

# Sri Lanka

Jewel of the Indian Ocean

Sat 11–Sat 25 November 2017

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*Sri Lanka is a great place for wetland birds, such as this Black Bittern at Debarawewa. Photo © Mike Crewe/Limosa*

**Report compiled by tour leader:  
Robin Chittenden**

**Sri Lanka | Jewel of the Indian Ocean****Tour leaders:** Robin Chittenden and Dhammi Samarasinghe**with:** John Boys, Colin Campbell and Richard & Mary Lee**12th November**

We arrived at Colombo airport early afternoon and were met by our guide, Dhammi. We were soon aboard our brand new Toyota Coaster bus, which we would soon note had perfect temperature control and huge openable windows. *En route* to Kithulgala we stopped for a snack and cup of tea before scanning some paddyfields nearby. We saw Blue-tailed Bee-eaters, White-throated Kingfishers, two Whiskered Terns and an Ashy Prinia.

After checking in at the Kithulgala Rest House, we were soon out in the garden enjoying the birds by the Kelenie River in the late afternoon: Green Imperial Pigeon, Brown-backed Needletails and Sri Lanka Hanging Parrots. Moving to the front garden a quick run of birds, Common Emerald Dove, White-bellied Drongo, Loten's Sunbird, Greater Coucal, Asian Brown Flycatcher and Oriental White-eye.

**13th November**

At dawn we explored the wood next door at the 'Rafters Retreat'. It initially seemed deserted of birds. Then the endemic owl, which we were hoping to see, started singing. After hurriedly walking the ever narrowing paths and crossing the garden of an unphased Sri Lankan, there it was, a Chestnut-backed Owlet, and low down too. Fabulous views. Other bird seen in the wood and hotel grounds included a Tickell's Blue Flycatcher, Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill, Gold-fronted Leafbird, Sri Lanka Swallows, two male Black-hooded Orioles, Layard's Parakeet, Red-backed Flamebacks, Stork-billed Kingfisher, Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike and an immature Shikra.

After a buffet breakfast we crossed the river by floating 'bridge' to explore the Makandawa Forest Reserve. Before getting to the reserve proper we saw Square-tailed Bulbul, two Sri Lanka Swallows perched low on telephone wires, Brown-headed Barbet and Orange Minivets plus a brief Sri Lanka Giant Squirrel. A downpour saw us take shelter for a while and the reserve staff showed us a massive Tarantula species in their bedroom. By the entrance area a Yellow-browed Babbler came to food. In the forest proper all seemed quiet, the highlight being a confiding Sri Lanka Junglefowl plus a few Black-capped Bultuls. Other wildlife included a Green Garden Lizard and Kangaroo Lizard. On the way out we saw a lovely Tickell's Blue Flycatcher and two Black-throated Munias with a very recently fledged youngster. During our buffet lunch a couple of Oriental Honey Buzzards drifted over.

Late afternoon saw us birding an area nearby, which was very quiet to start with: Common Emerald Dove, more Square-tailed Bultuls, a brief Crimson-backed Flameback, Brown-breasted Flycatcher, but after admiring the *Acavus phoenix* snails and having a quick a cup of tea, things started to happen. A gang of Orange-billed Bblers passed by, more Red-backed Flamebacks showed up, then three Crimson-fronted Barbets, followed by a Brown-headed and then a Yellow-fronted Barbet, plus three Black-hooded Orioles, a Black-headed Cuckooshrike, and another Layard's Parakeet.

**14th November**

First light saw us walking the track near the suspension bridge. We 'scoped a Crested Honey Buzzard. In the forest we found a Black-naped Monarch, two Black-capped Bblers, a Common Hawk Cuckoo making its hysterical-sounding song, Blyth's Reed Warbler, a Brown-capped Babbler, which popped out and showed very well, calling Chestnut-backed Owlet, three more Red-backed Flamebacks, a couple of Orange Minivets and two Southern Hill Mynas.

After breakfast we headed towards Sinharaja. *En route*, news reached us that the local guide there had managed to locate a roosting Serendib Scops Owl. Near the park entrance we transferred to a jeep and a few bumpy minutes later, after a brief stop for a Clipper butterfly, we arrived at a scrubby bamboo area. We gingerly made our way down a steep slope, through the vegetation and tangled branches, and then there it was, looking just like a pale leaf, partially obscured, of course, the legendry Serendib Scops Owl. After that we quickly checked in at the Blue Magpie Lodge and enjoyed a sumptuous lunch. The chef even received a round of applause, much to his and everyone else's surprise.

After a siesta during which a few saw a couple of Legge's Flowerpeckers, Crested Treeswifts, Brown Shrike and another Crested Honey Buzzard, we walked back from the entrance of the Sinharaja Forest Reserve. We 'scoped three Sri Lanka Mynas and five Purple-faced Leaf Monkeys mooched about.

**15th November**

We arrived at the ticket office at the Sinharaja Forest Reserve entrance, having had a shockingly early 5am breakfast! Here a tame Spot-winged Thrush was pottering about, as was a Purple-faced Leaf Monkey. We also picked up a local guide. On the way up the hill by jeep we stopped for six Sri Lanka Green Pigeons, a Layard's Parakeet and a Black-headed Cuckooshrike. A quick look around the habitat by the education centre produced a bird flock, but most only showed briefly, a couple of Sri Lanka Scimitar Babblers, a Sri Lanka Crested Drongo, and all too quickly a White-faced Starling and Lesser Yellownappe.

At the start of the main track proper were a couple of Brown-backed Needletails feeding over trees across a clearing. Later we 'scoped two Red-faced Malkohas and wondered at a Snub-nosed Lizard. Then the local guide located a pair of Sri Lanka Frogmouths. We carefully made our way down the steep slope and 'island' hopped across the swampy ground. And there they were a pair, just feet away, although partially obscured by the tree ferns they were roosting in. A little further down the track we came across another mixed bird flock, composed mostly of Orange-billed Babblers, but eventually a few other species popped out of the woodwork: another Red-faced Malkoha, a Dark-fronted Babbler, a Malabar Trogon, a Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, a Black-naped Monarch and a couple of Sri Lanka White-eyes.

