

Sri Lanka

Jewel of the Indian Ocean

Sat 12–Sat 26 November 2016



Sri Lanka Highlights (clockwise from top left): Black Bittern at Debarawewa • Changeable Hawk-eagle having another bad hair day • Our awesome first Leopard at Yala • Indian Peacocks in their splendor • Close-up Chestnut-headed Bee-eater • Obliging White-throated Kingfisher . Photos © Mike Crewe/Limosa

**Report compiled by tour leader:
Mike Crewe**

Sri Lanka | Jewel of the Indian Ocean

Leaders – Mike Crewe & Dhammithera Samarasinghe (Dammi)

Day 1 – Saturday, November 12th 2016

Leaving a slightly damp and chilly UK was pretty easy this evening, with the lure of tropical warmth to come!

Day 2 – Sunday, November 13th 2016

Arriving in Colombo, we took a little while to sort out money exchange before meeting up with Dammi, finding our bus and heading out of town. The hustle and bustle of Sri Lanka's west coast region unfolded before us, but before long, we were taking a welcome snack break and enjoying our first Common Mynas. Continuing eastward and upward, we eventually arrived at our hotel at Kitulgala and just managed to squeeze in some first-day birding. Close encounters with our first Tickell's Blue Flycatcher will be well remembered, but the highlight was an obliging Chestnut-backed Owlet – our first island endemic.

Day 3 – Monday, November 14th 2016

Our first full day saw us out in the hotel garden before breakfast and enjoying great views of Purple-backed and Loten's Sunbirds, Pale-billed Flowerpeckers and Oriental White-eyes bouncing around the trees and hawking winged termites. Orange Minivet, White-bellied Sea Eagle, Brahminy Kite, Yellow-fronted Barbet, Layard's Parakeet and Common Iora all added to the list. Along the drive, both Orange-billed and Yellow-billed Babblers showed well, Oriental Magpie-robins sang sweetly and a Green Imperial Pigeon posed quietly. A pair of Sri Lanka Grey Hornbills showed up and Asian Palm Swifts and Indian Swiftlets cruised overhead. After breakfast, we took the small ferry across the river and walked into the Makandawa Reserve. Birding proved to be a little quiet but we began to get to grips with some of Sri Lanka's wet forest species and we enjoyed close views of a singing Brown-capped Babbler. Non bird highlights were many and included prolonged study of a female Green Garden Lizard burying her eggs by tamping down the sand with her nose! Another highlight here was the remarkable black, spidery, flower spike of Black Bat Flower (*Tacca chantrieri*), while we started our butterfly list with the likes of Clipper, Psyche, White Four-ring and Tailless Line-blue.

After a fine lunch, we headed a short way along the road to the area near the police station. More Orange-billed Babblers greeted us here, as well as our first Black-hooded Orioles. Yellow-browed and Square-tailed Bulbuls were noisy and active, while Dammi found a nice write-in for the list in the shape of a perched Dollarbird. A group of very vocal Southern Hill Mynas entertained us for a while until a shower of rain set us on our way back to the bus. A final treat for us came after dark when cloudy skies peeled back and revealed a spectacular full moon, at the closest point it will be to us for the next 60 years.

Day 4 – Tuesday, November 15th 2016

Some pre-breakfast birding at the hotel was a little quiet to start with, but birds did eventually show themselves and we had a chance to become more familiar with Kithulgala's garden treats, including a Stork-billed Kingfisher down at the river. Today was largely a travel day, as we set off for the Blue Magpie Lodge, close to the forest reserve of Sinharaja. Jolly along past rice paddies, rubber plantations and Coconut stands, we notched up a nice list of roadside birds, including no less than three Black Eagles.

We eventually made it in time for a fine lunch in the new section of the lodge. Duly fed, we set out again at 3pm for the very bumpy jeep ride up to the Sinharaja reserve. Meeting up with a local guide, we were taken along a bit of a tricky slope into the forest. Though slippery, we made it in one piece and the reward was a fine pair of Serendib Scops Owls, tucked well in under a dark canopy of branches and leaves. Amazing that these birds seem to be pretty obliging for visitors, despite going undiscovered for science until less than 20 years ago...

Day 5 – Wednesday, November 16th 2016

Up with the lark this morning for a morning experiencing the delights of the Sinharaja Reserve. The bumpy ride up in the jeeps certainly turned it into quite an adventure but we eventually arrived at the information centre, after a couple of brief stops to seek out Sri Lanka Hill Myna, Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot, Legge's Flowerpecker and some very obliging Sri Lanka Green Pigeons. At the first centre, we were soon enjoying a very tame Spot-winged Thrush, then an equally obliging Emerald Dove, before we chanced across a busy suite of birds that included the spectacular Sri Lanka Blue Magpie, several Orange Minivets, Brown Shrike and a fabulous, white, male Indian Paradise Flycatcher. Entering the forest, we were entertained by a small gathering of Sri Lanka Tree-nymphs – huge butterflies that drifted through the trees like tissue paper. Close encounters with a couple of Sri Lanka Junglefowl followed, then we were treated to a pair of Sri Lanka Frogmouths, snuggling up against

each other. Further along the main trail, after a rather quiet spell, we were suddenly immersed in a mad melee of birds. Sri Lanka Drongos, very noisy Ashy-headed Laughingthrushes, Sri Lanka Scimitar-babblers, Black-naped Monarch, some very unobliging White-faced Starlings and even a spectacular Red-faced Malkoha. Pressing on, we managed to dodge some really rather scary spiders that were as big as your hand and gave the Sri Lanka Thrush a good run for its money, but it remained hidden.

Our walk back started well, with a close encounter with a male Malabar Trogon, but suddenly the heavens opened and we had a deluge that lasted until we were back at the vehicles. With the rain past, we drove back down in the jeeps, the front vehicle notching up a Green Pit Viper, the second vehicle settling for a very tame Green Vine Snake. After lunch and a break, we walked out of the lodge – notching up a nice Indian Pitta in the process – and headed for a favoured spot for Green-billed Coucal. After a little bit of searching, we managed to find a couple of pairs, with at least one bird showing quite well – if a little briefly.

Day 6 – Thursday, November 17th 2016

One of the local Sinharaja specialties was still eluding us so we were up very early this morning and heading out in the jeeps to a neighbouring village. Patience and guile were needed here and we began by waiting on the road, where a nice range of birds provided us with plenty to watch. Eventually we were summoned down and, on the second attempt, we were all soon watching a very close pair of Sri Lanka Spurfowl, that were regular visitors to the back garden. Job done and back to base for breakfast!

It was another lengthy travel day today, this time heading to Embilipitiya, our gateway to the south. Arriving in time for lunch we were soon well fed with another fine buffet selection that included some fine curries. The views from the windows were pretty good too, with the lake outside providing us with Gull-billed, White-winged Black and Whiskered Terns, Spot-billed Pelicans and an array of cormorants, herons and egrets. After lunch, we enjoyed a local pair of Indian Scops Owls, before we headed south to the Kalametiya Bird Reserve. Here, a short walk through coastal scrub got us in place to watch Yellow-wattled Lapwings, flocks of Kentish and Lesser Sand Plovers, Little Stints, Curlew Sandpipers and a range of terns, including Little and Caspian.

