

Sri Lanka – *Birding in style*

A 17 day birding holiday with a difference with Amila Salgado - **Birdwing Nature Holidays**



Sri Lanka Blue Magpie



Chestnut-backed Owlet



Red-faced Malkoha

Itinerary in brief

Day 01 Arrival/Katunayake
Day 02 Dambulla
Day 03 Sigiriya
Day 04 Local birding
Day 05 Elkaduwa
Day 06 Local birding
Day 07 Kandy
Day 08 Nuwara Eliya.
Day 09 Horton Plains NP
Day 10 Local birding /Yala NP
Day 11 Yala NP/Bundala NP
Day 12 Yala NP/ Tissamaharama
Day 13 Udawalawe NP
Day 14 Sinharaja rainforest
Day 15 Sinharaja rainforest
Day 16 Katunayake
Day 17 Departure

Overnight stay

Taj Airport Garden Hotel. (5 star transit hotel)
Heritance Kandalama, Dambulla (5 star nature hotel)
Heritance Kandalama, Dambulla
Heritance Kandalama, Dambulla
Hunas Falls Hotel (4 star nature hotel)
Hunas Falls Hotel
Hunas Falls Hotel
St Andrew's Hotel (3 star nature hotel)
St Andrew's Hotel
Yala Village Hotel (luxury game lodge)
Yala Village Hotel
Yala Village Hotel
Boulder Garden Hotel (jungle boutique hotel)
Boulder Garden Hotel
Boulder Garden Hotel
Taj Airport Garden Hotel

Introduction

Sri Lanka is a pear-shaped island situated in the southern tip of India close to the equator & the focus of this exciting birding holiday. A continental island, it had been connected to India for much of its geological past through episodes of lowered sea-levels. Despite these 'land-bridge' connections, faunal exchange between the rainforests found in Southern India and Sri Lanka, had been minimal. This insularity is likely to have occurred due to the inability of rainforest organisms to disperse through intervening dry lowlands, which still remain dry, receiving only one major rainy season as opposed to the wetzone which receives two monsoons. As a result Sri Lankan wetzone species are believed to have got 'trapped' within it for longer period of time. Long insularity, lot of rain and year-round warm temperatures can mean one thing- a bewildering variety of endemic biodiversity! This explains why South Western Sri Lanka and Western Ghats of S. India are jointly regarded as one of the 25 biodiversity hotspots. This is considering it has lost 70 % of its original habitats and yet



BIRDWING Nature Holidays

'Best value Birding and Natural History Holidays in Sri Lanka'

containing 0.7 % of the world's known vascular plants and 1.3 % of the known vertebrate animals endemic to it. Sri Lanka is the western-most representative of Indo-Malayan Flora and its abundant birdlife shows many such affinities.

This exciting birding holiday focuses on the island's 33-plus endemics, sub-continental specialties and regular migrants without compromising on the quality of accommodation which ranges from 3 -5 star hotels, a luxury game lodge & one boutique hotel ensuring maximum comfort in addition to great birding. It also incorporates a tinge of culture at bearable levels with visits to two World Heritage sites. In addition to birding which is the prime focus of this itinerary, there will be opportunity to see & enjoy other forms of natural history such as butterflies, reptiles and big game including Elephant, Leopard and Sloth Bear. Therefore the itinerary is even suitable for people with broader interests.

I count 19 years of birding experience in Sri Lanka and will be your birding guide and the first point of your contact for your tour. I will be with you throughout the tour looking into every aspect of the tour personally from the start to the end.

The itinerary covers a variety of habitat types, which include steamy lowland rainforests, well-wooded home gardens, lily-covered inland reservoirs, dry-country big game parks, grasslands fringing forests, thorny scrublands, dense monsoon forests, coastal mudflats, imposing riverine forests & misty cloud forests. As such the tour combines a variety of local avi-faunal zones and ensures highly profitable birding.

Only 6 hotels are used to cover the 17 days of this holiday ensuring longer stays in each location, which enable you to explore the sites leisurely. In fact we spend 3 nights each in 4 top quality hotels in key birding locations offering participants opportunity not only to enjoy unrushed birding but also to simply have time off to enjoy these marvelous hotels - to sample the pools /spas & health centres & other recreational facilities. There will also be a bit of time to optionally engage in such non birding interests as golfing, cycling & even hot-air ballooning!