Heading to the ex-research centre we noted Asian Elephant rummagings. After a short rest we started the return leg, glimpsing a Large-billed Leaf Warbler, another pair of Malabar Trogons and a Sri Lanka Crested Drongo. Another bird flock had a few Ashy-headed Laughingthrushes and a Lesser Yellownappe. A Sri Lanka Junglefowl and Brown-capped Babbler were spotted too. We headed back downhill along the bumpy track, when all of a sudden the surprise find of the day went to an immature Malayan Night Heron that was hunting pools on the track itself. We watched several times, as it performed some sort of distraction display by fluffing up its neck feathers and opening its wings. After several approaches by jeep it flew up into tree. What a bonus bird!!

**16th November**

A very early morning start saw us emerge after a half hour bumpy jeep drive to a house on the edge of the forest. As it grew lighter, first three Chestnut-backed Owlets could be heard calling, then a Sri Lanka Drongo started up, followed by a couple of Spot-winged Thrushes.

We were then quickly ushered into the house to look out of the kitchen and dining room windows at the back garden. Here was the dark shape of a crane feeding in the open. Yes a crane!! As it grew still lighter its colouration became apparent: a Slaty-legged Crane. Nice. Then a family party of noisy Ashy-headed Laughingthrushes blundered through. Then all of a sudden an Indian Pitta popped out and next a Green-billed Coucal, which we later saw a matter of feet away, trying to extract a large snail from its shell. Then a pair of Sri Lanka Spurfowls came right up and fed a matter of feet away. Mary also saw a fine male Indian Blue Robin emerge from the scrub, briefly. As we headed back for breakfast and at the last gasp, four Sri Lanka Blue Magpies were seen by the road. What a relief to find these birds as they have become so much more difficult to locate. The ones that used to come to the feeding station by the former research centre are no longer around.

After breakfast we headed for our next hotel at Embilipitiya. After checking in we soon located two roosting Indian Scops Owls. A quick scan of the tank there revealed hundreds of Whiskered Terns and a few Spot-billed Pelicans. After another buffet lunch and siesta we headed to the Kalametiya Sanctuary, which is situated by the southern coast. We spent the late afternoon birding the scrub, rough grassland and wetlands there. We first stopped at a tank, where we saw our first Lesser Whistling Ducks, Grey-headed Swamphens and Pheasant-tailed Jacanas. On the adjacent paddyfields were at least 60 Glossy Ibises, many Marsh Sandpipers and Black-tailed Godwits.

Heading towards the coast we came across Yellow-wattled Lapwings, a Painted Stork, several Orange-breasted Green Pigeons, Paddyfield Pipits, two large flocks of Ashy-crowned Sparrow-larks flew over and later two were 'scoped on the ground, 20 or so Rosy Starlings and Green Bee-eaters. Around the lagoons we found many Marsh Sandpipers, Lesser Sand Plovers, two Great Stone-curlews, Whiskered, White-winged, Caspian, Gull-billed and Little Terns. By the mangroves were five Indian Stone-curlews and a few Asian Koels briefly.

**17th November**

An early start was needed to get to the Udawalawe National Park at the opening time of 6am. Once we had completed the administrative process of getting the tickets it wasn't too long before we were in dry, scrubby habitat. Our high-seated jeeps gave us great views of Plain and Jungle Prinias, Jerdon's Bushlarks, three Blue-tailed Bee-eaters and a pair Orange-breasted Green Pigeons, all right by the track. Also easy to see were several Tawny-bellied Babblers, a family party of White-browed Fantails, several Changeable Hawk Eagles and a Yellow-eyed Babbler. A pair of Barred Buttonquails was spotted some way down the track, then John spied

two right by our jeep. A female Marshall's lora flew into a tree, but flew off before giving a good view. Luckily a male Marshall's lora posed in some trackside vegetation. Feeding by a small pool were a Marsh Sandpiper and Wood Sandpiper, just yards away. A Sirkeer Malkoha was on the 'wrong' side against the sun. Luckily one later was on the 'right' side sunning itself. A bird initially thought to be a Besra, then later re-identified as a Shikra from Colin's photographs, was also perched right by the track, but a Grey-bellied Cuckoo was not quite so cooperative. We stopped for our packed breakfast under the shade of a large tree overlooking a mostly dried out tank. Woolly-necked and Painted Storks, were 'scoped nearby. A couple of Toque Macaques there were on the scrounge for titbits.

Continuing around the tank we found our only perched Black-crowned Night Heron of the tour plus three pied Kingfishers and two Malabar Pied Hornbills flew past. On the wetter parts of the tank were a swarm of Gull-billed, Whiskered, White-winged and Little Terns. A couple of Lesser Adjutants were seen in flight, plus three Black-winged Kites, two Indian Rollers and a White-bellied Sea-eagle. In total, nine Asian Elephants were seen, and hordes of Lemon Emigrant butterflies taking on salts were a spectacle.

We got back on board our bus and continued to Tissamaharama. We arrived in time to check in and have an early buffet lunch. After our siesta we birded a section of the Debarawewa tank. Happily a Watercock was on view, as was the first of six Yellow Bitterns. A Black Bittern did a couple of fly-pasts. Scattered about were Purple Herons, Great Egrets, Grey-necked Swamphens, Pheasant-tailed Jacanas and Oriental Darters. After straining our eyes on a very distant Cotton Pygmy Goose we came across several more thankfully much closer. Last stop was a local back garden. Where Richard located two White-naped Woodpeckers. Bonus bird as we left was a Jungle Owlet.