Day 7 – Friday, November 18th 2016

Though our accommodation at Embilipitiya was undeniably comfortable, we had to press on southward and we were up and out early today, armed with a packed breakfast. Heading eastward, we were soon entering Udawalawe National Park. This wonderful area of dry scrub and associated wetlands is home to a fine cross-section of Sri Lanka's wildlife and it was not long before we were immersed in Indian Peafowl, Rosy Starlings and a whole host of calling prinias. Soon we were having one to one meetings with the park's largest occupants – Asian Elephants. We had a number of great encounters with these animals, including some all-too-cute youngsters. From our vantage point up in the jeeps, Jerdon's Bushlarks and Blyth's Pipits had to be looked down upon as they foraged right beside the main track. We eventually made it to an overlook under a spreading fig tree and tucked into packed breakfasts, against a backdrop of lurking jackals, soaring Spot-billed Pelicans and Painted Storks and hopelessly optimistic Toque Macaques. Venturing onward, we took the slope down to the edge of a major wetland, where Mugger Crocodiles lurked in quantity, Yellow Wagtails scuttled around and a host of egrets and herons fished. We also found our first Lesser Adjutant soaring here, too.

Cruising slowly back the way we had come, we encountered our first Malabar Pied Hornbills in a huge fig tree and enjoyed a festival of Green and Blue-tailed Bee-eaters. Back on the bus again, we headed south to Tissamaharama – fortunately for us, a place often referred to simply as Tissa! Another voluminous lunch appeared and was gratefully demolished, before it was time for some afternoon birding at the local wetlands at Debarawewa. The place overflowed with birds, including large numbers of Pheasant-tailed Jacanas, Grey-headed Swampheens, Lesser Whistling-ducks and Little Cormorants, as well as a good scattering of Purple Herons, Eurasian Coots, Yellow Bitterns, a Watercock, and three Black Bitterns. Recent rains caused some temporary bus shenanigans before we headed back to the hotel and more food!

Day 8 – Saturday, November 19th 2016

Armed with our trusty packed breakfasts, we headed south from the hotel today for a morning at Bundala National Park. Having got all of the entrance procedures sorted and checked out the Little Swift nests, we were soon heading across an area of damp grassland, where Red-wattled Lapwings, Oriental Skylarks and Blyth's Pipits fed. A short detour out to a viewpoint over the main lake revealed a mass of hunting Whiskered and White-winged Terns and several Indian Stone-curlews nearby. A drive through the neighbouring thorn scrub was a little quiet, but we did have the chance to play cat and mouse with some rather elusive Banded Button-quails. Our journey took us through to a complex of saltpans with the furthest pool alive with waders. Driving through, we enjoyed close up views of Curlew Sandpipers, Little Stints, Common Redshank, Black-tailed Godwits and some wonderful Small Pratincoles. Terns were present in good numbers, too, with Greater and Lesser Crested Terns

particularly well represented. Working through the waders in the main pool, it soon became clear that good numbers of Broad-billed Sandpipers were lurking among the other species, while nine Red-necked Phalaropes were spinning around in the background. The big surprise here was the discovery of two Great Knot, while an abundance of Northern Shoveler was also something of a surprise.

After a tasty hotel lunch, we headed back to the wonderfully birdy pond at Debarawewa. Before long we were immersed in herons, egrets, cormorants, whistling ducks and masses of Pheasant-tailed Jacanas and Grey-headed Swampheens again. Black and Yellow Bitterns both put in an appearance again and we rounded the day off with flight views of a Cinnamon Bittern.

Day 9 – Sunday, November 20th 2016

It was another packed breakfast start to the day today and we headed out well before dawn so as to be in with a fighting chance of getting into the queue at the entrance gate to the wonderful Yala National Park. While this park attracts a large number of visitors, only a small area of it is open to the public so much of it remains an undisturbed wilderness of scrub forest, rocky outcrops and shallow lagoons. Cruising the dirt roads and trails we soon began running into a nice array of mammals, including herds of Chital and Feral Water Buffalo as well as occasional encounters with Ruddy Mongooses and Wild Boar. Open areas with muddy lagoons were dominated by the sinister forms of Mugger Crocodiles and, at one particular spot, several were gathered around the body of a Chital, with Golden Jackals and Indian Jungle Crows awaiting their turn. With the various jeep drivers all in contact with each other, it wasn't long before we were in pursuit of a reported Leopard sighting. While the chase was rather thrilling, it came to nothing and, in the end, fortune shone upon us and we actually chanced upon our very own Leopard – so much better than jumping in on someone else's... Our Leopard appeared to be a fully-grown and well fed male, who had chosen to hang out in a low spreading tree. At first, just his tail was visible, twitching at the tip and giving him away. With a bit of careful manoeuvring, however, we were in perfect position to enjoy him and record him for posterity. Truly an amazing moment to experience. Later, we got lucky again and managed views of what appeared to be a female, working her way through the undergrowth. But it was our first male that really made an impression on us and will be remembered for many years to come.

Birds were in good supply at Yala and included good views of both Blue-faced and Sirkeer Malkohas, three species of bee-eaters – including three wonderful Chestnut-headed Bee-eaters – and some interesting encounters with Indian Peafowl. Baya Weavers attending to their nests caught our attention for a while, as did some busy Brahminy Starlings. Both packed breakfast and lunch were taken at a sandy beach, where Greater Crested Terns fed offshore and a pair of House Sparrows were considering the prospect of nest-building in a visiting jeep! It had been a fun day and we returned to the hotel with some great memories and to prepare for more good food and Lion Beers – or Elephant Ginger Beers!

Day 10 – Monday, November 21st 2016

Today was to be mostly a travel day, but it was certainly an interesting journey, as we travelled back north from the coastal flatlands and into the hills. Climbing ever higher, we eventually stopped for a tea break at the little town of Ella. Here, the views back southward to the coast were pretty spectacular and the locals were keen that we shouldn't miss the day's highlight – a train crossing the local railway bridge. Some flowering Coral Trees were popular with Oriental White-eyes, Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrikes and Golden-fronted Leafbirds and a Brown Mongoose was a surprise visitor to the gardens.

Refreshed after our cups of tea, we pressed on, reaching the Surrey Estate lodge in time for lunch. But before we could eat, there were birds to be enjoyed, starting with some busy Cinereous Tits and a pair of Brown-headed Barbets at close range. The real highlight here, however, came in the shape of a roosting Brown Wood Owl, tucked away in a Fishtail Palm, with Indian Blue Robin and Orange-headed Thrush as a supporting cast. Onward, ever onward (and upward!) we eventually reached Nuwara Eliya in the late afternoon. We gave the local whistling-thrushes a quick check to no avail, but we did find our first Yellow-eared Bulbuls. Once checked in to our rather grand accommodation (fit for a queen it seems!) we took a walk around the block to get a flavour of the area. Birding was rather quiet, but it was nice to enjoy the feel of this old hill station town.