High quality dining experiences complement great birding on this excellent holiday with a fine mix of western and eastern delicacies/from international buffets to fine dining. All hotels have a good choice of international wine/champaign to further enrich your dining experiences.

This tour is recommended between Nov-April when the northern winter migrants supplement the island's resident birds and is most likely to produce good numbers and great birding. We aim to see 230-250 species of birds during this tour.

The slow pace of this holiday also makes it ideal for birders with difficulty in walking /keeping up with large groups which at times move in break-neck speeds. Almost 90 % of our walks will be on flat and gently sloping terrain. Amila will carry his Kowa TSN 823 telescope during most birding walks & will scope the birds that stay long enough for better appreciation. This will be particularly helpful for those new to the tropics and/or not wanting to lug one along personally.

All hotels used on this holiday are selected with a purpose. For example we use the luxurious Taj Airport Garden Hotel, Katunayake which is a five star transit hotel just 10 minutes from the airport on Day 01 to enable you to quickly rest after a long flight. We are careful not to have long drives & visits to 'key sites' built-in on the first day as we understand the importance of giving you a good rest before the commencement of the holiday. So there is absolutely no extensive driving on day 01 & the optional birding for this day is limited to the hotel gardens. Proximity to the airport is another key factor in our using the Taj Airport Garden Hotel again at the end before your departure to enable you to relax and refresh before your flight back. This is always better rather than boarding the plane straight from the jungle!



Detailed itinerary (Endemic birds are bold faced)

Day 01. After arriving in Bandaranaiyake International Airport in Katunayake --35 km north of Colombo the commercial capital in Sri Lanka, we will drive to Taj Airport Garden Hotel, Katunayake which is just 10 minutes from the airport to rest and recuperate after a long flight. An early dinner and a welcome briefing will end the first day.

Target species: For anybody not in a mood to rest, a walk in the hotel gardens will produce some of the commoner birds that we will encounter during the rest of the holiday such as Brown-headed Barbet, Black-hooded Oriole, Common Tailorbird, Asian Koel, Purple-rumped & Loten's Sunbirds, Pale-billed Flowerpecker, White-throated Kingfisher & Black-rumped Flameback. If this is not enough to settle your birding juices, a dusk vigil near a mangrove edged corner of the hotel gardens may produce Black Bittern, Black-crowned Night Heron & if lucky the elusive Slaty-legged Crake.

Overnight: Taj Airport Garden Hotel is a 5 star transit hotel situated just 10 minutes from the Bandaranaiyake International Airport and is our preferred retreat after a long flight. Standard rooms provide satellite television, safety lockers, e-mail and internet connections, 24 hour room service, a mini bar and in-house & laundry facilities. The hotel offers a 24 hour Coffee Shop, business centre & 2 restaurants which include a specialty Chinese one. The hotel gardens and a small wetland adjoining offers decent birding.



Brown-headed Barbet

Taj Airport Garden Hotel

Southern Coucal

Day 02 After recharging the batteries & another brief exploration in the hotel gardens we will set off at 9.00 a.m to the dry lowlands of Dambulla and to Heritance Kandalama, our luxurious base for the next three nights. En route we will make a couple of roadside birding stops. We will arrive just after noon during the hottest time of the day so a dip in the hotel's infinity pool may just be what you want to do next after ordering a bite.

Kandalama is situated in the border of the intermediate and dry zones – a fact reflected in its birdlife with a rich mixture of both elements. We will do a late afternoon walk to explore the riches combining forest and wetland birding. Thereafter we will return to the hotel for a refreshing shower and to enjoy one of the many buffet dinners with many western and eastern delicacies.