### **18th November**

Another pre-dawn start to get in the queue at Yala National Park. One hundred jeeps are allowed to enter the park in the morning and it seemed to take an age for the tickets to be obtained from the ticket office when the park opened at 6am. While waiting, two Malabar Pied Hornbills flew over. Avoiding the first snarl up of jeeps, Colin spotted two birds on the track. Two Indian Pittas, having a territorial squabble. Fabulous. Next a couple of Ruddy Mongooses potted over a rock right by the track. Next came a few Muggers and a close Jacobin Cuckoo. We then came across the first proper jeep jam. Dhammi mentioned that sometimes they wait in (jeep) line for up to two hours before seeing the Leopard. Not anything like as bad for us as in a matter of minutes we could see the Leopard resting in a tree, unluckily though, it almost immediately then descended the tree and out of view. While waiting just in case it should make a reappearance, a juvenile Grey-bellied Cuckoo was spotted. Round the corner we came across three Chital looking very alarmed. We waited a little, just in case, but to no avail, although another unseen Chital uttered an alarm call. There was a Leopard about very close.

Carrying on with the safari we came across the first of two Yellow-crowned Woodpeckers. We ate our packed breakfast by the beach with Indian Jungle Crows in accompaniment, plus a few Oriental White-eyes at head height. Continuing on our exploration we scanned a couple of tanks where the highlights were a Grey-headed Fish-Eagle, a couple of Chestnut-headed Bee-eaters and a Pintail Snipe. Carrying on birding, our rewards were two Blue Malkhoas, an Ashy Drongo, a White-bellied Sea Eagle, two more Grey-headed Fish Eagles plus a flock of Gull-billed Terns, Curlew Sandpipers and, as we were leaving, a Brahminy Starling and a White-browed Fantail. Mammals seen included, 14 Asian Elephants, one with a very new calf, six Ruddy Mongooses, three Sambar, about fifty Spotted Deer and many Wild Boars.

After a buffet lunch and a welcome siesta we popped out to birdwatch the local 'tanks'. Starting at Tissamaharama you couldn't help notice the thousands of pendulous Indian Flying Foxes adorning the ancient Rain Trees. A posy of Spot-billed Pelicans was resting on the top of these trees. We enjoyed seeing and photographing several butterflies that were feeding: Crimson Rose, Double-banded Crow, Danaid Eggfly, Crimson Rose and a pair of Painted Sawtooths (the Jezebel look alike). Walking beside another section of the Debarawewa tank we found another Black Bittern, flying off, two Yellow Bitterns, two Pintail Snipes, Intermediate Egret and a Rat Snake on the adjacent paddyfields. Later two Ashy Woodswallows flew over and we enjoyed watching the striking Tricoloured Munias. The Clamorous Reed Warbler was not quite so cooperative.

### **19th November**

A slightly more relaxed start to the day with breakfast at the hotel. Luckily, overcast skies meant that Bundala National Park was not its usual ultra baking self. Having ascended into the tall jeep, the first spot was a pair of Baya Weavers. We watched the male stitching in a thread of long vegetation. Impressive. With few visitors to this park, getting our tickets was a cinch. Driving along the scrubby side tracks, we picked out three Grey-bellied Cuckoos.

Just as we drove onto the bund that took us around the salt pans, there were three Sri Lanka Swallows on the ground just feet away. Scanning the pans we saw four Greater Crested Terns among many Caspian and Little Terns. There were masses of Marsh Sandpipers, Little Stints, Curlew Sandpipers and Lesser Sand Plovers. Common Greenshank was not so common, but at one time one was next to a Marsh Sandpiper to allow direct comparison. Among the throngs, Colin spotted a Red-necked Phalarope, which was the first of a further six found scattered about the pans. A Broad-billed Sandpiper feeding right by the jeep was a delight, as were a further eight that we saw on the estuary proper. One could only imagine what was among all the hordes of distant waders in the bay. Two Spoonbills were obvious, though and scanning further there was an unexpected Black-necked Stork. On the near bunds were two Small Pratincoles, six Great Stone-curlews and thirty or so Pacific Golden Plovers.

Heading to the freshwater marsh a dark cuckoo with chestnut wings flew past and out of view. Another surprise, a Chestnut-winged Cuckoo. Along the water's edge we could compare Little and Indian Cormorants. Two Indian Stone-curlews were found roosting in the shade. On the way out, we watched the antics of a huge party of Tufted Grey Langurs and on the marshy side were a brief Watercock and a showy Lesser Adjutant. Mammals seen were one Asian Elephant and a handful of Chital.

After a siesta we headed to the Yala National park entrance area, where we found a Sri Lanka Woodshrike and two Coppersmith Barbets. At a drier area nearby were eight Ashy-crowned Sparrow Larks, Eurasian Hoopoe, eight Greater Crested Terns, Pacific Golden Plovers, Jerdon's Bushlark, Yellow-eyed babbler, Asian Koel and a very striking Indian Star Tortoise. A scan of an inlet nearby revealed many Little Stints, Marsh Sandpipers, Curlew Sandpipers, Lesser Sand Plovers and a couple of Kentish Plovers. Nearby an Indian Nightjar soon floated in and could be seen resting on the ground in the half-light.

### **20th November**

Having had a tip off we popped into a garden at Debarawewa and we were rewarded with views of a roosting Brown Fish Owl. Heading into the highlands we took a short break to admire the Rawana waterfall. A couple of Black Eagles flew over. A tea break at Ella had the bonus of a splendid view of southern Sri Lanka plus two Cinereous Tits and a Stripe-necked Mongoose. Before lunch we had a quick stop at the Surrey Tea Estate. A Brown Wood Owl was quickly located in one of its roost sites, but unfortunately a loud wedding at the venue put paid to any proper forest birding.