Day 11 – Tuesday, November 22nd 2016

Another early start today was met with quite a covering of fog and it was a rather interesting drive up the mountain to Horton Plains! One in the park, we birded the roadside and were soon immersed in flocks of Sri Lanka White-eyes. Other birds were less obliging at first, but perseverance paid off and gradually we managed to tease out a couple of pairs of Sri Lanka Bush Warblers. Further on in the grasslands, we enjoyed some fine fly-bys from a couple of Hill Swallows, as well as the opportunity to chat to the local Sambars, which seemed pretty oblivious to our presence. With the fog lifting, we ventured on, turning up some great views of Dull-blue Flycatchers – a bird that's more attractive than the name might suggest. Several buzzards were seen today that

raised questions about the birds that winter here – were they all Himalayan Buzzards, or were we seeing Steppe Buzzards too? Pied Bushchats were busy collecting food for young and Zitting Cisticolas bounced around the grasslands, then it was all too soon time to head back down for another fine lunch. Late afternoon saw us making the short journey to Victoria Park, where the first pond provided us with Green Sandpiper, Common Kingfisher, and an Indian Pond Heron perched on a Norfolk Island Pine! Though our chief quarry here decided not to be particularly helpful, we still enjoyed some good birding, including the likes of Indian Pitta, Blyth's Reed Warbler, Indian Blue Robin and several Forest Wagtails.

Day 12 – Wednesday, November 23rd 2016

After only a partial success yesterday afternoon, a few brave souls were up early this morning and returned to Victoria

Park for a second attempt. After three circuits of the area, our luck changed and we chanced across a wonderful Pied Thrush, digging up worms in the mud. This was soon followed by our one and only Kashmir Flycatcher that worked steadily through the Monterey Cypress trees that are common in the park. Back for breakfast, we then packed and began our decent back down to the hotter lowlands. Our route again took us through a twisty, turny landscape of tea plantations and small holdings and we broke our journey with a visit to a tea processing plant. Here, we not only learned about the whole preparation process, but we also got to sample the wares, as well as enjoy some nesting Hill Swallows. Passing through the outskirts of Kandy – and passing that spectacularly huge *Ficus benjamina* – we stopped off for lunch (seems we were forever eating on this trip, but the food was pretty darned good!) then completed our journey to Sigiriya.

Once rooms were sorted and we were settled in, we took a short walk along the lane from our hotel and found our first Fork-tailed Drongo-cuckoo as well as good number of Sri Lanka Green Pigeons. But our main mission was to wait for the light to fade, after which we got our first looks at a Jerdon's Nightjar, which was soon followed by a different night jar!

Day 13 – Thursday, November 24th 2016

A full day birding around Sigiriya began with a pre-breakfast walk in the lane. Or at least a stand, since we chanced across a whole bunch of birds almost immediately – despite the drizzle. Sri Lanka Green Pigeons and an array of barbets and bulbuls were attracted to fruiting figs and we finally got good views of the endemic Black-capped Bulbul, which had been doing its best to avoid us until now. Further along the lane we tried crake calling, but settled for a Brown-capped Babbler that mooched along almost at our feet. Breakfast ensured we didn't go hungry for the next few hours, then we headed out to bird the forests near the great Lion Rock. Perseverance was required at first, but before long we were immersed in good stuff, starting with a Jerdon's Leafbird that fed at mistletoe flowers. Soon we had a male Black-headed Cuckooshrike to enjoy, then a busy pair of Tawny-bellied Babbler, then a male Indian Paradise Flycatcher, then a Sri Lanka Woodshrike – the good birds just kept coming! We also started what was to become a decent butterfly list for the day with Peacock Pansies drifting around over the grass, soon to be followed by a Chocolate Soldier or two.

Taking a short drive, we had further success along a road that crosses north of Lion Rock. The forest was quiet at first but we soon picked up on a few more goodies, as well as working through a host of interesting butterflies feeding on the damp ground. Golden Angle, Malayan, Zebra Blue, Common Hedge Blue and Angled Castor were all new to the list here. Further on – and with much relief for Mike – we finally found ourselves a Black Rat. Since it was on the list, we felt sure we should find one, though sadly this one was rather flat and clearly not going anywhere. More butterflies were in this section – Great Eggfly, Grey Pansy, African Babul Blue and Oriental Cupid all graced Rat Corner, along with a few Juggle Prinias and a White-winged Tern. After another vast lunch and a siesta, we ventured out in the late afternoon and were soon enjoying a Rufous Woodpecker, which posed perfectly in the scope for us. Our day rounded off in a search for nightjars, with our wait being enlivened by Robert's bat detecting skills and by the news that there was a rogue elephant just half a kilometre up the road! Eventually a fine Jerdon's Nightjar appeared and put on a great show from a nearby dead snag.

Day 14 – Friday, November 25th 2016

Our final full day was to be our last travel day, but Dammi had some nice things lined up for us. A pre-breakfast walk at Sigiriya in search of fish owls didn't find us our quarry, but we still had some nice birds, as well as plenty of monkeys to enjoy. Packing up and shipping out, we made a supermarket stop for some spices and other goodies, then checked a few roadside wetlands, where we eventually found a male Cotton Pygmy Goose. Dragonflies were out in good numbers in the warm weather, too and the likes of Rapacious Flangetail, Orange-winged Groundling and Spine-tufted Skimmer were all found. Masses of cormorants, herons and egrets thronged the wetlands and, before long it was – yes, you guessed it – time to eat again!

After lunch at Kurunagala, we paid a visit to the local buddhist temple, expertly guided by Dammi, who gave us some great insight into his religion. Then, after this peaceful respite, it was time to head onward to the coast and our final resting place on the coast. Little in the way of birds was to be seen here, unless you are keen on House Crows, but it gave us a good opportunity to get freshened up, sink a few last drinks together and reflect on a great tour.

Day 15 – Saturday, November 26th 2016

Time for final farewells to Dammi and the team as we made a comfortable transfer to the airport and began our homeward journey. Having needed to jump in and co-lead this trip last-minute, I was apprehensive, but I needn't have been. This was a great group and it was such fun to spend time with you all in the field. It was also a pleasure and a privilege to spend time with Dammi and to learn so much about his country from him.

I look forward to the day when we get a chance to travel together again, some other place, some other time...

Annotated List of Birds Recorded (Total species - 243)

Lesser Whistling-duck *Dendrocygna javanica*

Widely scattered at wetlands throughout, with largest numbers around Tissa.

Cotton Pygmy Goose *Nettapus coromandelianus*

Two seen at Debarawewa on 19th and a total of three at roadside wetlands on our long drive on 25th.

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

An irregular bird on Sri Lanka, so it was surprising to find some 200 birds at Bundala on 19th.

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*

Noted at Kalamateiya and Bundala. Also around 180 flew west over the sea off Yala on 20th.

Garganey *Anas querquedula*

Around 20 birds at Bundala on 19th.

Sri Lanka Spurfowl *Galloperdix bicalcarata*

Heard calling at Kithulgala and Sinharaja and finally seen well near the Blue Magpie on 17th.

Sri Lanka Junglefowl *Gallus lafayetii*

Heard almost daily but much trickier to see! A good scattering seen, however, at four sites, most notably at Sinharaja and Yala.

Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristata*

Plentiful and seen regularly throughout the trip. Some fine views of a displaying male at Yala on 20th.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

At least five on a roadside lake on 17th with a singleton seen by some on 19th.

Painted Stork *Mycteria leucocephala*

Common at wetlands in the south of the island and noted on our final drive day. A star feature of Udawalawe.

