

# Sri Lanka

Jewel of the Indian Ocean

Sat 10–Sat 23 November 2018

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*Changeable Hawk Eagle at Udawalawe. Photo © Mike Crewe/Limosa*

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

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**Sri Lanka | Jewel of the Indian Ocean****Tour leaders:** Robin Chittenden and Dhammi Samarasinghe**with:** Mike Balding, Bill & Clare Cheney, Andy Gill, Kay Marriott, Sandra Peel & Marge Wood, Chris & Rosemary Sargent and Carole White,**11th November**

We arrived at Colombo airport early afternoon and were met by our local guide Dhammi. En route to Kithulgala we stopped for a snack and cup of tea before scanning some paddyfields. Here we saw Blue-tailed Bee-eaters, White-throated Kingfishers, a few Sri Lanka Swallows, two Asian Palm Swifts, Red-wattled Lapwings, Indian Pond Herons, White-breasted Waterhen, Scaly-breasted and White-rumped Munias and a Grey Mongoose. Although it still just light when we arrived at Kithulgala Rest House all bird activity had ceased.

**12th November**

At 5.45am we walked from our hotel at Kithulgala and explored the wooded area next door. A Chestnut-backed Owlet started calling fairly high up in one of the large trees. After a little peering this way and that, Chris suddenly said, 'that's an owl isn't it'? And indeed it was, showing off its chestnut back. It stayed long enough for everyone to get 'scope views and even turned around at one stage. It then flew to a nearby tree. There despite it continuously calling we found it very difficult to relocate. Mike spotted it but it quickly changed position again. Kay spotted a perched Crested Serpent Eagle. We then enjoyed a few Sri Lanka Hanging Parrots, but the Lesser Yellownappe was not very cooperative, spending most of its times out of view from us.

Back at our hotel and scanning from the back garden, Dhammi picked up a perched raptor. Through the 'scope it looked like an 'orange-bellied' Falcon. It turned out to be an educational bird. Dhammi on brief views thought it was a Rufous-bellied Eagle but the black hood, pure white upper breast, large yellow eye-ring would seem to eliminate that. Could Oriental Hobby but a likely candidate, but this bird looked large. A search later for photographs on the internet revealed that some of the photographs of the Peregrine, known as Shaheen, that is the southern India and Sri Lanka form, looked exactly like our bird. Who would have thought a Peregrine could look so colourful? Also seen were a handful of Southern Hill Mynas, a couple of Gold-fronted and Jerdon's Leafbirds, a male Black-hooded Oriole and Carole spotted a Legge's Flowerpecker.

The 'ferry' crossing the Kelani River required two journeys to get all of us across. Those waiting for the second crossing were entertained by a Common Tailorbird, Asian Brown Flycatcher and a distant Black Eagle that soared over the forest. All saw Little Cormorant and a Grey Wagtail. Starting the trail at Makandawa Forest Reserve we came across a feeding party of Square-tailed Bulbuls. A Crested Serpent Eagle flew over a clearing. By the path we found a Large-billed Leaf Warbler and a Black-naped Monarch, but the narrowness of the path and the flighty nature of the birds meant that only a few managed to get on to them. The Forest Wagtail was more cooperative but you still had to be quick to see it before it walked off into the forest. Those that were able to cross the stepping-stones of varying heights, waited in the usual position overlooking the open meadow area. We'd literally just settled to start scanning, when Dhammi waved us over. He'd found a Serendib Scops Owl. Only slight problem to view it entailed a three feet drop into a beautifully clear and shallow forest river. It did mean getting your boots totally soaked (and your feet soothed by the call water), but the compensation was the Owl mostly in full view. In some positions only just a few twigs in the way. A fantastic sight although one felt sorry for the four that had been unable to get far enough along the track. On the return leg were our first Orange-billed Babblers and a Tickell's Blue Flycatcher. As we were preparing to leave to bird the area near the police station, a group of very showy Layard's Parakeets were watched feeding very close in an oil palm. By the police station a fast-moving Green Warbler and Common Iora were seen by a few. A perched Southern Hill Myna was more obliging and was replaced by an equally cooperative Red-backed Flameback. Three Brown-backed Needletails flew low overhead and a tame male Sri Lanka Junglefowl strolled around a garden. A tea break at the 'River Lounge' produced a couple of Brown-breasted Flycatchers and a posing Spot-winged Thrush plus a nice cup of tea.

**13th November**

First light saw us birding the track near the suspension bridge, but first you have to cross the swaying footbridge bridge that only takes five people across at a time. Walking along the track, through the mixed habitat of forest trees, gardens and clear areas, we found two Sri Lanka Grey Hornbills and a small party of Orange-billed Babblers. One area was particularly busy with bird activity. The trees were bristling: Yellow-fronted Barbet, a pair of Orange Minivets, a couple of Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrikes, a brief Black-naped Monarch and two male

Black-hooded Orioles. Special though were the two Brown-capped Babblers, which peered at us feet away, from the scrub, as we peered back at them. Crossing back over the river the first few had a Stork-billed Kingfisher. Fortunately for some, another Stork-billed Kingfisher was on view at the hotel. Just as we were about to leave, a Crested Honey Buzzard soared over.