After checking into our colonial hotel at Nuwara Eliya and after having a short break, we ventured into Victoria Park. Almost at once we stumbled upon a tame India Pitta. A pair of Grey-headed Canary Flycatchers gave delightful views, as did two Sri Lanka White-eyes, which for a change were at head height. A little further on and two Sri Lanka Scimitar Babblers foraged in the open. A Kashmir Flycatcher flicked out of view, showing its white tail patches to some. And a very brief male Indian Blue Robin popped out, but too quickly for most to see. We found a female Kashmir Flycatcher nearby, but she wouldn't play ball, in sharp contrast to two Asian Brown Flycatchers that posed in the open. Very frustrating.

### **21st November**

We left our hotel at 04.45 am to get to Horton Plains for first light. On the way up a Brown Wood Owl flew in front of our van. By the entrance gate were the shapes of an Indian Blackbird and Indian Blue Robin, just about discernable in the early morning gloom. With low cloud swirling about the Arrenga Pool seemed mystical. A Green Warbler showed quite well as did a Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher. The faces of Bear Monkeys peered at us through the fog. We then birded back along the road where we found three Yellow-eared Babblers, three Velvet-fronted Nuthatches and a few Sri Lanka White-eyes. At one point a Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush could be heard whistling just a matter of feet away, but would it reveal itself?! To be frank it was unusually difficult birding. All seemed quiet so we moved on to the open areas where Pied Bushchats were more obvious. Two Hill Swallows perched on the window of the tearooms, before flying onto wires in the room itself. John spotted a Common Buzzard that was then pursued by a territorial Black-winged Kite. The latest research suggests that all buzzards here are in fact Common (Steppe) Buzzards and not the Himalayan Buzzard as previously thought.

We tried a different area of forest and eventually we found the not so Dull-blue Flycatcher. We returned to the Arrenga Pool, where a very skulking Sri Lanka Bush Warbler was eventually seen by Mary. On the return to Nuwara Eliya we dropped in at the Hakgala Strict Nature Reserve. Some birds here were happily more obvious: Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike, Sri Lanka White-eyes, a brief but dramatic Indian Paradise Flycatcher and another Green Warbler. After our siesta we birded a wide track through Bomurella forest and Eucalyptus trees. Dhammi heard a Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon singing and amazingly it flew down and landed on the side of the local rubbish dump where it proceeded to drink the leachate. Nice!!? Other than a few Bear Monkeys the woods seemed quiet.

**22nd November**

Up early again at 5.30am to get to Victoria Park at dawn. After walking in circles for half an hour, checking various likely looking spots, we'd seen diddly squat, but then our luck began to change. First an Indian Blackbird, this time in daylight and then a female Kashmir Flycatcher, showed well perched low, in the open. A Forest Wagtail was not quite so helpful, flying off twice, before all could see it. Then something magical, Dhammi from nowhere, suddenly discovered a male Pied Thrush low in a tree. It gave great views there, if you were quick, then again on an open branch in a nearby tree. Relief was in store for those that missed it, as it was located feeding by the stream that runs through the park, where it gave fabulous views. This success saw an abrupt turn around and exit to the park, as breakfast at the Club was calling.

Heading from Nuwara Eliya to Sigiriya we stopped at the Blue Field Tea Factory en route. Apart from the tea, a couple of Hill Swallows and two Black Eagles were seen. We arrived at Sigiriya late afternoon, having had a buffet lunch on the edge of Kandy. We then started to bird the garden, but all seemed quiet. It then rained. Happily it cleared just before dusk and, as often happens, the forest awoke: two Orange-headed Thrushes, a Crimson-fronted Barbet, Black-capped Bulbul, Sri Lanka Green Pigeon and many Little Swifts were seen. Sigiriya is a beautiful area in which to relax a little after the previous days of rather intense birdwatching. The slightly open nature of the forest often results in better views of some of the species. And the hotel with its fabulous view of the iconic rock is a lovely place to unwind.

**23rd November**

The forest at Sigiriya was alive with birds on our pre-breakfast stroll, but many seemed awkward to get on to. Exceptions were an Orange-headed Thrush, two Small Minivets, a Fork-tailed Drongo-cuckoo, several White-browed Bulbuls, an Orange-breasted Green Pigeon and three Sri Lanka Junglefowls (two females and an immature male). After the fabulous buffet breakfast we birded an area of the Sigiriya fortress and moat. Small Minivets, Jerdon's Leafbird, Loten's Sunbird and Coppersmith Barbet were found. Along the road we saw a White-rumped Shama, while on a nearby track, four Golden Jackals appeared out of the forest. In the surrounding countryside we found and 'scoped a Banded Bay Cuckoo. In the late afternoon we did a repeat visit to some of the same areas. We came across a fruiting tree with a few Crimson-fronted Barbets but also caught up in the flock were a very close Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker, Jerdon's Leafbird, and an Indian Paradise Flycatcher.

We then headed to the magic pools where some of the forest skulkers come to wash. It was truly amazing, we saw at least ten Orange-headed Thrushes, ten Indian Blue Robins (two were females), three Indian Paradise Flycatchers, including two of the ghostly white migratory type, two Brown-capped Babblers and three White-rumped Shammas. To finish off, we visited an open area nearby and we didn't have to wait long before a Jerdon's Nightjar flew in and helpfully landed on a bough allowing sufficient time for 'scope views.

**24th November**

The pre-breakfast walk was quiet but we did see a pair of Fork-tailed Drongos-cuckoos this time. Sorry to leave such a lovely place we headed south, stopping at three tanks *en route*. At the first, highlights were a Stork-billed Kingfisher and a pair of Brahminy Kites constructing a nest. At the second were eighteen Cotton Pygmy Geese, but best of all, Mary spotted a Cinnamon Bittern flying that unfortunately no one else got on too. Also there was a Grey-headed Fish Eagle and plentiful numbers of Pheasant-tailed Jacanas. At the third tank there were very close Lesser Whistling Ducks.

A late afternoon stroll onto the beach at Negombo produced many terns fishing offshore. Most were Whiskered Terns but also there were several Greater and Lesser Crested Terns. Also there were hordes of House Crows attracted to the fish catches on the beach.

My thanks to Baur and especially to Dhammi for his brilliant tour leading.