Asian Openbill *Anastomus oscitans*

Widespread in small numbers, especially around rice paddies and other shallow wetlands.

Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus*

One at Udawalawe on 18th and two pairs at Yala on 20th. One also seen at Sigiriya on 24th.

Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*

At least two at Bundala on 19th.

Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilos javanicus*

Singles of this mighty beast were seen at Udawalawe, Bundala and Yala.

Black-headed Ibis *Threskiornis melanocephalus*

Common in shallow wetlands, especially rice paddies in the south of the island.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

A group of eight flew over at Debarawewa on 18th.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

A good concentration of birds from 17th to 19th at wetlands in the south.

Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis*

Wonderfully common in well-vegetated wetlands in the Tissa area and often showing very well.

Cinnamon Bittern *Ixobrychus cinnamomeus*

A star find by Tony! One seen after a bit of a search at the last knockings at Debarawewa on 19th.

Black Bittern *Dupetor flavicollis*

Two at Debarawewa on 18th and another two on a different section of the same wetland on 19th.

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

A few around the southern wetlands with one on 17th, nine on 18th and a single on 19th.

Striated Heron *Butorides striata*

Two at Bundala on 19th and one at Yala on 20th, none of which showed for the whole group, sadly.

Indian Pond Heron *Ardeola grayii*

Abundant throughout the trip in wetland areas.

Eastern Cattle Egret *Bubulcus coromandus*

Abundant throughout the trip in wetland areas, especially around rice paddies.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Small numbers seen daily in the southern wetlands. The local race is much paler than our UK birds.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

Small numbers seen in the southern wetlands with a highest day count of 10 on 18th.

Great Egret *Ardea alba*

Small numbers widely scattered and seen on most days.

Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia*

Small numbers at wetlands throughout the tour but not always easy to pick out from the masses of more common species.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Common in suitable wetlands throughout the trip.

Spot-billed Pelican *Pelecanus philippensis*

Small numbers seen regularly in wetlands from Embilipitiya southward with some particularly excellent views on our morning at Udawalawe.

Little Cormorant *Microcarbo niger*

The most common cormorant and seen almost daily throughout the trip.

Indian Cormorant *Phalacrocorax fuscicollis*

Mostly confined to the wetlands in the south, but often quite common in the Tissa area.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Scarce, with just two birds seen near Tissa on 19th.

Oriental Darter *Anhinga melanogaster*

Small numbers on seven dates with most birds in the Tissa area.

Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus*

A single bird seen rather briefly at Udawalawe on 18th.

Crested Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*

Single birds around Kithulgala and Blue Magpie Lodge on 15th, on our travels on 23rd and at Sigiriya on 24th.

Crested Serpent Eagle *Spilornis cheela*

One to three on four dates – always a fine looking bird.

Changeable Hawk Eagle *Nisaetus cirrhatus ceylanensis*

Widespread and often very confiding with some close encounters with perched birds on several occasions.

Local birds are part of the group of forms sometimes recognized as Crested Hawk Eagle.

Black Eagle *Ictinaetus malaiensis*

A superb species with a surprising wing shape... three birds seen on 15th, including a fine pair relatively low overhead. Also two on 22nd and one on 23rd.

Shikra *Accipiter badius*

A total of around eight birds scattered throughout the trip. Many were roadside birds seen from the bus on travel days, but we had some nice perched birds too.

Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus*

Singles and pairs seen throughout the trip with nice views of perched birds at Kithulgala.

White-bellied Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster*

One to two on five dates with some great views especially around Udawalawe National Park.

Grey-headed Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus ichthyaetus*

Great views of singles at Bundala on 19th and Yala National Park on 20th.

Himalayan Buzzard *Buteo burmanicus*

At least one at Horton Plains (see also next species).

Common (Steppe) Buzzard *Buteo buteo vulpinus*

Several buzzards were noted around Horton Plains, where Himalayan Buzzard is a regular winter visitor.

However, the great diversity in appearance of birds – especially the dark chocolate and rich, rusty ones that we saw, show plumage colours and variability indicative of Steppe Buzzard.

White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus*

A noisy and common bird of wetland areas – even in hotel gardens!

Ruddy-breasted Crake *Porzana fusca*

One seen sneaking across the grass at Bundala on 19th.

Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla*

A nice bonus of one feeding among the bulrushes at Bundala on 19th.

Watercock *Gallicrex cinerea*

Singles at Debarawewa on 18th and 19th and two at Bundala on 19th.

Grey-headed Swamphen *Porphyrio poliocephalus*

Common in wetlands in the south – even abundant in some places around Tissa.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Rather scarce, but a few seen around Bundala on 19th and one on our travel day on 25th.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*

At least six at Debarawewa on 18th and 19th.

Barred Buttonquail *Turnix suscitator*

Two pairs at Bundala National Park on 19th and two at Yala on 20th.

Indian Stone-curlew *Burhinus indicus*

One at Kalametiya on 17th, at least 10 at Bundala on 19th and several around Yala on 20th.

Great Stone-curlew *Esacus recurvirostris*

Three at Kalametiya on 17th, at least eight at Bundala on 19th and several around Yala on 20th.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

Good numbers in shallow wetlands in the south of the island.

Yellow-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus malabaricus*

Small numbers on open, grassy areas in the south of the island.

Red-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus*

Present throughout in suitable open, wetland habitats.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*

At least eight around Bundala on damp, grassy areas on 19th and a similar number at Yala on 20th.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

At least two at Bundala on 19th.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

Two at Kalametiya on 17th.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

A fair scattering in southern wetlands with a maximum of 15+ at Kalametiya on 17th.

Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*

Good numbers in southern wetlands with a maximum of 30+ at Kalametiya on 17th and 40+ at Bundala.

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*

Singles at Bundala on 19th and Yala on 20th.

Pheasant-tailed Jacana *Hydrophasianus chirurgus*

Common in wetland areas with some high counts in well-vegetated ponds in the south, including some 400 at Debarawewa near Tissa.

Pin-tailed Snipe *Gallinago stenura*

Small groups were found feeding in wet grassland areas at Bundala and Yala.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

A fly-by of around 50 birds at Kalametiya on 17th and at least 15 at Bundala on 19th.

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*

A singleton on 17th was our only one.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*

Small numbers at southern wetlands.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*

A good number of birds seen daily from 17th to 20th in southern wetlands.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Small numbers at southern wetlands.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Just two singles at Yala on 20th and at Victoria Park, Nuwara Eliya on 23rd.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

At least four at Udawalawe on 18th and two at Yala on 20th.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Small numbers at southern wetlands.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

At least six at Bundala on 19th and three at Yala on 20th.

Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris*

Two were busily feeding in the main lagoon beyond the salt pans at Bundala on 19th.

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

One seen in the salt pans at Bundala on 19th.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

Very common in open shallow pools in the south of the island.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

Plentiful in open shallow pools in the south of the island.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*

At least 30 at Bundala on 19th.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

A group of nine birds was spinning around at Bundala National Park on 19th.

Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum*

A brief fly-by bird seen on 19th.

Small Pratincole *Glareola lactea*

At least 12 birds on the bunds at the salt pans at Bundala on 19th – a wonderful little bird.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*

Quite common at southern wetlands, especially at Embilipitiya and Bundala.