En route to Sinharaja some saw two Black Eagles and two Crested Serpent Eagles. A brief stop resulted in lovely views of a Brown Shrike. What a welcome awaited us at the hotel at Sinharaja: two Blue Magpies, three Yellow-browed Bulbuls, two Black-capped Bulbuls, Common Emerald Dove and a Layard's Palm Squirrel, all from the veranda.

After a siesta, we birded from the road back from the entrance to the Sinharaja Forest Reserve. At the headquarters were three Blue Magpies, a Sri Lanka Junglefowl and then very little: a brief Yellow-fronted Barbet and distant Legge's Flowerpecker. We explored another area near the hotel, which produced just another Yellow-fronted Barbet and a Bamboo Orchid. We decided a cup of tea on the veranda was a better idea. Three Sri Lanka Junglefowls visited the feeding station: a pair with a cute chick.

#### **14th November**

We heading up the mountain after completing the paperwork at the Sinharaja Forest Reserve park entrance and picked up a couple of park guides. On the way up the incredibly rough track by Jeep and Land Rover we stopped for a Sri Lanka Green Pigeon, Orange-billed Babblers, a couple of Green Imperial Pigeons, our first White-browed Bulbuls and two Plum-headed Parakeets flew over.

At the start of the main path were some delightfully tame Sri Lanka Junglefowls. Next was a small group of Dark-fronted Babblers, collecting nest material. Just by the path but a little bit obscured was a single female Sri Lanka Frogmouth. The thought they always come in pairs crossed my mind. Continuing down the track we found a Legge's Flowerpeckers and Black Eagle flew over, and then it went dead. The two bird flocks we could hear drifted away from the path. We did find a few reptiles: a vivid Green Vine Snake, a few Kangaroo Lizards and a Garden Green Lizard plus many Sri Lanka Tree Nymph butterflies were floating about. On the return walk a Sri Lanka Drongo stayed in view long enough for fabulous 'scope views.

Dhammi thought the best bet was to have a lunch and siesta where the forest bird flock may move towards water in the afternoon. During the siesta a few Purple-faced Leaf-monkeys mooched about. Then at last a flock but would the birds show? Glimpses of Malabar Trogon and two Sri Lanka Scimitar Babblers hardly cut the mustard, especially as Dhammi had glimpsed a Red-faced Malkoha. The birds were being particularly difficult. There's nothing like a cup tea to restore happiness though, especially when the birds at the veranda at Martin's showed well: two Velvet-fronted Nuthatches, a white and 'normal' Indian Paradise Flycatcher, four Sri Lanka White-eyes, four Sri Lanka Myna flew over and half a dozen Brown-backed Needletails spotted by Rosemary.

#### **15th November**

After an early tea and coffee we left our hotel at five sharp in time to get to a house on the edge of the forest and just in time for dawn. Having positioned ourselves at the various viewpoints around the house we then viewed the back 'garden'. A couple of Spot-winged Thrushes were on there. Then a Slaty-legged Crake appeared, and although it didn't hang around for a protracted stay, it was on view for several minutes and at one stage strolled past us only a matter of feet away. When some Orange-billed Babblers arrived they were quickly followed by a group of Ashy-headed Laughing Thrushes, again all showing feet away. Then suddenly an Indian Blue Robin put in appearance followed by up to eight Sri Lanka Junglefowl. Some of which were feeding right by our feet, completely unconcerned. Above a Sri Lanka Giant Squirrel clambered about, but where were the Sri Lanka Spurfowls. Eventually a female wandered in for a minute or two, before sloping off. Then a Yellow-striped Mouse Deer popped out. What a bonus as this species is rarely seen. We then birded along the track, highlights being a couple of Lesser Yellownapes, a few Sri Lanka Drongos, a Black-naped Monarch, a Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill and two Sri Lanka Scimitar Babblers seen by Kay. But could we find the usually easily located Green-billed Coucal?

In the afternoon we decided to do the main trail at Sinharaja Forest Reserve again. After all, that was where the greatest potential of new birds were. Although some of the birds were a little difficult we were more successful with a male Malabar Trogon. Three Brown-backed Needletails zoomed over the trees at the research centre. Yes we actually made it all the way there again. Heading back, at last, a better bird flock with two Red-faced Malkohas and a White-faced Starling, although you still had to be on your toes as the birds did not hang about for long. The most bizarre thing was the whoosh of wings of a large bird that flew into a tree right above our heads. Not one of us managed to clap eyes on what surely must have been a Green-billed Coucal. Would it reappear?!! Heading back down we enjoyed the streamlined beauty of the Crested Treeswifts and the later group were lucky to see a Crimson-backed Flameback and a few Sri Lanka Green Pigeons in perfect light.

**16th November**

A dawn bird walk near our hotel and after all the previous attempts, there were a couple of Green-billed Coucals. Not much else though apart from six Sri Lanka Mynas perched in the distance. En route to Udawalawe was a brief Crimson-fronted Barbet and a Changeable Hawk Eagle.