Target species: **Black-capped Bulbul, Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill, Sri Lanka Junglefowl**, Spot-billed Pelican, Little Minivet, Oriental White-eye, White-browed Bulbul, Blue-faced Malkoha, Black-headed Cuckoo-shrike, Thick-billed Flowerpecker, White-rumped Shama, Green, Chestnut-headed & Blue-tailed Bee-eaters, House Swift, Common Iora, Indian Robin, Orange-breasted Green Pigeon, Green Imperial Pigeon, Great, Intermediate & Little Egrets, Oriental Darter, Indian & Little Cormorants, Asian Openbill, Black-headed Ibis & Grey Heron Brahminy Kite, Grey-headed Fish Eagle, White-bellied Sea Eagle, Crested Serpent Eagle & Shikra.



Non birding highlights: Hanuman Langur, Toque Macaque, Grey Mongoose, Common Garden Lizard, Land Monitor, Water monitor, Flying fox & Giant Squirrel & the ubiquitous Palm Squirrel.

Overnight: Heritance Kandalama, Dambulla is nestled in lush tropical greenery on the foothills of a forested ridge overlooking the Kandalama tank -an ancient reservoir built for irrigation purposes in the heart of the 'cultural triangle' A 5 star hotel, this architectural masterpiece built by Geoffrey Bawa spans 1 km in length and offers awe-inspiring views of the surrounding woods & water. It stand as a model for environment conservation and has won many awards including the coveted Green Globe Award for its sound environmental practices. Its luxurious air-conditioned rooms come with a modern bathroom, satellite tv, telephone with IDD, tea/coffee making facilities, mini bar, piped music/radio, 24h room service & a private balcony offering spectacular views. The hotel has three restaurants and bars & three swimming pools, one of which includes a fantastic infinity pool. There is also a gym, and a business centre with internet facilities & a modern Spa to sample between the birding walks. Heritance Kandalama has won many awards for its culinary specialties and dining here is going to be a top highlight of this holiday as is birding with over 145 species!

Day 03 Pre-breakfast birding walk around the hotel gardens to catch the early morning activity. Thereafter we will enjoy a fine birding breakfast overlooking the vast & magnificent Kandalama Tank. After breakfast we will do more local explorations taking advantage of the early birding activity before it gets too warm.

Thereafter you will be at leisure to enjoy this magnificent hotel & to take advantage of the various facilities. You will again be met by Amila at 2.45 p.m. for the afternoon excursion to Sigiriya Rock Fortress which is popularly believed to be the pleasure capital of a single king called Kashyapa in the 5th century A.D. A UNESCO World Heritage site, this inselberg rises 200 m above the surrounding forested plains of the Sigiriya Sanctuary, which holds good birds. The more energetic could scale the Sigiriya rock for cultural explorations interrupted by regular birding distractions. We will descend in time for some quality late afternoon birding in the Sigiriya Sanctuary until dusk to include some crepuscular birding before heading back to Heritance Kandalama to end an enjoyable birding & cultural day after a another fine buffet dinner.



Sri Lanka Junglefowl Infinity pool, Heritance Kandalama Toque Macaque Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill

Target species: **Sri Lanka Green Pigeon, Sri Lanka Woodshrike, Crimson-backed Flameback, Brown-capped Babbler, Sri Lanka Swallow**, Shaheen – local race of Peregrine, Indian Pitta, Orange-headed Thrush, Coppersmith Barbet, Tickell's Blue Flycatcher, Asian Brown Flycatcher, Dark-fronted Babbler, Brown Shrike, Blyth's Reed Warbler, Crested Treeswift, Jerdon's Leafbird, Pied & Stork-billed Kingfishers, Lesser Whistling-duck, Pheasant-tailed Jacana, Purple Swamphen, Little Grebe, Large Cuckoo-shrike, Indian & Jerdon's Nightjars & Brown Fish Owl.



Non birding highlights: 5th century symmetrical water gardens plus boulder & terraced gardens, 5th century frescos of bare breasted heavenly maidens, 'lion's paws' & cave dwellings.

Overnight: Heritance Kandalama, Dambulla.

Day 04 Today we will explore a combination of local forest & wetland patches. Late afternoon we will explore the bird-rich surroundings of the hotel.