## Annotated List of Birds Recorded (234species)

**Lesser Whistling-duck *Dendrocygna javanica***

Widely scattered at wetlands.

**Cotton Pygmy Goose *Nettapus coromandelianus***

Seven Debarawewa and eighteen Gallewella.

**Garganey *Spatula querquedula***

Eighteen Kalametiya.

**Sri Lanka Spurfowl *Galloperdix bicalcarata***

A pair Sinharaja.

**Sri Lanka Junglefowl *Gallus lafayetii***

Ones and twos seen here and there and five Sinharaja and three Sigiriya.

**Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristata***

Plentiful and seen regularly throughout the trip.

**Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis***

Three Bundala, one Sinharaja and a few Gallewella.

**Painted Stork *Mycteria leucocephala***

Common at wetlands in the south of the island.

**Asian Openbill *Anastomus oscitans***

Widespread in small numbers.

**Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus***

Two Udawalawe.

**Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus***

One Bundala.

**Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilos javanicus***

Two Udawalawe and one Bundala.

**Black-headed Ibis *Threskiornis melanocephalus***

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

**Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus***

Sixty plus Kalametiya.

**Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia***

Two Bundala and one Yala.

**Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis***

Five Debarawewa and two Tissamaharama.

**Cinnamon Bittern *Ixobrychus cinnamomeus***

One seen by Mary Gallewella.

**Black Bittern *Dupetor flavicollis***

One or two Debarawewa.

**Malayan Night Heron *Gorsachius melanolophus***

One Sinharaja.

**Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax***

One Udawalawe and a few Tissamaharama.

**Indian Pond Heron *Ardeola grayii***

Abundant throughout the trip in wetland areas.

**Eastern Cattle Egret *Bubulcus coromandus***

Abundant throughout the trip in wetland areas.

**Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea***

Small numbers seen in the southern wetlands.

**Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea***

Small numbers seen in the southern wetlands.

**Great Egret *Ardea alba***

Small numbers widely scattered.

**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***

Fairly common in suitable wetlands throughout the trip.

**Spot-billed Pelican *Pelecanus philippensis***

Small numbers seen regularly in wetlands in the south.

**Little Cormorant *Microcarbo niger***

The most common cormorant.

**Indian Cormorant *Phalacrocorax fuscicollis***

Several in southern wetlands.

**Oriental Darter *Anhinga melanogaster***

Small numbers on wetland sites.

**Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus***

Three Udawalawe and one Horton Plains.

**Crested Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus***

Ones and twos here and there.

**Crested Serpent Eagle *Spilornis cheela***

One Sinharaja.

**Changeable Hawk-eagle *Nisaetus cirrhatu ceylanensis***

Several Udawalawe, three Yala and one Victoria Park. Local birds are part of the group of forms sometimes recognized as Crested Hawk Eagle.

**Black Eagle *Ictinaetus malaiensis***

Two Rawana waterfall, one near Ella and two near Nuwara Eliya.

**Shikra *Accipiter badius***

Singles Kithulgala, and one Gallewella.

**Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus***

Ones and twos here and there.

**White-bellied Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster***

One Udawalawe, one Yala and two near Tissamaharama.

**Grey-headed Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus ichthyaetus***

Three Yala National Park and one Gallewella.

**Common (Steppe) Buzzard *Buteo buteo vulpinus***

At least one at Horton Plains.

**Slaty-legged Crake *Rallina eurizonoides***

One Sinharaja.

**White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus***

Common.

**Watercock *Gallicrex cinerea***

Singles Debarawewa and one Bundala.

**Grey-headed Swamphen *Porphyrio poliocephalus***

Very common in wetlands in the south.

**Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus***

Not common.

**Barred Buttonquail *Turnix suscitator***

Two pairs Udawalawe.

**Indian Stone-curlew *Burhinus indicus***

Five Kalametiya and two Bundala.

**Great Stone-curlew *Esacus recurvirostris***

Two Kalametiya, two Udawalawe and eight Bundala.

**Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus***

Common.

**Yellow-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus malabaricus***

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

**Red-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus***

Common wetland habitats.

**Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva***

Up to six Yala and thirty plus Bundala.

**Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola***

Three Bundala.

**Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus***

A couple Bundala and Yala.

**Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus***

Good numbers in southern wetlands.

**Pheasant-tailed Jacana *Hydrophasianus chirurgus***

Common in wetlands.

**Pin-tailed Snipe *Gallinago stenura***

Three Gallewella, two Debarawewa and one Yala.

**Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa***

Many Kalametiya.

**Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata***

One Bundala.

**Common Redshank *Tringa totanus***

Small numbers at southern wetlands.

**Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis***

A good number of birds in southern wetlands.

**Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia***

Small numbers at southern wetlands.

**Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus***

One Udawalawe and two.

**Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola***

A few in southern wetlands.

**Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos***

Small numbers at southern wetlands.

**Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres***

One Kalametiya, two Bundala and three Yala.

**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 nine at Bundala.

**Ruff *Calidris pugnax***

Twenty or so Kalametiya.

**Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus***

Seven Bundala.

**Small Pratincole *Glareola lactea***

Two Bundala.

**Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica***

Common at southern wetlands.

**Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia***

Three Kalametiya and sixty plus Bundala.

**Greater Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii***

Five Bundala, seven Yala and a few off Negumbo.

**Lesser Crested Tern *Thalasseus bengalensis***

A few off Negumbo.

**Little Tern *Sternula albifrons***

A scattering of birds at Kalametiya, Bundala and Yala.

**Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida***

Common and often abundant.

**White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus***

Fairly common wetlands.

**Feral Rock Dove *Columba livia***

Widespread but local in towns and larger villages.

**Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon *Columba torringtoniae***

One Bomurella.

**Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto***

Three Bundala.

**Spotted Dove *Spilopelia chinensis***

Very common.

**Common Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps indica***

Fairly common in forested areas of the wet zone at Kithulgala and Sinharaja and one Sigiriya.