After checking into our hotel at Udawalawe the group found a Coppersmith Barbet excavating a nest right by the swimming pool. Heading out we had a quick scan of some wetlands where there were Painted Storks, a White-bellied Sea-eagle, a Spot-billed Pelican and Jerdon's Bushlarks. We popped into our old hotel in Embilipitiya. There we found the two roosting Indian Scops Owls. One perched completely out in the open briefly, flushed there by a Sri Lanka Giant Squirrel in the same tree. En route to Kalametiya Bird Sanctuary some saw four Malabar Pied Hornbills.

Near Kalametiya we first stopped at a tank but it was being refurbished. A Grey-headed Swamphen was lurking in a remnant bit of vegetation. Heading to the reserve it was apparent there were absolutely thousands upon thousands of Black-tailed Godwits. Massive flocks kept getting up, off their roosting site and heading inland. The main pit was carpeted with this large wader. Also there were many Marsh Sandpipers and a few Little Stints. A black-hooded Oriole perched in the open. In the drier areas were a few Yellow-wattled Lapwings, Green Bee-eaters and Paddyfield Pipits,

By the mangroves were three Indian Stone-curlews, a Purple Sunbird, 40 or so Lesser Sand Plovers, a couple of Great Stone-curlews spotted by Carole and several Ashy-crowned Sparrow-larks.

**17th November**

We arrived at Udawalawe National Park just as the park opened and it wasn't long before we were in the short queue to get the tickets. While waiting we had a look at a Changeable Hawk Eagle. From the high-seated jeeps we spotted a beautiful Forest Wagtail perched in a small tree completely in the open. A little further on and we watched two Yellow-eyed Babblers plus Jungle, Plain and Ashy Prinias. Jerdon's Bushlarks were feet away. Then suddenly a bizarre sight as a smallish bird flew out of view. We edged closer and there it was perched up on a branch, an India Pitta. Meanwhile the first jeep had moved off so a quick phone call to Dhammi and they quickly returned to see the bird. The roosting Indian Peafowls were scattered liberally about their favoured trees and gradually made their way to ground. Other roadside goodies were an Orange-breasted Green Pigeon and a Black-winged Kite. There was a continual passage of Rosy Starlings; some eventually were seen perched or feeding on the ground. By a pool, with lazing Water Buffalo, three Chitals sauntered into view. A Blue-face Malkoha was seen by those in the first jeep but had become mostly hidden by the time the second jeep had driven into the same position. Luckily Mike spotted its tail, in the bush, and eventually it popped into full view. Those in the second jeep saw a Golden Jackal.

We ate our packed breakfast by a large lake under the cooling shade of a large tree. It was all rather idyllic with many water birds: Oriental Darter, Spot-billed Pelicans, Black-crowned Night Herons, Painted Storks, a pair of White-bellied Sea-eagles and a juvenile Brown-headed Fish-eagle spotted by Carole. Although the majority of the terns were Whiskered Terns we saw one each of Gull-billed, White-winged and Little Tern as they did a fly past. A Toque Macaque was there, on the scrounge for titbits. Retracing our steps we came across a circling Lesser Adjutant and an Indian Roller. Three Asian Elephants were right by the track and a pack of up to ten Golden Jackals were seen by all. In total eight Asian Elephants were seen. By the headquarters were a couple of White-browed Fantails, two Small Minivets and a few Indian Robins.

We got back on board our bus and travelled 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. There were hordes of wetland birds: Lesser Whistling Ducks, Grey-necked Swamphens, Pheasant-tailed Jacanas and Oriental Darters. A few Eastern Cattle Egrets were feeding around a partially submerged Water Buffalo. Then some locals told us about an owl in their garden. Minutes later we were enjoying spectacular views of a Jungle Owlet, perched completely in the open. Back to the tank and Dhammi spotted a Yellow Bittern. Stopping off at another local back garden we were diverted by a Red-backed Flameback but then a White-naped Woodpecker popped in a little later. The two flamebacks then began eyeing up each other on the same tree. Fantastic.

**18th November**

Having left out hotel at six in the morning we were soon clambering aboard the high-seated jeeps near the entrance to Bundala National Park. We spent time scanning the adjoining wetlands before getting to the park proper. They were teaming with birds: Grey-headed Swamphens, Lesser Whistling Ducks, Purple Herons and

Painted Storks to name a few. Suddenly a Black Bittern appeared and flew right across the marsh. A Grey Heron caught an enormous Indian five-fingered Frog and having thought better of it, let it go. In the reeds were a few squabbling Clamorous Reed Warblers, sorting out their territories. Two Yellow Bitterns were on show, one of which flew right past the Jeeps. Two Watercocks were discreetly swimming low in the wet vegetation. Their only give away was the occasional sight of a 'Corncrake' like head showing through the vegetation, although one almost showed its whole body briefly. A Lesser Adjutant flew in.

Driving through the scrubby habitat we then emerged onto one of the bunds of the salt pans. Four Small Pratincoles were roosting on the bund and a little further along were four Pied Kingfishers. Scanning more distantly produced two Red-necked Phalaropes, four Great Crested Terns and a flock of 60 or so Caspian Terns. All looked particularly fabulous through the 'scope which was possible to use (just) in the jeeps. Before arriving at the final bund we stopped for eight or so close Broad-billed Sandpipers, but they were against the light.