We will enjoy yet another fabulous buffet dinner at Heritance Kandalama

Targets species: Pintail Snipe, Baya & Streaked Weavers, Watercock, Black & Yellow Bitterns, Cotton Pygmy-goose, Paddyfield Pipit, Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, Grey-breasted Prinia, Jungle Prinia, Alexandrine Parakeet, Indian Cuckoo, Grey-bellied Cuckoo, Indian Pygmy Woodpecker, Forest Wagtail, Yellow Wagtail ('Grey-headed'), Ashy Woodswallow, Tawny-bellied Babbler, Painted Stork, Grey-headed Fish Eagle, Crested Hawk Eagle, Black-crowned Night Heron & Barred buttonquail.

Overnight: Heritance Kandalama, Dambulla.

Day 05 After a lie-in followed by a birding breakfast we will bid farewell to Heritance Kandalama and head to the pleasant hills of Elakduwa (900-1,200 m) in the wet zone, the epicentre of endemics. We will proceed to our luxurious retreat Hunas Falls Hotel. Afternoon we will walk in the Simpson's Trail to look for a good mixture of mid elevational & hill birds including several sought-after specialties.

We will return for to enjoy a fine dining style dinner at the Hunas Falls Hotel.



Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher

Fine dining

Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot

Indian Pitta

Target species: **Yellow-fronted Barbet, Sri Lanka Small Barbet, Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot, Layard's Parakeet, Sri Lanka Scimitar Babbler, Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon, Dull blue Flycatcher, Sri Lanka White-eye**, Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher, Black-naped Monarch, White-browed Fantail, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, Southern Hill Myna, Orange Minivet, Great Tit, Indian Blue Robin, Pied Thrush, Kashmir Flycatcher, Common Hawk Cuckoo (potential split), Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike, Mountain Hawk Eagle, Black Eagle, Hill Swallow & Plum-headed Parakeet.

Overnight: Hunas Falls Hotel, Elkaduwa lies 1,000m above sea level in the cooler hills of Elkaduwa just 24 kms from Kandy, the ancient hill capital. It is a popular getaway for honeymooners in Sri Lanka with its scenic settings & beautifully landscaped gardens vividly dotted with perennials adding to its romantic atmosphere. The hotel is named after a 300 ft waterfall that tumbles gracefully below the hotel. The luxurious rooms come with bath/shower, satellite TV, telephone with IDD, mini bar, individual safety lockers, piped music/radio, tea/coffee making facilities & a private balcony /terrace. There is also a traditional Ayurvedha style health centre & a temperature controlled swimming pool to chill during non-birding breaks. The hotel also has a jogging track, a flood-lit tennis court, a mini



golf course & offers bicycle on rent if you need to work off some pounds. The surrounding woods offer great wet zone birding – Amila was responsible for researching and naming most of the popular nature trails around this hotel and has intimate knowledge of the area.

Day 06 Pre-birding walk around the hotel's lake trail to catch the early morning activity followed by a birding breakfast. Thereafter we will walk in the Shaheen Trail for raptors & scenery. Midday at leisure in the hotel. Late afternoon we will make a short excursion to a nearby forest patch for some 'high value targets'

Target species: **Chestnut-backed Owlet**, Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher, Indian Scops Owl, Gold-fronted Leafbird, Lesser Yellownap, Shaheen, Layard's Flycatcher, Oriental Honey Buzzard, White-bellied Sea Eagle & Ashy Prinia.

Non birding highlights: Eurasian Otter, Grey Flying Squirrel & butterflies including Tree Nymph, Sri Lanka Birdwing, Commander, Clipper & Blue Bottle.

Overnight: Hunas Falls Hotel, Elkaduwa.

Day 07 After yet another exciting morning's birding in the bird rich Simpson's trail we will drive to Kandy (477m), the cultural-epicentre where age-old rituals continue at the Temple of the sacred Tooth Relic. Kandy is the second largest city & the last Sinhalese kingdom in Sri Lanka, which was ceded to the British in 1815. We will visit the above historic temple, which houses the sacred tooth relic of the Buddha and the Royal Botanical Gardens founded by the British in 1821. After exploring this historic city, we will return to our luxurious retreat for dinner & overnight stay.

Target species: We will seek for improved views of Common Hawk Cuckoo, Sri Lanka Small Barbet, Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot, Southern Hill Myna, Sri Lanka Green Pigeon, Alexandrine Parakeet, Tickell's Blue Flycatcher & Indian Pitta.

