changeable Hawk-Eagle	<i>Nisaetus cirrhatus</i>
Besra	<i>Tachyspiza virgata</i>
Shikra	<i>Tachyspiza badia</i>
Brahminy Kite	<i>Haliastur indus</i>
White-bellied Sea Eagle	<i>Ichthyophaga leucogaster</i>
Grey-headed Fish Eagle	<i>Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus</i>
Malabar Trogon - N	<i>Harpactes fasciatus</i>
Common Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>
Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill - E	<i>Ocyceros gingalensis</i>
Malabar Pied Hornbill - N	<i>Anthracoceros coronatus</i>
Indian Roller	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>
Chestnut-headed Bee-eater	<i>Merops leschenaulti</i>
Asian Green Bee-eater	<i>Merops orientalis</i>
Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
Black-backed Dwarf Kingfisher	<i>Ceyx erithaca</i>
Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>
Stork-billed Kingfisher	<i>Pelargopsis capensis</i>
White-throated Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>
Crimson-fronted Barbet - E	<i>Psilopogon rubricapillus</i>
Coppersmith Barbet	<i>Psilopogon haemacephalus</i>
Brown-headed Barbet	<i>Psilopogon zeylanicus</i>
Yellow-fronted Barbet - E	<i>Psilopogon flavifrons</i>
Black-rumped Flameback	<i>Dinopium benghalense</i>
Lesser Yellownape	<i>Picus chlorolophus</i>
Crimson-backed Flameback - E	<i>Chrysocolaptes stricklandi</i>
Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker	<i>Yungipicus nanus</i>
Yellow-crowned Woodpecker	<i>Leiopicus mahrattensis</i>
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
Alexandrine Parakeet	<i>Psittacula eupatria</i>
Rose-ringed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>
Layard's Parakeet - E	<i>Psittacula calthrapae</i>
Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot - E	<i>Loriculus beryllinus</i>
Small Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus cinnamomeus</i>
Scarlet Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus flammeus</i>
Indian Cuckooshrike	<i>Coracina macei</i>
Ashy Woodswallow	<i>Artamus fuscus</i>

E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic I=Introduced	
Common name	Scientific name
Common Iora	<i>Aegithina tiphia</i>
Marshall's Iora	<i>Aegithina nigrolutea</i>
Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike	<i>Hemipus picatus</i>
Sri Lanka Woodshrike - E	<i>Tephrodornis affinis</i>
Black-hooded Oriole	<i>Oriolus xanthornus</i>
White-browed Fantail	<i>Rhipidura aureola</i>
Sri Lanka Drongo - E	<i>Dicrurus lophorinus</i>
White-bellied Drongo	<i>Dicrurus caerulescens</i>
Black-naped Monarch	<i>Hypothymis azurea</i>
Indian Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone paradisi</i>
Sri Lanka Blue Magpie - E	<i>Urocissa ornata</i>
House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>
Large-billed Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>
Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher	<i>Culicicapa ceylonensis</i>
Cinereous Tit	<i>Parus cinereus</i>
Jerdon's Bush Lark - N	<i>Plocealauda affinis</i>
Common Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>
Grey-breasted Prinia	<i>Prinia hodgsonii</i>
Jungle Prinia	<i>Prinia sylvatica</i>
Plain Prinia	<i>Prinia inornata</i>
Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>
Sri Lanka Bush Warbler - E	<i>Elaphrornis palliseri</i>
Hill Swallow - N	<i>Hirundo domicola</i>
Sri Lanka Swallow - E	<i>Cecropis hyperythra</i>
Black-capped Bulbul - E	<i>Rubigula melanictera</i>
White-browed Bulbul - N	<i>Pycnonotus luteolus</i>
Yellow-eared Bulbul - E	<i>Pycnonotus penicillatus</i>
Red-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>
Yellow-browed Bulbul - N	<i>Acritillas indica</i>
Square-tailed Bulbul - N	<i>Hypsipetes ganeesa</i>
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>
Brown-capped Babbler - E	<i>Pellorneum fuscicapillus</i>
Ashy-headed Laughingthrush - E	<i>Argya cinereifrons</i>
Orange-billed Babbler - E	<i>Argya rufescens</i>
Yellow-billed Babbler - N	<i>Argya affinis</i>
Velvet-fronted Nuthatch	<i>Sitta frontalis</i>
Sri Lanka Hill Myna - E	<i>Gracula ptilogenys</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>
Indian Robin	<i>Copsychus fulicatus</i>
Oriental Magpie-Robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>
Sri Lanka Shama - E	<i>Copsychus leggei</i>
Dull-blue Flycatcher - E	<i>Eumyias sordidus</i>
Tickell's Blue Flycatcher	<i>Cyornis tickelliae</i>

E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic I=Introduced	
Common name	Scientific name
Pied Bush Chat	<i>Saxicola caprata</i>
Legge's Flowerpecker - E	<i>Pachyglossa vincens</i>
Pale-billed Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum erythrorhynchos</i>
Purple-rumped Sunbird	<i>Leptocoma zeylonica</i>
Purple Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris asiaticus</i>
Loten's Sunbird - N	<i>Cinnyris lotenius</i>
Golden-fronted Leafbird	<i>Chloropsis aurifrons</i>
Scaly-breasted Munia	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>
White-rumped Munia	<i>Lonchura striata</i>
Tricoloured Munia	<i>Lonchura malacca</i>
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Paddyfield Pipit	<i>Anthus rufulus</i>

Amphibians & reptiles

Common name	Scientific name
Indian Black Terrapin	<i>Melanochelys trijuga</i>
Indian Flap-shelled Turtle	<i>Lissemys punctata</i>
Mugger Crocodile	<i>Crocodylus palustris</i>
Green Forest Lizard	<i>Calotes calotes</i>
Painted-lip Lizard	<i>Calotes ceylonensis</i>
Black-cheeked Lizard	<i>Calotes nigrilabris</i>
Oriental Garden Lizard	<i>Calotes versicolor</i>
Hump-nosed Lizard	<i>Lyriocephalus scutatus</i>
Sri Lankan Kangaroo Lizard	<i>Otocryptis wiegmanni</i>
Lowland Kangaroo Lizard	<i>Otocryptis nigristigma</i>
Forest Day Gecko	<i>Cnemaspis sp</i>
Common House Gecko	<i>Hemidactylus frenatus</i>
Bark Gecko	<i>Hemidactylus leschenaultii</i>
Termite Hill Gecko	<i>Hemidactylus triedrus</i>
Keeled Indian Mabuya	<i>Eutropis carinata</i>
Bronzegreen Little Skink	<i>Eutropis macularia</i>
Bengal Monitor	<i>Varanus bengalensis</i>
Common Water Monitor	<i>Varanus salvator</i>
Forsten's Cat Snake	<i>Boiga forsteni</i>
Common Bronzeback Tree Snake	<i>Dendrelaphis tristis</i>
Oriental Rat Snake	<i>Ptyas mucosa</i>
Boulenger's Keelback	<i>Fowlea asperima</i>
Green Vine Snake	<i>Ahaetulla nasuta</i>
Slender Coral Snake	<i>Calliophis melanurus</i>
Green Pit Viper	<i>Trimeresurus trigonocephalus</i>