We ate our packed breakfasts scanning the waders. It was high tide, explaining the vast numbers of waders on the pans: over 100 Marsh Sandpipers, hundreds of Little Stints, tens of Curlew Sandpipers, hundreds of Lesser Sand Plovers and a couple of hundred Pacific Golden Plovers. Common Greenshank was not so common, but at one time one was next to a Marsh Sandpiper to allow direct comparison. Rarest of all were three Great Knot roosting among the throngs of Lesser Sand Plovers, and as luck would have it, we managed to pick out a Greater Sand Plover too. On the estuary side, two Saltwater Crocodiles lurked. In all we saw about 16 Great Stone-curlews, including one right by the track. At our final stop were a couple of Muggers and many Gull-billed Terns. An Asian Elephant was spotted miles away. On the way out we enjoyed lovely views of Indian Roller and a Jacobin Cuckoo and, of all things, two Eurasian Collared Doves.

After a siesta we headed to Yala National park entrance area where we found a Sri Lanka Woodshrike. Near the headquarters, Rosemary spotted two Barred Button-quail. Luckily two more were seen, albeit briefly later at the Indian Nightjar location. Back at the area near the headquarters there were three Tawny-bellied Babblers and then Dhammi found seven Malabar Pied Hornbills. Such fantastic birds. Mike then spotted two Small Minivets, which gave sublime views feet away. As dusk fell we tried to see Indian Nightjar, but there was only a brief low fly past. We headed back to our hotel. We had another early start in the morning.

### **19th November**

We left our hotel at five in the morning in time to get to the Yala National Park entrance in time for the six o'clock opening. En route a young Black-naped Hare lolloped by the road. At our first stop was a small herd of Chital including one mother and fawn. We then drove by a small ley where we found two Striated Herons, a few Lesser Sand Plovers, one Greater Sand Plover, two Great Stone-curlews, a Gull-billed Tern and a small Mugger Crocodile. Then an interesting manoeuvre, in which we reversed up a one-way track to try and locate a Chestnut-headed Bee-eater. We came across Brahminy Starling and Hoopoe and round the corner was a Ruddy Mongoose, then a Yellow-crowned Woodpecker and a few Orange-breasted Green Pigeons. Only returning the right way along the track did we discover a pair of Chestnut-headed Bee-eaters. One of which started to burrow a nest hole. We then had our breakfast break by the coast with attendant Indian Jungle Crows plus Common Iora and Plain Prinia. Other highlights were an Ashy Drongo, a Grey-headed Fish-Eagle, a White-rumped Shama, two skulking Yellow-crowned Woodpeckers, Dark-fronted Babbler, White-browed Fantail, White-bellied Sea-eagle, plus five Sambars. Stopping to transfer from the jeeps to our bus, we found an exceedingly confiding troupe of Tufted Grey Langurs including mothers with young. Other mammals seen included, seven Asian Elephants, many Wild Boars and a Golden Jackal.

After a welcome siesta we popped out to birdwatch the local 'tanks'. Starting at Tissamaharama we looked at the thousands of Indian Flying Foxes, whose wings seemed especially wrapped up against their bodies, protecting them from the rain. A Stork-billed Kingfisher perched in the Rain Trees. And a massive Water Monitor was on the road. The rain stopped as we arrived to walk beside another section of the Debarawewa tank. A Yellow Bittern was there and was later spotted by Rosemary just yards from the track. Even closer, a matter of feet away, was an adult Black-crowned Night-heron. Earlier we peered at a Crested Serpent Eagle. Lightning strikes and ominous-looking clouds put paid to further birding and we got back on the bus just as the rain started.

### **20th November**

As we left to head north after breakfast, Dhammi had had a tip off, so we popped into a garden at Debarawewa and we were rewarded with the sight of a roosting Brown Fish Owl. Initially, views were rather disappointing. Not only was the bird partially obscured, but also it had its back to us. Luckily just as we were about to leave it turned its head and started preening. En route north we scanned the Panagamuwa tank and found five Pygmy Geese and further on were two Woolly-necked Storks.

Heading uphill we took a short break to admire the Rawana waterfall. We arrived for a buffet lunch at the Surrey Tea Estate. Birding afterwards we found three Loten's Sunbirds and five Brown-headed Barbets. In the meantime Dhammi and Andy were scrambling the slopes to look for a roosting Brown Wood Owl but with no joy. Andy had some compensation in the shape of a brief Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon. A little later, walking the back track, Dhammi had more luck and located the owl, which we all managed to clamber down the wooded slope to see through the 'scope. After checking in to our hotel at Nuwara Eliya we had a quick visit to Victoria Park. Nothing doing until we came across a pair of showy Grey-headed Canary-flycatchers. Then a couple of Pied Thrushes flew out of the tree but were luckily re-located and 'scoped. A Kashmir Flycatcher put in a short appearance but the light was beating us.