**Orange-breasted Green Pigeon *Treron bicinctus***

Small numbers around Kalametiya, Udawalawe, Yala and Sigiriya.

**Sri Lanka Green Pigeon *Treron pompadora***

One Kithulgala, six Sinharaja and up to sixteen Sigiriya.

**Green Imperial Pigeon *Ducula aenea***

Fairly common and widespread.

**Green-billed Coucal *Centropus chlororhynchos***

One Sinharaja.

**Greater Coucal *Centropus sinensis***

One Kithulgala, one Sinharaja and one Tissamaharama.

**Sirkeer Malkoha *Taccocua leschenaultii***

Three Udawalawe.

**Red-faced Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus pyrrhocephalus***

Three Sinharaja.

**Blue-faced Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus viridirostris***

Two Udawalawe on 18th and up to two Yala.

**Chestnut-winged Cuckoo *Clamator coromandus***

One Bundala.

**Jacobin Cuckoo *Clamator jacobinus***

One Yala.

**Asian Koel *Eudynamys scolopaceus***

Four Kithulgala and a couple Yala.

**Banded Bay Cuckoo *Cacomantis sonneratii***

One Sigiriya.

**Grey-bellied Cuckoo *Cacomantis passerinus***

One Udawalawe, one Yala and three Bundala.

**Fork-tailed Drongo-cuckoo *Surniculus dicruroides***

Up to two Sigiriya.

**Common Hawk-cuckoo *Hierococcyx varius***

One Kithulgala.

**Serendib Scops Owl *Otus thilohoffmanni***

One Sinharaja.

**Indian Scops Owl *Otus bakkamoena***

Two Embilipitiya.

**Brown Fish Owl *Ketupa zeylonensis***

One Debarawewa.

**Brown Wood Owl *Strix leptogrammica***

One near Nuwara Eliya and another briefly en route to Horton Plains.

**Jungle Owlet *Glaucidium radiatum***

One Debarawewa.

**Chestnut-backed Owlet *Glaucidium castanonotum***

One Kithulgala and three heard Sinharaja.

**Sri Lanka Frogmouth *Batrachostomus moniliger***

A pair Sinharaja.

**Jerdon's Nightjar *Caprimulgus atripennis***

Two near Sigiriya.

**Indian Nightjar *Caprimulgus asiaticus***

One Yala.

**Crested Treeswift *Hemiprocne coronata***

A view seen here and there.

**Indian Swiftlet *Aerodramus unicolor***

Common.

**Brown-backed Noddy *Hirundapus giganteus***

Eight Kithulgala and two Sinharaja.

**Asian Palm Swift *Cypsiurus balasiensis***

A few seen.

**Little Swift *Apus affinis***

Many Sigiriya.

**Malabar Trogon *Harpactes fasciatus***

Five Sinharaja.

**Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis***

Two Udawalawe and one north of Tissamaharama.

**Stork-billed Kingfisher *Pelargopsis capensis***

One Debarawewa and one Gallewella.

**White-throated Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis***

Widespread and common.

**Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis***

One Debarawewa and one Sigiriya.

**Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis***

Three Udawalawe and one Bundala.

**Green Bee-eater *Merops orientalis***

Common in the south.

**Blue-tailed Bee-eater *Merops philippinus***

Fairly common.

**Chestnut-headed Bee-eater *Merops leschenaulti***

Two Yala.

**Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops***

One Yala.

**Malabar Pied Hornbill *Anthraceros coronatus***

Two Udawalawe, four Yala and six south of Tissamaharama.

**Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill *Ocyrceros gingalensis***

Three Kithulgala and two Sinharaja.

**Brown-headed Barbet *Psilopogon zeylanicus***

A few here and there.

**Yellow-fronted Barbet *Psilopogon flavifrons***

One Kithulgala and Sinharaja.

**Crimson-fronted Barbet *Psilopogon rubricapillus***

Three Kithulgala and up to three Sigiriya.

**Coppersmith Barbet *Psilopogon haemacephalus***

One Udawalawe, two Yala and a few Sigiriya.

**Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker *Dendrocopos nanus***

One Sigiriya.

**Yellow-crowned Woodpecker *Dendrocopos mahrattensis***

Two Yala.

**Lesser Yellownape *Picus chlorolophus***

Two Sinharaja.

**Red-backed Flameback *Dinopium psarodes***

Fairly common.

**Crimson-backed Flameback *Chrysocolaptes stricklandi***

Two Kithulgala.

**White-naped Woodpecker *Chrysocolaptes festivus***

Two Debarawewa.

**Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus peregrinator***

One or two Sigiriya.

**Layard's Parakeet *Psittacula calthrapae***

A few Kithulgala and Sinharaja.

**Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria***

Several Kithulgala and Sinharaja and two Sigiriya.

**Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri***

Common.

**Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot *Loriculus beryllinus***

Several Kithulgala and Sinharaja.

**Indian Pitta *Pitta brachyura***

One Sinharaja, two Yala and one Victoria Park.

**Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike *Hemipus picatus***

One Kithulgala and one Hakgala Strict Nature Reserve.

**Sri Lanka Woodshrike *Tephrodornis affinis***

One Yala.

**Ashy Woodswallow *Artamus fuscus***

Two Debarawewa.

**Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia***

A few seen here and there.

**Marshall's Iora *Aegithina nigrolutea***

Two Udawalawe.

**Black-headed Cuckooshrike *Coracina melanoptera***

One Kithulgala and one Sinharaja.

**Small Minivet *Pericrocotus cinnamomeus***

Three Yala and up to six Sigiriya.

**Orange Minivet *Pericrocotus flammeus***

A couple at Kithulgala and Sinharaja.

**Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus***

Ones and twos here and there.

**Black-hooded Oriole *Oriolus xanthornus***

A few seen Kithulgala, Sinharaja and Sigiriya.

**Ashy Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus***

Two Yala.

**White-bellied Drongo *Dicrurus caerulescens***

Common in the lowlands around Kithulgala and Sinharaja and Sigiriya.