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*

A good scattering of birds around the southern wetlands.

Greater Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii*

Common around the coast with good numbers roosting at Bundala and fishing offshore at Yala and Negumbo.

Lesser Crested Tern *Thalasseus bengalensis*

Plenty roosting on the bunds at Bundala on 19th and small numbers offshore at Negumbo on 25th.

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*

A scattering of birds at Kalametiya, Bundala and Yala.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*

Common and often abundant at well-vegetated wetlands.

White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*

Common and often abundant at well-vegetated wetlands.

Feral Rock Dove *Columba livia*

Widespread but local in towns and larger villages.

Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon *Columba torringtoniae*

Very elusive this year, with a couple of birds seen briefly at Horton Plains and others heard in upland forests.

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Seven birds at Bundala on 19th demonstrate that the recent spread southward of this species continues.

Spotted Dove *Spilopelia chinensis*

Common and seem daily.

Common Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps indica*

One or two noted in forested areas of the wet zone at Kithulgala and Sinharaja.

Orange-breasted Green Pigeon *Treron bicinctus*

Small numbers around Kalametiya, Udawalawe and Yala, as well as at Sigiriya.

Sri Lanka Green Pigeon *Treron pompadora*

Quite widespread and locally common with especially good numbers at Sinharaja and Sigiriya.

Green Imperial Pigeon *Ducula aenea*

Small numbers noted throughout the trip with birds seen well at Kithulgala on our first couple of mornings.

Green-billed Coucal *Centropus chlororhynchos*

Heard distantly at Kithulgala on 14th then a pair seen briefly but well at Sinharaja on 16th.

Greater Coucal *Centropus sinensis*

Small numbers heard or seen throughout the trip.

Sirkeer Malkoha *Taccocua leschenaultii*

A skulking bird at Udawalawe on 18th then a showy pair at Yala on 20th.

Red-faced Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus pyrrhocephalus*

Two showed nicely at Sinharaja on 16th.

Blue-faced Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus viridirostris*

Two at Udawalawe on 18th and two at Yala on 20th.

Jacobin Cuckoo *Clamator jacobinus*

Two pairs seen at Udawalawe on 18th and four birds seen at Bundala on 19th, including a buffy youngsters.

Asian Koel *Eudynamys scolopaceus*

Heard but not seen at Kithulgala, with another noted at Sinharaja on 17th.

Grey-bellied Cuckoo *Cacomantis passerinus*

A nice perched bird at Udawalawe on 18th and three seen in flight around Yala on 20th.

Fork-tailed Drongo-cuckoo *Surniculus dicruroides*

Great views of a calling bird by our hotel at Sigiriya.

Indian Cuckoo *Cuculus micropterus*

Heard calling at Sigiriya on the morning of 24th.

Serendib Scops Owl *Otus thilohoffmanni*

After missing the species at Kithulgala, we were pleased to be shown a secretive pair at Sinharaja on 15th.

Indian Scops Owl *Otus bakkamoena*

Great views of a cuddly pair at our hotel at Embilipitiya on 17th.

Brown Wood Owl *Strix leptogrammica*

After much stealth and great planning by Danni, we had fabulous views of a roosting bird on 21st.

Jungle Owlet *Glaucidium radiatum*

Great scope views of a feisty individual near Tissa on 19th, thanks to Dammi's local contacts.

Chestnut-backed Owlet *Glaucidium castanonotum*

Nice scope views of one, with another close by, at Kithulgala on our very first evening.

Sri Lanka Frogmouth *Batrachostomus moniliger*

A wonderful paired scoped as they snuggled together at Sinharaja on 16th.

Jerdon's Nightjar *Caprimulgus atripennis*

Seen on the evenings of 23rd and 24th at Sigiriya, including a nicely perched bird on the latter date.

Crested Treeswift *Hemiprocne coronata*

Some great flight views of this graceful species at a number of places.

Indian Swiftlet *Aerodramus unicolor*

Widespread and often noted in busy flocks overhead.

Brown-backed Needletail *Hirundapus giganteus*

Brief views of two of these chunky birds at Udawalawe on 18th.

Asian Palm Swift *Cypsiurus balasiensis*

Widespread and frequently noted in noisy, screaming flocks overhead.

Little Swift *Apus affinis*

Small numbers near the coast with best views at a breeding colony at the entrance area to Bundala on 19th.

Malabar Trogon *Harpactes fasciatus*

Three at Sinharaja, including a fine male that posed beautifully for us, shortly before the rain came down...

Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis*

Two of these smart birds seen at Udawalawe on 18th.

Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis*

Dammi's sharp eyes found us one of these near the police station at Kithulgala on 14th.

Stork-billed Kingfisher *Pelargopsis capensis*

Rather elusive this year; one seen and others heard at the river at Kithulgala on 14th and 15th, one calling at Sigiriya on 24th and one at our lunch stop by the lake on 25th.

White-throated Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis*

Widespread and common and seen daily throughout the trip.

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

Widespread and small numbers were seen on eight dates throughout the trip.

Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis*

Small numbers around the southern wetlands from 17th to 19th.

Green Bee-eater *Merops orientalis*

A common and endearing feature of scrubby areas in the south.

Blue-tailed Bee-eater *Merops philippinus*

Widespread in small numbers, with slightly higher numbers around the southern wetland areas.

Chestnut-headed Bee-eater *Merops leschenaulti*

A singleton seen briefly on 15th then great views of three from the jeeps at Yala on 20th.

Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

Three seen at Bundala on 19th all appeared to be of the richly cinnamon-coloured, local race.

Malabar Pied Hornbill *Anthraceros coronatus*

What a beast!! Wonderful views of these daily from 18th to 20th, including a fine pair with a full-grown youngster at Udawalawe in a huge fig tree.

Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill *Ocyrceros gingalensis*

Singles and pairs noted on six dates around Kithulgala/ Sinharaja and the Sigiriya area.

Brown-headed Barbet *Psilopogon zeylanicus*

Noted on six dates, spread throughout the trip. Best seen at our lunch stop on the Surrey Estate on 21st.

Yellow-fronted Barbet *Psilopogon flavifrons*

Widespread in wet zone forest areas and seen regularly around Kithulgala and Sinharaja.

Crimson-fronted Barbet *Psilopogon rubricapillus*

A little elusive on this trip, but one was seen at Udawalawe in the hornbill tree on 18th and another near our hotel at Sigiriya on 24th.

Coppersmith Barbet *Psilopogon haemacephalus*

Singles or pairs noted on six dates but more often heard than seen. A pair showed well to us all at Sigiriya.

Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker *Dendrocopos nanus*

One seen by Dammi and Mike remained a 'leader-only' on 15th, but a pair at Sigiriya showed well to us all.

Yellow-crowned Woodpecker *Dendrocopos mahrattensis*

Two seen up close and personal at Yala on 20th.

Lesser Yellownappe *Picus chlorolophus*

A pair of these smart woodpeckers was in the mixed feeding flock at Sinharaja on 16th.

Red-backed Flameback *Dinopium psarodes*

The commonest woodpecker on the trip, with one to two on five dates throughout our stay.

Crimson-backed Flameback *Chrysocolaptes stricklandi*

A rather elusive pair skipped by us at our spurfowl spot on the morning of 17th.