### **21st November**

We left our hotel at 4.45 am to get to Horton Plains for first light. By the entrance gate was the shape of an Indian Blackbird looking very similar to 'ours'. Once the entrance formalities were complete we headed a couple of miles into the park. No sooner had we got out of our minibuses than a few Sri Lanka White-eyes were on view, but then almost immediately there was a Sri Lanka Bush Warbler, but you had to be quick. Strolling back along the entrance road small flocks of birds appeared: three Dull-blue Flycatchers, a handful of Yellow-eared Bulbuls, a few Cinerous Tits. And then Dhammi's ears detected a Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush a little way off. All of a sudden it flew up perched briefly, flew across the road and landed on view for a few seconds. A little later parts of it were again on view for a few seconds. We heard Crimson-backed Flameback drumming, but unfortunately it did not show. Also in the bird flocks were four Velvet-fronted Nuthatches (including one that seemed to show partial albinism), Sri Lanka Scimitar Babbler, Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher and another Sri Lanka Bush Warbler.

We then headed towards the visitor centre area where we had extremely close views of several Hill Swallows and a few Pied Bushchats. Heading back down the hill, Dhammi again detected a Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush and despite the dense cover it popped into view for a few seconds or so again. Another female was calling from even more dense cover. While we were intently watching any movement for the thrush, the rare endemic Black-lipped Lizard was noticed sunbathing on a close fern frond.

Kay and Andy had a look in Victoria Park during the siesta period and were delighted to find an Indian Pitta. Later we explored the Bomurella Wood in the hope of locating a Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon. This failed but we did have a lovely bird flock fairly low down. The Sri Lanka White-eyes gave exceptionally close views. Also in the flock were a couple of Yellow-eared Bulbuls, Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, three Cinerous Tits and one brief Tickell's Blue Flycatcher. Carole spotted a Bear Monkey and Dhammi located a well camouflaged rare and endemic Rhino-horned Lizard.

### **22nd November**

Up again at 5.45am to get to Victoria Park at dawn to ensure we were out during the best part of the day when the birds are most active. It was barely light as we entered the park but some got onto an India Pitta, as it bounced along. Luckily we came across it later in stronger light and, although it always kept to the shadows, it was on full view several times. Dhammi detected a Pied Thrush and a couple of them perched briefly in the trees. All was not lost as they came down to the edge of the stream to feed. In total there were four males. Fantastic. Just as we got onto the thrushes, a male Kashmir Flycatcher appeared. All managed to see this jewel but the Forest Wagtail wasn't so cooperative.

After a buffet breakfast we headed towards Colombo. The journey was held up for half an hour or so as we waited for a massive fallen tree branch to be cleared from blocking the road. We stopped at Kithulgala for a buffet lunch. It was lovely to re-absorb the view of the Kelani River plus a few birds: Legge's Flowerpecker, Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill and Crested Honey-buzzard. En route to our final hotel at Negombo we spotted White-bellied Sea Eagle and Dhammi found two Ashy Woodswallows.

### **23rd November**

An early morning stroll onto the beach at Negombo produced many terns fishing offshore. Most were Whiskered Terns but there were a few very distant Great Crested Terns. There was a passage of Eastern Cattle Egrets, one Indian Pond Heron and three Brahminy Kites, all coming in off the sea, presumably having just arrived from India. A dozen or so Ashy-crowned Sparrow-larks flew north. Also there were hordes of House Crows attracted to the fish catches on the beach.

My thanks to Baur's, and especially to Dhammi for his brilliant tour leading, and to the careful driver and his assistant.

**Annotated List of Birds  
(220 species seen)**

- Lesser Whistling-duck *Dendrocygna javanica***  
Widely scattered at wetlands.
- Cotton Pygmy Goose *Nettapus coromandelianus***  
Five Panagamuwa tank.
- Garganey *Spatula querquedula***  
Three hundred Kalametiya bird sanctuary.
- Sri Lanka Spurfowl *Galloperdix bicalcarata***  
A female Sinharaja.
- Sri Lanka Junglefowl *Gallus lafayetii***  
Ones and twos seen here and there.
- Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristata***  
Plentiful and seen regularly throughout the trip.
- 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 south of Ella.
- Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilos javanicus***  
Singles at Udawalawe National Park, Bundala National Park and Yala National Park.
- Black-headed Ibis *Threskiornis melanocephalus***  
Common in shallow wetlands, especially rice paddies in the south of the island.
- Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia***  
Two over Bundala National Park and thirty plus near Yala National Park.
- Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis***  
Two Debarawewa tank.
- Black Bittern *Dupetor flavicollis***  
One Bundala National Park.
- Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax***  
Six Udawalawe and a few Tissamaharama.
- Striated Heron *Butorides striata***  
Two Yala National Park.
- 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.
- Little Egret *Egretta garzetta***  
Fairly common in suitable wetlands.
- 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.

**Crested Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus***

Ones and twos here and there.

**Crested Serpent Eagle *Spilornis cheela***

One Kithulgala, one Makandarawa Forest Reserve, two en route to Sinharaja Forest Reserve and one Debarawewa tank.

**Changeable Hawk Eagle *Nisaetus cirrhatus ceylanensis***

One east Sinharaja, three Udawalawe National Park and four Yala National Park.