**Sri Lanka Drongo *Dicrurus lophorinus***

Eight Sinharaja.

**White-browed Fantail *Rhipidura aureola***

Three Udawalawe and one Yala.

**Black-naped Monarch *Hypothymis azurea***

One Kithulgala and one Sinharaja.

**Indian Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi***

One Hakgala Strict Nature Reserve and up to five Sigiriya.

**Sri Lanka Blue Magpie *Urocissa ornata***

Four Sinharaja.

**House Crow *Corvus splendens***

Very common.

**Indian Jungle Crow *Corvus culminatus***

Several seen here and there.

**Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher *Culicicapa ceylonensis***

Three Victoria Park and two Horton Plains.

**Cinereous Tit *Parus cinereus***

One Ella and two Victoria Park.

**Ashy-crowned Sparrow-lark *Eremopterix griseus***

Eighty plus Bundala and eight Yala.

**Jerdon's Bushlark *Mirafra affinis***

Three Udawalawe and a couple Yala.

**Oriental Skylark *Alauda gulgula***

Three Yala.

**Black-capped Bulbul *Pycnonotus melanicterus***

A few Kithulgala, Sinharaja and Sigiriya.

**Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer***

Common and widespread.

**Yellow-eared Bulbul *Pycnonotus penicillatus***

Three Horton Plains.

**White-browed Bulbul *Pycnonotus melanicterus***

One Kalametiya, one Yala and six Sigiriya.

**Yellow-browed Bulbul *Acritillas indica***

Two Kithulgala.

**Square-tailed Bulbul *Hypsipetes ganeesa***

Six Kithulgala and two Sinharaja.

**Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica***

Common.

**Hill Swallow *Hirundo domicola***

Eight Horton Plains and four north of Nuwara Eliya.

**Sri Lanka Swallow *Cecropis hyperythra***

Four Kithulgala area, four Kalametiya and three Bundala.

**Green Warbler *Phylloscopus nitidus***

One Horton Plains and one Hakgala Strict Nature Reserve.

**Large-billed Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus magnirostris***

One Sinharaja.

**Clamorous Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus***

One Debarawewa.

**Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum***

One Kithulgala.

**Sri Lanka Bush Warbler *Elaphornis palliseri***

One Horton Plains.

**Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis***

A few Horton Plains.

**Grey-breasted Prinia *Prinia hodgsonii***

Two Hakgala Strict Nature Reserve.

**Jungle Prinia *Prinia sylvatica***

Several Udawalawe and Yala.

**Ashy Prinia *Prinia socialis***

One at our first paddyfield stop and one Bundala.

**Plain Prinia *Prinia inornata***

A few here and there.

**Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius***

Common.

**Sri Lanka Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus melanurus***

Two Sinharaja, a few Horton Plains and two Victoria Park.

**Tawny-bellied Babbler *Dumetia hyperythra***

Six Udawalawe.

**Dark-fronted Babbler *Rhopocichla atriceps***

Two Kithulgala and two Sinharaja.

**Brown-capped Babbler *Pellorneum fuscicapillus***

One Kithulgala, one Sinharaja and two Sigiriya.

**Orange-billed Babbler *Turdoides rufescens***

Several Kithulgala and Sinharaja.

**Yellow-billed Babbler *Turdoides affinis***

Common.

**Ashy-headed Laughingthrush *Garrulax cinereifrons***

Up to sixteen Sinharaja.

**Yellow-eyed Babbler *Chrysomma sinense***

One Udawalawe National Park and two Yala.

**Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus***

Fairly common and widespread in the lowlands.

**Sri Lanka White-eye *Zosterops ceylonensis***

Four Sinharaja, up to twelve Victoria Park and Nuwara Eliya Rawana and several Horton Plains.

**Velvet-fronted Nuthatch *Sitta frontalis***

One Sinharaja and three Horton Plains.

**Sri Lanka Hill Myna *Gracula ptilogenys***

Several Sinharaja.

**Southern Hill Myna *Gracula indica***

Two Kithulgala.

**Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis***

Common.

**Brahminy Starling *Sturnia pagodarum***

One Udawalawe.

**White-faced Starling *Sturnornis albofrontatus***

One Sinharaja.

**Rosy Starling *Pastor roseus***

Twenty or so Bundala.

**Pied Thrush *Geokichla wardii***

A male Victoria Park.

**Orange-headed Thrush *Geokichla citrina***

Up to twelve Sigiriya.

**Spot-winged Thrush *Geokichla spiloptera***

Two Sinharaja.

**Indian Blackbird *Turdus simillimus***

A couple Horton Plains and one Victoria Park

**Indian Robin *Copsychus fulvicatus***

Fairly common.

**Oriental Magpie-robin *Copsychus saularis***

Common.

**White-rumped Shama *Copsychus malabaricus***

Four Sigiriya.

**Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica***

Ones and twos here and there.

**Brown-breasted Flycatcher *Muscicapa muttui***

Singles Kithulgala, Sinharaja and Victoria Park.

**Tickell's Blue Flycatcher *Cyornis tickelliae***

Ones and twos Kithulgala, Sinharaja and Sigiriya.

**Dull-blue Flycatcher *Eumyias sordidus***

One Horton Plains.

**Indian Blue Robin *Larvivora brunnea***

One Sinharaja, one Victoria Park and ten Sigiriya.

**Kashmir Flycatcher *Ficedula subrubra***

One or two Victoria Park.

**Pied Bushchat *Saxicola caprata***

Twelve Horton Plains.

**Jerdon's Leafbird *Chloropsis jerdoni***

One Sinharaja and up to four Sigiriya.

**Golden-fronted Leafbird *Chloropsis aurifrons***

Three Kithulgala and two Sigiriya.

**Legge's Flowerpecker *Dicaeum vincens***

One Sinharaja.

**Pale-billed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum erythrorhynchos***

Ones and twos here and there.