White-naped Woodpecker *Chrysocolaptes festivus*

Great views of a pair of this scarce species at a nest site near Tissa on 19th.

Rufous Woodpecker *Celeus brachyurus*

A pair was found at Sigiriya on 24th and the male showed especially well, perched up in a dead tree top.

Layard's Parakeet *Psittacula calthrapae*

Noted on five dates during the trip, with best views of birds around Kithulgala on our first couple of days.

Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria*

Largest of the parakeets here and noted regularly around Kithulgala and Sigiriya, with good views at the latter.

Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*

Widespread and common and noted daily throughout the trip.

Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot *Loriculus beryllinus*

Widespread and noisy, though often just a flying buzz bomb overhead! Seen well around our Kithulgala hotel.

Indian Pitta *Pitta brachyura*

Widespread and quite common judging by the vocalisations!! Often heard calling at dawn and dusk, especially around Sigiriya and Nuwara Eliya and birds were eventually seen well at both places, with a little guile...

Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike *Hemipus picatus*

One to two on four dates and best seen at Kithulgala in the gardens just across the river from our hotel.

Sri Lanka Woodshrike *Tephrodornis affinis*

After much searching, we eventually had good views of one at Sigiriya on 24th.

Ashy Woodswallow *Artamus fuscus*

Two spotted on a roadside wire by Dammi on 13th was our first bonus bird of the trip. Later, one seen along the road on our drive day on 21st.

Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia*

A good spread of sightings, with birds seen particularly well around Yala and Sigiriya.

Black-headed Cuckooshrike *Coracina melanoptera*

Great views of a smart male at Sigiriya on 24th.

Small Minivet *Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*

At least six seen around Yala on 20th – like hyperactive redstarts!

Orange Minivet *Pericrocotus flammeus*

Startling apparitions in black and orange bounced around the trees at Kithulgala, Sinharaja and Sigiriya.

Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*

Noted on our lists on all but two dates, with both brown headed *cristatus* and grey-capped *lucionensis* seen.

Black-hooded Oriole *Oriolus xanthornus*

Seen well on a number of occasions at Kithulgala, Sinharaja and Sigiriya.

Ashy Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus*

Two seen by Dammi and Tony at Yala on 20th.

Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocercus*

One hassled a bee-eater for its catch at Sigiriya on 24th.

White-bellied Drongo *Dicrurus caerulescens*

Common in the lowlands around Kithulgala and Sinharaja and again around Sigiriya.

Sri Lanka Drongo *Dicrurus lophorinus*

Some good views of birds in mixed flocks at Kithulgala and Sinharaja.

White-browed Fantail *Rhipidura aureola*

Noted on three dates with best views of one feeding around elephant droppings at Yala and in the open scrub at Sigiriya.

Black-naped Monarch *Hypothymis azurea*

Two showed on and off at Sinharaja on 16th.

Indian Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi*

Some great sightings of birds around Kithulgala/Sinharaja and Sigiriya. Longer-tailed, all white males are migrants from mainland India, while the chestnut birds we saw were local Sri Lankan ones.

Sri Lanka Blue Magpie *Urocissa ornata*

Great views of a pair close to the visitor centre at Sinharaja on 16th.

House Crow *Corvus splendens*

Common to abundant in coastal towns and villages – especially so around Negombo on our last evening.

Indian Jungle Crow *Corvus culminatus*

Common throughout the trip in towns and villages, even as high as Nuwara Eliya.

Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher *Culicicapa ceylonensis*

Great views of two in a bird bath at the Surrey Estate on 21st, then six or so around Horton Plains on 22nd.

Cinereous Tit *Parus cinereus*

These 'monochrome Great Tits' were seen very well at the Surrey Estate on 21st and around Victoria Park and Horton Plains on 22nd and 23rd.

Ashy-crowned Sparrow-lark *Eremopterix griseus*

Two on the grass and another four in flight at Bundala on 19th and at least 10 around Yala on 20th.

Jerdon's Bushlark *Mirafra affinis*

Tame and easily observed along the main trails at Udawalawe on 18th and Yala on 20th.

Oriental Skylark *Alauda gulgula*

Some nice views of six or so at Bundala on 19th (including one in song). Singles also noted at Yala on 20th and Sigiriya on 24th.

Black-capped Bulbul *Pycnonotus melanicterus*

A noisy group at Kithulgala managed to avoid being seen by us, but small, busy groups were seen at Sigiriya on 24th and 25th.

Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer*

Common and widespread and seen every day. Well adapted to human environments.

Yellow-eared Bulbul *Pycnonotus penicillatus*

Small numbers of this smart bird were seen daily around Nuwara Eliya and Horton Plains.

White-browed Bulbul *Pycnonotus melanicterus*

Singles noted at Bundala and Yala on 19th and 20th and nice views of pairs at Sigiriya on 24th and 25th.

Yellow-browed Bulbul *Acritillas indica*

Some good sightings of pairs around Kithulgala and Sinharaja in wet zone forest habitats.

Square-tailed Bulbul *Hypsipetes ganeesa*

Common around Kithulgala and Sinharaja with noisy, busy feeding parties seen regularly around the lodges.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

Around 20 birds seen feeding over the main lagoon at Bundala on 19th.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Seen daily from 16th with large numbers of winter visitors around the wetlands in the south of the island.

Hill Swallow *Hirundo domicola*

At least four seen around Horton Plains on 22nd and ten or so seen nesting at the tea factory on 23rd.

Sri Lanka Swallow *Cecropis hyperythra*

A good number of birds seen in the Kithulgala area and one at Bundala on 19th.

Green Warbler *Phylloscopus nitidus*

Heard vocalising in forest and woodland areas throughout much of the trip, but proved to be a devil to see!

Large-billed Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus magnirostris*

Less common than Green Warbler but equally widespread – and equally difficult to see!

Clamorous Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus*

Several heard chuntering away in the bulrushes at Bundala, with one or two seen well – especially one in a brushwood pile right beside the main trail.

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*

Widespread throughout the island but far more often heard than seen. We did work on seeing a couple of close birds in the car park at the hotel at Kithulgala though.

Sri Lanka Bush Warbler *Elaphornis palliseri*

After a tricky start, we finally managed to weedle out a couple of pairs of these around Horton Plains on 22nd.

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*

Noted in small numbers at Kalametiya, Bundala and Horton Plains.

Grey-breasted Prinia *Prinia hodgsonii*

One seen well at Udawalawe National Park on 18th.

Jungle Prinia *Prinia sylvatica*

A couple of these plain, heavy-billed prinias seen at Udawalawe on 18th and one at Sigiriya on 24th.

Ashy Prinia *Prinia socialis*

Common at Udawalawe National Park with some nice views of singing birds.

Plain Prinia *Prinia inornata*

Common in open, scrubby habitats around Udawalawe, Bundala and Yala.

Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius*

Commonly heard but not so easy to see, though we did enjoy views at Kithulgala especially.

Sri Lanka Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus melanurus*

Seen or heard at Kithulgala, Sinharaja (in a busy feeding flock), at Horton Plains and at Victoria Park.

Tawny-bellied Babbler *Dumetia hyperythra*

Two fed in low vegetation at Sigiriya on 24th.