Non-birding highlights: a vast day roost of Flying fox & botanical highlights including Giant Jawa Fig, Double coconut, Cannon-ball tree & orchid house, a historic Buddhist temple – one of the most important places of worship for the Buddhists.

Overnight: Hunas Falls Hotel, Elkaduwa.

Day 08 Pre-breakfast birding walk around the hotel gardens. After yet another excellent birding breakfast we will drive further up to the cooler hills of Nuwara Eliya (1,890m) the famous British hill station in the central highlands for the remaining montane endemics & specialties. Drop in temperature will necessitate warm clothing but some of you will find this pleasantly welcoming. This is an important centre of 'Ceylon tea' and as we negotiate the windy hillside roads vast stretches of tea plantations become a dominant aspect of the landscape. We will optionally pause at a tea factory to see the production of Ceylon tea using old British machinery and to see nesting hill swallows inside the factory if this is missing. We will thereafter proceed to St Andrew's Hotel, our comfortable hill station base for two nights. Afternoon we will walk to the Victoria Park, which is an urban park established in 1897 to commemorate the 60th coronation jubilee of Queen Victoria for more montane birding. By now we should have bagged most of the sought-after species recorded of this urban park and may be able to visit a nearby patch for the threatened Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush which if found today will preclude a very early start tomorrow.

We will return to our cozy hotel for yet another excellent 'fine dining style' dinner and overnight stay.

Target species: **Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush**, **Yellow-eared Bulbul**, **Sri Lanka Hill White-eye**, Pied Thrush, Kashmir Flycatcher, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, Indian Blue Robin, Indian Pita, Blyth's Reed Warbler, Forest Wagtail, Black-throated Munia, Plain Prinia, Pied & if lucky Slaty-legged Crake.



Overnight: St Andrew's Hotel, Nuwara Eliya. - Situated 6,182 feet above sea level in the foothills of the cloud forests of Mt. Pedro Sri Lanka's tallest mountain, this stately Tudor style colonial mansion aged over 100 years, still preserves the charms of the colonial era with its typical English hill country ambience. The hotel's spacious & cozy rooms are amply furnished and offer bath / showers with hot & cold water, telephone, 24 h room service & heaters. The hotel also has a souvenir shop, a billiards room, T.V Lounge & children's play room. It also offers IDD facilities & safety lockers at the reception. St Andrew's Hotel's food is second to none and the hotel has a charming restaurant with a show kitchen. The private wetland reserve at the back of the hotel may hold a few surprises.

Day 09 After having some early tea and coffee in the hotel lobby, we will collect packed breakfast and more tea & coffee & drive further up to Horton Plains National Park (2,100m), which is the highest plateau in Sri Lanka. This magnificent national park comprise of moss-covered cloud forests home to Gondwanaland relic flora and grasslands. It is the only national park in Sri Lanka where visitors are allowed to walk and we will explore this picturesque park for several highly sought-after montane endemics. We will return to the hotel for our usual midday break. In the evening we will visit a nearby patch to fill any remaining gaps. We will return to St Andrew's Hotel, for another sumptuous fine dining style dinner & overnight stay.

Targeted species: **Sri Lanka Bush Warbler, Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush, Yellow-eared Bulbul, Sri Lanka White-eye, Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon, Dull-blue Flycatcher, Sri Lanka Scimitar Babbler, Crimson-backed Flameback, Pied Bush Chat, Zitting Cisticola, Crested Goshawk, Besra, Jerdon's Baza, Black-throated Munia, Mountain Hawk Eagle, newly spit Himalayan Buzzard & the potential split Indian Blackbird.**



Yellow-eared Bulbul

Fine dining

Pied Thrush

Mountain Hawk Eagle

Non-birding highlights: If prepared to walk seeing world's end – an escarpment with a sheer drop of 870 m, Sambar Deer, the endemic Bear Money, Rhino-horned lizard, Dwarf Chameleon & Black-lipped Lizard.

Overnight: St Andrew's Hotel, Nuwara Eliya

Day 10 We will abandon the cooler hills and return to the dry lowlands of Yala which is famed for great birding & Leopards. En route we will pause at several sites for roadside birding before reaching Yala Village Hotel, Yala our luxurious game lodge accommodation for three nights. In the late afternoon we will board safari jeeps & visit the Yala National Park for dry zone forest & waterbirds including waders.