**Black Eagle *Ictinaetus malaiensis***

One over Makandarawa Forest Reserve, two en route to Sinharaja and one en route to Surrey Estate.

**Shikra *Accipiter badius***

Singles here and there.

**Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus***

Ones and twos here and there.

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

Three Udawalawe area, one Yala, one Panagamuwa tank and one Kithulgala.

**Grey-headed Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus ichhyaetus***

One Udawalawe National Park and one Yala National Park.

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

One Sinharaja.

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

Common.

**Watercock *Gallicrex cinerea***

Two Bundala.

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

Very common in wetlands in the south.

**Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus***

Uncommon.

**Barred Buttonquail *Turnix suscitator***

Two pairs Udawalawe.

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

Three Kalametiya.

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

One Kalametiya, 20 plus Bundala and two Yala National Park.

**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***

Three hundred plus Bundala.

**Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola***

Five Bundala.

**Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius***

One Bundala National and three Yala National Park

**Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus***

A few Bundala.

**Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus***

Good numbers in southern wetlands.

**Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus***

One Bundala National and one Yala National Park

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

Common in wetlands.

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

Many thousands Kalametiya.

**Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres***

Six Kalametiya bird sanctuary and ten Bundala.

**Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris***

Three Bundala National Park

**Ruff *Calidris pugnax***

Four Bundala National Park.

**Broad-billed Sandpiper *Calidris falcinellus***

At least 11 at Bundala.

**Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea***

Several Bundala National Park.

**Little Stint *Calidris minuta***

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

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

Three Gallewella, two Debarawewa and one Yala.

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

Two Bundala.

**Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos***

Small numbers at southern wetlands.

**Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus***

Two Yala.

**Common Redshank *Tringa totanus***

Small numbers at southern wetlands.

**Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis***

Good number of birds in southern wetlands.

**Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola***

A few in southern wetlands.

**Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia***

Small numbers at southern wetlands.

**Small Pratincole *Glareola lactea***

Ten Bundala.

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

Common in southern wetlands.

**Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia***

One Kalametiya and eighty plus Bundala.

**Greater Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii***

Four Bundala and a few distantly off Negumbo.

**Little Tern *Sternula albifrons***

A scattering of birds in the south.

**Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida***

Common and often abundant.

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

Only a handful detected among the Whiskered Terns.

**Feral Rock Dove *Columba livia***

Widespread but local in towns and larger villages.

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

One seen by Andy at Surrey Tea Estate.

**Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto***

Two 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.

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

Small numbers around Kalametiya, Udawalawe and Yala.

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

A handful Kithulgala and Sinharaja and two Udawalawe National Park

**Green Imperial Pigeon *Ducula aenea***

Fairly common and widespread.

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

Two Sinharaja.

**Greater Coucal *Centropus sinensis***

One Tissamaharama.

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

Two Sinharaja.

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

One Kalametiya bird sanctuary, two Udawalawe National Park and one Bundala National Park.

**Jacobin Cuckoo *Clamator jacobinus***

One Bundala National Park.

**Asian Koel *Eudynamys scolopaceus***

The one seen by most was at Surrey Tea Estate

**Serendib Scops Owl *Otus thilohoffmanni***

One Makandarawa Forest Reserve.

**Indian Scops Owl *Otus bakkamoena***

Two Embilipitiya.

**Brown Fish Owl *Ketupa zeylonensis***

One Debarawewa.

**Brown Wood Owl *Strix leptogrammica***

One Surrey Tea Estate.

**Jungle Owlet *Glaucidium radiatum***

One Debarawewa.

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

One Kithulgala.

**Sri Lanka Frogmouth *Batrachostomus moniliger***

A female Sinharaja.

**Indian Nightjar *Caprimulgus asiaticus***

One very briefly Yala.

**Crested Treeswift *Hemiprocne coronata***

A view seen here and there.

**Indian Swiftlet *Aerodramus unicolor***

Common.

**Brown-backed Needletail *Hirundapus giganteus***

Three Kithulgala and up to nine Sinharaja.

**Asian Palm Swift *Cypsiurus balasiensis***

A few seen.

**Little Swift *Apus affinis***

A few Bundala National Park, one Yala National Park and one Kithulgala.

**Malabar Trogon *Harpactes fasciatus***

One or two Sinharaja.

**Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis***

One and twos Bundala National Park Udawalawe National Park and Yala National Park.

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

One or two Kithulgala, one Debarawewa tank, one Bundala National Park and one Tissamaharama.

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

Widespread and common.

**Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis***

A few in the south.

**Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis***

Several in the south including up to six Bundala National Park.

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

Common in the south.

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

Fairly common.

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

Five Yala.

**Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops***

Two Yala.

**Malabar Pied Hornbill *Anthracoceros coronatus***

Four en route to Kalametiya bird sanctuary and seven Yala National Park.

**Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill *Ocyeros gingalensis***

Three Kithulgala and two Sinharaja.

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

A few here and there.

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

Several Kithulgala and Sinharaja.

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

One briefly east of Sinharaja.