**Purple-rumped Sunbird *Leptocoma zeylonica***

Ones and twos here and there.

**Purple Sunbird *Cinnyris asiaticus***

Ones and twos in southern lowlands.

**Loten's Sunbird *Leptocoma lotenius***

Up to two Kithulgala and one Sigiriya.

**House Sparrow *Passer domesticus***

A few here and there.

**Baya Weaver *Ploceus philippinus***

Two Bundala.

**White-rumped Munia *Lonchura striata***

Up to five Kithulgala.

**Scaly-breasted Munia *Lonchura punctulata***

Fairly common and widespread.

**Black-throated Munia *Lonchura striata***

Three Kithulgala.

**Tricoloured Munia *Lonchura malacca***

Fairly common.

**Forest Wagtail *Dendronanthus indicus***

One Victoria Park.

**Western Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava***

One Kalametiya and two Udawalawe appeared to be of the form *thunbergi*, often known as Grey-headed Wagtail.

**Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea***

Ones and twos here and there.

**Paddyfield Pipit *Anthus rufulus***

Ones and twos here and there and sixteen Kalametiya.

**Mammals****Sri Lanka Giant Squirrel *Ratufa macroura***

One Kithulgala.

**Layard's Palm Squirrel *Funambulus layardi***

One Sinharaja.

**Indian Palm Squirrel *Funambulus palmarum***

Common.

**Striped-necked Mongoose *Herpestes vitticollis***

One Ella.

**Ruddy Mongoose *Herpestes smithii***

One Sinharaja and six Yala.

**Golden Jackal *Canis aureus***

Four Sigiriya.

**Leopard *Panthera pardus***

One Yala.

**Indian Flying Fox *Pteropus giganteus***

Particularly Tissamaharama.

**Tufted Grey Langur *Semnopithecus priam***

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

**Bear Monkey *Trachypithecus vetulus senex***

Two Horton Plains and three Bomurella.

**Purple-faced Leaf Monkey *Trachypithecus vetulus vetulus***

Up to five Sinharaja.

**Toque Macaque *Macaca sinica***

Small numbers in the south and around Sigiriya.

**Wild Boar *Sus scrofa***

Up to thirty Yala.

**Sambar *Cervus unicolor***

Three Yala and five Horton Plains.

**Chital *Axis axis***

Fifty plus Yala and ten Bundala.

**Feral Water Buffalo *Bubalus bubalis***

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

**Asian Elephant *Elephas maximus***

Udawalawe, Bundala and Yala.

**Reptiles**

Mugger Crocodile *Crocodylus palustris*

Asian Water Monitor *Varanus salvator*

Indian Monitor *Varanus bengalensis*

Brown-patched (aka Sri Lankan) Kangaroo Lizard *Otocryptis wiegmanni*

Hump-nosed Lizard *Lyricephalus scutatus*

Green Forest Lizard *Calotes calotes*

Oriental Garden Lizard *Calotes versicolor*

Asian House Gecko *Hemidactylus frenatus*

Taylor's Striped Skink *Eutropis floweri*

Indian Flapshell Turtle *Lissemys punctata*

Indian Star Tortoise *Geochelone elegans*

Green Vine Snake *Ahaetulla nasuta*

Oriental Rat Snake *Ptyas mucosa*

**Butterflies**

Common Rose *Pachliopta aristolochiae*

Crimson Rose *Pachliopta hector*

Ceylon Rose *Pachliopta jophon*

Red Helen *Papilio helenus*

Blue Mormon *Papilio polymnestor*

Common Mormon *Papilio polytes*

Lemon Emigrant *Catopsilia pomona*

Common Jezebel *Delias eucharis*

Common Grass Yellow *Eurema hecabe*

Three Spot Grass Yellow *Eurema blanda*  
 White Orange Tip *Ixias marianne*  
 Psyche *Leptosia nina*  
 Painted Sawtooth *Prioneris sita*  
 Tawny Coster *Acraea violae*  
 Plain Tiger *Danaus chrysippus*  
 Common Crow *Euploea core*  
 Double-banded Crow *Euploea sylvester*  
 Danaid Eggfly *Hypolimnas misippus*  
 Sri Lanka Tree Nymph *Idea iasonia*  
 Blue Glassy Tiger *Danaus similes*  
 Peacock Pansy *Junonia almana*  
 Grey Pansy *Junonia atlites*  
 Lemon Pansy *Junonia lemonias*  
 Common Treebrown *Lethe rohria*  
 Commander *Moduza procris*  
 Dark-Brand Bushbrown *Mycalesis mineus*  
 Common Sailor *Neptis hylas*  
 Gladeye Bushbrown *Nissanga patnia*  
 Common Lascar *Pantoporia hordonia*  
 Sri Lanka Tiger *Parantica taprobana*  
 Clipper *Parthenos sylvia*  
 Leopard *Phalanta phalantha*  
 Blue Tiger *Tirmula limniace*  
 Dark Blue Tiger *Tirmula septentrionis*  
 White Four-ring *Ypthima ceylonica*  
 Indian Cupid *Everes lacturnus*

#### **Dragonflies**

Yellow Waxtail *Ceriagrion coromandelianum*  
 Orange-winged Groundling *Brachythemis contaminata*  
 Pied Parasol *Neurothemis tullia*  
 Spine-tufted Skimmer *Orthetrum chrysis*

#### **Other taxa**

Stick Insect species *Prisomera spinicollis*  
 Fringed Ornamental Tarantula *Poecilotheria ornata*  
 Giant Wood Spider *Nephila pilipes*  
 Snail species *Acavus phoenix*

#### **A few plants**

Badura Pitcher plant species *Nepenthes distillatoria*  
 Rhododendron species *Rhododendron arboreum zeylanicum*  
 Ceylon Balsam *Impatiens repens*  
 Blue Water Lily *Nymphaea stellata* National Flower of Sri Lanka.  
 Bamboo Orchid *Arundina graminifolia*