Dark-fronted Babbler *Rhopocichla atriceps*

Seen on four dates around Kithulgala, Sinharaja and Sigiriya – skulking but we did get good views at times.

Brown-capped Babbler *Pellorneum fuscicapillus*

Two at Kithulgala included a very showy, singing male on 14th, one at the Surrey Estate on 21st and one that mooched along almost at our feet at Sigiriya on 24th.

Orange-billed Babbler *Turdoides rufescens*

Busy, noisy parties were seen regularly around Kithulgala and Sinharaja.

Yellow-billed Babbler *Turdoides affinis*

Widespread and noted on all but two days of the trip.

Ashy-headed Laughingthrush *Garrulax cinereifrons*

A noisy, busy group of around 10 birds in a feeding flock at Sinharaja on 16th.

Yellow-eyed Babbler *Chrysomma sinense*

Two at Udawalawe National Park on 18th.

Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus*

Common and widespread in the lowlands and seen especially well at the hotel at Kithulgala and at our tea stop on the way to Nuwara Eliya on 24th.

Sri Lanka White-eye *Zosterops ceylonensis*

Plentiful at Horton Plains with feeding flocks being a regular feature in the wooded sections there.

Velvet-fronted Nuthatch *Sitta frontalis*

Nice views of two by the information centre at Sinharaja on 16th.

Sri Lanka Hill Myna *Gracula ptilogenys*

After a few brief glimpses, we finally got to see this species well at Sinharaja on 16th.

Southern Hill Myna *Gracula indica*

Noted regularly around Kithulgala, with a noisy group near the police station on 14th being very obliging.

Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis*

Widespread and seen every day of the trip around towns, villages and other human habitats.

Brahminy Starling *Sturnia pagodarum*

One seen by one of the jeep teams at Udawalawe on 18th and at least 10 around Yala on 20th.

White-faced Starling *Sturnornis albofrontatus*

A bit of a damp squib, two or three lurked at the back of the trees with a mixed feeding flock at Sinharaja on 16th but they never gave more than the briefest of views.

Rosy Starling *Pastor roseus*

Wintering flocks of mostly young birds were regularly seen around Udawalawe, Bundala and Yala.

Pied Thrush *Geokichla wardii*

After an elusive bird toyed with us at Victoria Park on the evening of 22nd, a return visit the next morning gave us excellent views of one digging for worms on 23rd.

Orange-headed Thrush *Geokichla citrina*

One during our owl quest before lunch at the Surrey Estate on 21st, then two very showy birds at our hotel at Sigiriya on 23rd and 24th.

Spot-winged Thrush *Geokichla spiloptera*

Several heard and a couple of birds seen very well during our early morning excursions at Sinharaja on 16th and 17th – especially that one that almost came into the house at the spurfowl spot!

Indian Robin *Copsychus fulicatus*

Widespread and common in more open country and gardens throughout the trip.

Oriental Magpie-robin *Copsychus saularis*

Seen every day of the trip along roadways and in villages and around hotel grounds.

White-rumped Shama *Copsychus malabaricus*

A shy but spectacular songster, heard only at Sigiriya but seen nicely at Yala National Park on 20th.

Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica*

Singles on three dates, at Kithulgala, Sinharaja and Nuwara Eliya.

Brown-breasted Flycatcher *Muscicapa muttui*

One or two seen on four dates in forest habitats at Kithulgala, Sinharaja and Nuwara Eliya.

Tickell's Blue Flycatcher *Cyornis tickelliae*

A good number of birds seen or heard around Kithulgala, Sinharaja and Sigiriya – including that male that sat on Andrew's chair!

Dull-blue Flycatcher *Eumyias sordidus*

Three seen very well at Horton Plains on 22nd. Despite the name, we all agreed that this is a pretty nice bird.

Indian Blue Robin *Larvivora brunnea*

Rather skulking, with a number of birds only seen by one or two of us each time, but I think we all managed to glimpse one at some point. Noted in tall forest habitats at Kithulgala, Sinharaja, Victoria Park and Sigiriya.

Kashmir Flycatcher *Ficedula subrubra*

After a bit of a search, one was seen very well at Victoria Park on the morning of 23rd.

Pied Bushchat *Saxicola caprata*

Nice views of a couple of pairs at Horton Plains on 22nd.

Jerdon's Leafbird *Chloropsis jerdoni*

Great views of a couple of males at Sigiriya on 24th.

Golden-fronted Leafbird *Chloropsis aurifrons*

Nice views of pairs at Kithulgala on 14th, Sinharaja on 16th and Ella on 21st.

Thick-billed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum agile*

One seen nicely at Yala National Park on 20th and several at Sigiriya on 24th.

Legge's Flowerpecker *Dicaeum vincens*

Several showed nicely around Sinharaja on 16th.

Pale-billed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum erythrorhynchos*

The strange, clicking call of this species was heard regularly throughout much of the trip and birds showed particularly well at Kithulgala and around Sigiriya.

Purple-rumped Sunbird *Leptocoma zeylonica*

Widespread and seen on all but two days of the trip.

Purple Sunbird *Cinnyris asiaticus*

Widespread but rather patchily recorded. Two at the hotel at Kithulgala perhaps showed the best.

Loten's Sunbird *Leptocoma lotenius*

Seen nicely at our hotel at Kithulgala on 14th and again at Sigiriya on 24th.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

One or two on the first couple of days at Kithulgala and at our hotel at Nuwara Eliya. More common in the south and an entertaining pair were trying to build a nest in the back of a jeep at Yala!

Baya Weaver *Ploceus philippinus*

A couple of pairs seen at Yala National Park, including a male attending a nest on 20th.

White-rumped Munia *Lonchura striata*

Fairly widespread and often seen on travel days around rice paddies.

Scaly-breasted Munia *Lonchura punctulata*

Fairly widespread and often seen on travel days around rice paddies. Also seen very well at Sigiriya on 24th.

Black-throated Munia *Lonchura striata*

One seen nicely through the scope with other munias at a roadside stop on 15th.

Tricoloured Munia *Lonchura malacca*

At least six of these smart birds at Udawalawe National Park on 18th and at least seven at Sigiriya on 24th.

Forest Wagtail *Dendronanthus indicus*

One at Sinharaja on the morning of 17th and at least three at Victoria Park on 22nd.

Western Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

Several heard and small numbers seen at wetlands around Udawalawe, Bundala and Yala. Those seen well enough all appeared to be of the form *thunbergi*, often known as Grey-headed Wagtail.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

Singletons noted on the river at Kithulgala and good numbers around wet areas in the Nuwara Eliya area.

Paddyfield Pipit *Anthus rufulus*

This rather upright pipit was noted in grassy areas around wetlands on 19th and 20th.

Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii*

Very nice views of this grassland species around Udawalawe, Bundala and Yala National Parks.

Mammals**Black-naped Hare *Lepus nigricollis***

One at Kalametiya on 17th, at least three at Yala on 20th and two at Sigiriya on 24th.

Sri Lanka Giant Squirrel *Ratufa macroura*

Singles seen on four dates, including both dark and pale forms.

Layard's Palm Squirrel *Funambulus layardi*

Two seen at Sinharaja on 16th.