**Coppersmith Barbet *Psilopogon haemacephalus***

One hotel Udawalawe, one Udawalawe National Park and one Yala.

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

Three Yala.

**Lesser Yellownape *Picus chlorolophus***

Five seen in total Kithulgala and Sinharaja.

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

One Kithulgala and one Debarawewa.

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

One Sinharaja Forest Reserve and one heard Horton Plains.

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

One Debarawewa.

**Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus peregrinator***

One Kithulgala.

**Plum-headed Parakeet *Psittacula cyanocephala***

Two Sinharaja Forest Reserve and five Udawalawe National Park.

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

A few Kithulgala and Sinharaja.

**Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria***

Several Kithulgala and Sinharaja and a few in the drier south-east.

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

Common in south-east.

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

Several particularly Kithulgala and Sinharaja.

**Indian Pitta *Pitta brachyura***

One Udawalawe National Park and one Victoria Park.

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

Two Kithulgala and one Sinharaja Forest Reserve.

**Sri Lanka Woodshrike *Tephrodornis affinis***

Two Yala.

**Ashy Woodswallow *Artamus fuscus***

Two east of Columbo airport.

**Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia***

A few seen here and there.

**Small Minivet *Pericrocotus cinnamomeus***

Two Udawalawe National Park and four Yala National Park.

**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 three Kalametiya bird sanctuary.

**Ashy Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus***

One Yala.

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

A few Kithulgala and Sinharaja.

**Sri Lanka Drongo *Dicrurus lophorinus***

Ten or so Sinharaja.

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

Three Udawalawe and three Yala.

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

One Kithulgala and three Sinharaja.

**Indian Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi***

Nine seen in total including a few white ones.

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

Nine in total Sinharaja.

**House Crow *Corvus splendens***

Very common.

**Indian Jungle Crow *Corvus culminatus***

Several seen here and there particularly in the south-east.

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

Two Victoria Park and two Horton Plains.

**Cinereous Tit *Parus cinereus***

Eight Horton Plains and a couple Bomurella Woods.

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

Several small flocks in the south-east.

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

Several Udawalawe and a couple Yala.

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

A few Kithulgala and Sinharaja.

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

Common and widespread.

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

Ten Horton Plains.

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

Four Sinharaja Forest Reserve and two Yala.

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

Several Sinharaja Forest Reserve.

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

Several Kithulgala and Sinharaja.

**Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica***

Common.

**Hill Swallow *Hirundo domicola***

Twelve Horton Plains.

**Sri Lanka Swallow *Cecropis hyperythra***

Four en route to Kithulgala.

**Green Warbler *Phylloscopus nitidus***

One and twos Kithulgala and Sinharaja Forest Reserve.

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

One glimpsed Makandarawa Forest Reserve.

**Clamorous Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus***

Five Bundala National Park.

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

One Udawalawe National Park and one Bundala National Park.

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

Two Horton Plains.

**Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis***

A few in south-east.

**Jungle Prinia *Prinia sylvatica***

Several Udawalawe and one Yala.

**Ashy Prinia *Prinia socialis***

Several Udawalawe National Park.

**Plain Prinia *Prinia inornata***

A few here and there.

**Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius***

Fairly common.

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

Two Sinharaja and one Horton Plains.

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

Three Udawalawe.

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

Seven Sinharaja, three Yala National Park Embilipitiya and two Horton Plains.

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

Two Kithulgala.

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

Several Kithulgala and Sinharaja.

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

Common.

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

Five Sinharaja.

- Yellow-eyed Babbler *Chrysomma sinense***  
Two Udawalawe National Park.
- Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus***  
Two Sinharaja Forest Reserve.
- Sri Lanka White-eye *Zosterops ceylonensis***  
Four Sinharaja, 20 plus Horton Plains and two Victoria Park.
- Velvet-fronted Nuthatch *Sitta frontalis***  
Three Sinharaja and six Horton Plains.
- Sri Lanka Hill Myna *Gracula ptilogenys***  
At least six Sinharaja.
- Southern Hill Myna *Gracula indica***  
Seven Kithulgala.
- Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis***  
Common.
- Brahminy Starling *Sturnia pagodarum***  
Six Udawalawe.
- White-faced Starling *Sturnornis albofrontatus***  
One Sinharaja.
- Rosy Starling *Pastor roseus***  
Many flocks in south-east including at least 3000 Bundala National Park.
- Pied Thrush *Geokichla wardii***  
Four males Victoria Park.
- Spot-winged Thrush *Geokichla spiloptera***  
One Kithulgala and two Sinharaja.
- Indian Blackbird *Turdus simillimus***  
One Horton Plains.
- Indian Robin *Copsychus fulicatus***  
Fairly common in the south-east.
- Oriental Magpie-robin *Copsychus saularis***  
Common.
- White-rumped Shama *Copsychus malabaricus***  
One Yala National Park.
- Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica***  
Ones and twos here and there.
- Brown-breasted Flycatcher *Muscicapa muttui***  
Two Kithulgala and Sinharaja.
- Tickell's Blue Flycatcher *Cyornis tickelliae***  
Three Kithulgala and one Bomurella Woods.
- Dull-blue Flycatcher *Eumyias sordidus***  
Four Horton Plains.
- Indian Blue Robin *Larvivora brunnea***  
One Sinharaja.
- Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush *Myophonus blighi***  
Three Horton Plains.
- Kashmir Flycatcher *Ficedula subrubra***  
A male Victoria Park.
- Pied Bushchat *Saxicola caprata***  
Four Horton Plains.
- Jerdon's Leafbird *Chloropsis jerdoni***  
A couple Kithulgala and two Sinharaja.
- Golden-fronted Leafbird *Chloropsis aurifrons***  
Two Kithulgala and two Sinharaja Forest Reserve.
- Thick-billed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum agile***  
Two Yala National Park.
- Legge's Flowerpecker *Dicaeum vincens***  
One Kithulgala and up to six 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 Bundala National Park.

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

Two Kithulgala and three Surrey Tea Estate.

**House Sparrow *Passer domesticus***

A few here and there.

**Streaked Weaver *Ploceus manyar***

Up to four Tissamaharama, seen by Kay and Andy.

**Baya Weaver *Ploceus philippinus***

One Tissamaharama, seen by Kay and Andy.

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

A few here and there.

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

Fairly common and widespread.

**Tricoloured Munia *Lonchura malacca***

Fairly common in south-east.

**Forest Wagtail *Dendronanthus indicus***

One Makandarawa Forest Reserve, one Udawalawe National Park and one Victoria Park.

**Western Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava***

Two Bundala National Park and one near Yala National Park.

**Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea***

Ones and twos here and there.

**Paddyfield Pipit *Anthus rufulus***

Fairly common in south-east.

**Mammals****Asian Elephant *Elephas maximus***

Eight Udawalawe, one Bundala and seven Yala.

**Toque Macaque *Macaca sinica***

Small numbers.

**Tufted Grey Langur *Semnopithecus priam***

Widespread.

**Bear Monkey *Trachypithecus vetulus senex***

One Bomurella.

**Purple-faced Langur *Trachypithecus vetulus vetulus***

Up to eight Sinharaja.

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

A few seen.

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

A few Sinharaja.

**Indian Palm Squirrel *Funambulus palmarum***

Common.

**Dusky Palm Squirrel *Funambulus obscurus***

One Horton Plains.

**Indian Hare aka Black-naped Hare *Lepus nigricollis***

One Bundala and one Yala

**Indian Flying Fox *Pteropus giganteus***

Particularly Tissamaharama.

**Indian Grey Mongoose *Herpestes edwardsi***

Three en route

**Brown mongoose *Herpestes fuscus***

One en route

**Ruddy Mongoose *Herpestes smithii***

A few seen..

**Golden Jackal *Canis aureus***

Ten Udawalawe and one Yala.

**Wild Boar *Sus scrofa***

One Bundala and up to twenty Yala.

**Yellow-striped Mouse Deer aka Yellow-striped Chevrotain *Moschiola kathygre***

One Sinharaja.

**Chital *Axis axis***

Three Udawalawe and fifty plus Yala.

**Sambar *Cervus unicolor***

Five Yala and one Horton Plains.

**Feral Water Buffalo *Bubalus bubalis***

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

**Reptiles**

Saltwater Crocodile *Crocodylus porosus*

Mugger Crocodile *Crocodylus palustris*

Green Vine Snake *Ahaetulla nasuta*

Common House Gecko *Hemidactylus frenatus*

Horned Agama (Rhino-horned Lizard) *Ceratophora stoddartii*

Sri Lankan Kangaroo Lizard *Otocryptis wiegmanni*

Green Forest Lizard *Calotes calotes*

Oriental Garden Lizard *Calotes versicolor*

Black-lipped Lizard *Calotes nigrilabris*

Bengal Monitor *Varanus bengalensis*

Asian Water Monitor *Varanus salvator*

Taylor's Striped Skink *Eutropis floweri*

Indian Flapshell Turtle *Lissemys punctata*

**Amphibians**

Indian five-fingered Frog aka Green Pond Frog aka Indian Bullfrog aka Indian Green Frog *Euphlyctis hexadactylus*

**Butterflies**

Blue Mormon *Papilio polymnestor*

Crimson Rose *Pachliopta hector*

Ceylon Rose *Pachliopta jophon*

Lemon Emigrant aka Common Emigrant *Catopsilia pomona*

Common Grass Yellow *Eurema hecabe*

Three-spot Grass Yellow *Eurema blanda*

Sri Lanka Tree Nymph *Idea iasonia*

Blue Glassy Tiger *Danaus similes*

Plain Tiger *Danaus chrysippus*

Common Crow *Euploea core*

Danaid Eggfly *Hypolimnas misippus*

Common Sailer *Neptis hylas*

Clipper *Parthenos sylvia*

Pioneer *Belenois aurota*

Sri Lanka Red Admiral *Vanessa indica nubicola*

**Moths**

Dark-based Gliding Hawkmoth *Ambulyx substrigilis*

**Dragonflies**

Shining Gossamerwing *Euphaea splendens*

Scarlet Basker *Urothemis signata*

**Other taxa**

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*