Indian Palm Squirrel *Funambulus palmarum*

Common and seen daily throughout the trip – a common feature of hotel gardens.

Dusky Palm Squirrel *Funambulus sublineatus*

One at Horton Plains on 22nd.

Black Rat *Rattus rattus*

After much worrying that we might miss this species, we found a dead one on the road at Sigiriya... this place shall forever be known as Black Rat Corner!

Indian Brown Mongoose *Herpestes fuscus*

One at our tea stop at Ella on 21st and two at Horton Plains on 22nd.

Indian Grey Mongoose *Herpestes edwardsii*

One to two daily around Sigiriya where it seemed to be quite common.

Ruddy Mongoose *Herpestes smithii*

Quite common around Bundala and Yala with some nice close views at both places.

Golden Jackal *Canis aureus*

One at our breakfast stop at Udawalawe on 18th and two with the crocs at Yala on 20th.

Leopard *Panthera pardus*

Truly a trip highlight, we saw two of these magnificent cats at Yala on 20th, with an especially close encounter with a well-fed male that we chanced upon ourselves.

Indian Flying Fox *Pteropus giganteus*

Widespread, judging by the dead ones on roadside wires. We saw some great flights of these in the evenings around the southern wetland areas.

Tufted Grey Langur *Semnopithecus priam*

Widespread and seen regularly around the southern wetland areas and around Sigiriya.

Bear Monkey *Trachypithecus vetulus senex*

Singles in upland forests showed briefly on 21st and 22nd.

Purple-faced Leaf Monkey *Trachypithecus vetulus vetulus*

Small numbers seen around Sinharaja on 15th and 16th and at Sigiriya on 24th.

Toque Macaque *Macaca sinica*

Small numbers seen most days, as well as some large groups in the south and around Sigiriya.

Wild Boar *Sus scrofa*

Several of these feisty beasts were seen around Yala National Park on 20th.

Sambar *Cervus unicolor*

Six seen at Yala on 20th and a couple of very tame individuals at Horton Plains on 22nd.

Chital *Axis axis*

Some nice herds of this attractive deer were seen around Udawalawe and Yala National Parks.

Feral Water Buffalo *Bubalus bubalis*

Common in the national parks at Udawalawe, Bundala and Yala.

Asian Elephant *Elephas maximus*

Some fine moments were spent with these remarkable animals at Udawalawe, Bundala and Yala, including some fluffy-topped little youngsters.

Reptiles**Mugger Crocodile *Crocodylus palustris***

Common at southern wetlands at Udawalawe, Bundala and Yala, with smaller numbers elsewhere.

Asian Water Monitor *Varanus salvator*

Widespread and seen regularly – including some really quite chunky beasties!

Indian Monitor *Varanus bengalensis*

Less common than Water Monitor, but still noted at several places and seen well at Bundala and Sigiriya.

Brown-patched Kangaroo Lizard *Otocryptis wiegmanni*

Some nice views of this strange lizard at Kithulgala.

Hump-nosed Lizard *Lyricephalus scutatus*

Great views of one of these peculiar-looking lizards at Sinharaja.

Green Forest Lizard *Calotes calotes*

Common but easily overlooked since they blend in so well with the vegetation. Most interesting was a female that we watched as she carefully back-filled her nest and padded down the dirt with her nose.

Oriental Garden Lizard *Calotes versicolor*

Singles seen at Udawalawe, Bundala and at our final day lunch stop.

Asian House Gecko *Hemidactylus frenatus*

Common and widespread and heard or seen regularly at hotels and lodges.

Taylor's Striped Skink *Eutropis floweri*

A friendly little chap hung out with us for a while when we took a rest at Sinharaja on 16th.

Indian Black Terrapin *Melanochelys trijuga*

Common and widespread around wetlands and even in hotel garden ponds.

Sri Lanka Green Pitviper *Trimeresurus trigonocephalus*

One seen from the first jeep during our descent from Sinharaja.

Green Vine Snake *Ahaetulla nasuta*

One seen from the second jeep during our descent from Sinharaja.

Butterflies

Sri Lanka Birdwing *Troides darsius*
 Crimson Rose *Pachliopta hector*
 Citrus Swallowtail *Papilio demoleus*
 Common Mormon *Papilio polytes*
 Blue Mormon *Papilio polymnestor*
 Psyche *Leptosia nina*
 Common Gull *Cepora nerissa*
 Common Albatross *Appias albina*
 White Orange-tip *Ixias marianne*
 Lemon Emigrant *Catopsilia pomona*
 Small Salmon Arab *Colotis amata*
 Small Grass Yellow *Eurema brigitta*
 Common Grass Yellow *Eurema hecabe*
 Sri Lanka Tree Nymph *Idea iasonia*
 Blue Glassy Tiger *Ideopsis similis*
 Plain Tiger *Danaus chrysippus*
 Common Indian Crow *Euploea core*
 Angled Castor *Ariadne ariadne*
 Indian Fritillary *Argynnis hyperbius*
 Grey Pansy *Junonia atlites*
 Chocolate Soldier *Junonia iphita*
 Peacock Pansy *Junonia almana*
 Great Eggfly *Hypolimnas bolina*
 Common Sailor *Neptis hylas*
 Clipper *Parthenos sylvia*
 Medus Brown *Orsotriaena medus*
 Dark-banded Bush Brown *Mycalesis mineus*
 Glad-eye Bush Brown *Mycalesis patnia*
 White Four-ring *Ypthima ceylonica*
 Large Oakblue *Arhopala amantes*
 Tailless Lineblue *Prosotas dubiosa*
 Metallic Cerulean *Jamides alecto*
 Zebra Blue *Leptotes plinius*
 Dark Grass Blue *Zizeeria karsandra*
 Oriental Cupid *Everes lacturnus*
 African Babul Blue *Azanus jesus*
 Common Hedge Blue *Acytolepis puspa*
 Malayan *Megisba malaya*
 Plains Cupid *Chilades pandava*
 Lime Blue *Chilades lajus*
 Golden Angle *Caprona ransonnetii*
 Grass Demon *Udaspes folus*
 Common Banded Demon *Notocrypta paralysos*

Dragonflies & Damselflies

Mountain Reedling <i>Indolestes gracilis</i>	Spine-tufted Skimmer <i>Orthetrum chrysis</i>
Ubiquitous Bluetail <i>Ischnura senegalensis</i>	Pink Skimmer <i>Orthetrum pruinatum</i>
Painted Waxtail (Bicoloured Damsel) <i>Ceriagrion cerinorubellum</i>	Foggy-winged Twister <i>Tholymis tillarga</i>
Yellow Waxtail (Yellow Damsel) <i>Ceriagrion coromandelianum</i>	Red-veined Darter <i>Sympetrum fonscolombii</i>
Rapacious Flangetail (Asian Tiger) <i>Ictinogomphus rapax</i>	Sociable Glider <i>Tramea limbata</i>
Oriental Scarlet <i>Crocothemis servilia</i>	Spine-legged Redbolt <i>Rhodothemis rufa</i>
Asian Pintail <i>Acisoma panorpoides</i>	
Orange-winged Groundling <i>Brachythemis contaminata</i>	
Pied Parasol <i>Neurothemis tullia</i>	
Sombre Lieutenant <i>Brachydiplax sobrina</i>	