Targeted species: Malabar Pied Hornbill, Jungle Owlet, Asian Paradise Flycatcher, Curlew, Marsh, Wood & Green Sandpipers, Lesser & Greater Sand Plovers, Little-ringed Plovers, Black-necked Stork, Great and Indian Thick-knees, Rosy Starling, Brahminy Myna, Jerdon's Bushlark, Oriental



Skylark, Common Hoopoe, Ashy-crowned Sparrow-lark, Woolly-necked Stork, Lesser Adjutant, Yellow-crowned Woodpecker, Ashy Drongo, Sirkeer & Blue-faced Malkohas, Yellow-wattled Lapwing & Orange-headed Thrush.

Non-birding highlights: Yala is famous for mammals which include Leopard, Sloth Bear & Elephant. Yala Block 1 comprising of 141 sq.km has close to 40 individual Leopards identified by their unique facial spot patterns, which represent the highest density of Leopards anywhere in the world. Also noteworthy are Spotted deer, Mugger Crocodile, Wild buffalo, Wild Boar, Stripe-necked & Ruddy Mongooses & Jackal.

Overnight: Yala Village Hotel is bordered by the turquoise Indian Ocean & forested coastal plains and is our luxurious base to explore Yala. The hotel offers sixty one chalets spread over 10 acres of well wooded area with each featuring an animal design element in its interior décor. The air-conditioned chalets come with a spacious bathroom, a private verandah, satellite TV, well stocked mini bar, telephone/IDD, tea and coffee making facilities and hair dryer. The hotel also has facilities such as laundry, babysitting, safe deposits, souvenir shop and internet/email. The restaurant offers a good choice of eastern and western cuisine. The roof top bar & observation deck provide great views of the Indian Ocean and the surrounding well wooded landscape dotted by rock outcrops that are at times visited by Leopard for prime time viewing over cocktails.



Leopard

Yala Village Hotel

Hanuman Langur

White-naped Woodpecker

Day 11 After an early tea & coffee in the hotel, we will collect packed breakfast and visit Yala National Park to see its morning activity. We will do rounds in some of the good birding areas for some unrushed quality birding & wildlife viewing. Thereafter we will return to the hotel for some leisure time till 3.00 p.m. when we will drive to Bundala National Park for shorebirds. This is the first RAMSAR wetland in Sri Lanka and comprise of dry forests & mud flats.

Target species: Western Reef Egret, Red-necked Phalarope, Indian Scops Owl, Black-tailed Godwit, Common Coot, Small Pratincole, Little Heron, Garganey, Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveller, Caspian, White-winged, Whiskered, Common, Large-crested & Little-crested & Little Terns, Indian Cormorant, Brown-headed Gull and if lucky Greater Flamingo.

Day 12 We will explore several forests & a network of ancient tanks/wetland patches around Yala & Tissamaharama today to fill remaining gaps.

Dinner will be buffet style at Yala Village Hotel, Yala.

Target species: White-naped Woodpecker, Common Coot, Watercock, Great Cormorant, Streaked & Baya Weavers, Black, Yellow & Cinnamon Bitterns, Brown Fish Owl & Indian Reed Warbler.

Overnight: Yala Village Hotel, Yala.



Day 13 A long day but should be rewarding as we combine the best of lowland dry & wet zones! We will say goodbye to Yala and set off early to Udawalawe National Park, to explore it in open-top safari jeeps. This beautiful park comprise of savanna-like open grasslands interspersed with shrubs & trees and offers highly profitable birding. Thereafter we will proceed to Boulder Garden Hotel, our exciting jungle boutique hotel accommodation for three nights to explore the lowland endemics. Late afternoon we will drive to a wet forest patch to bag a 'high value target'- the newly discovered avian jewel Serendib Scops Owl, which was discovered only in 2001! Those not wanting to join this owl expedition may chill by the pool.

Target species: Should easily be a 100 species day with Blyth's Pipit, White & Citrine Wagtails, 'Indian' Red-rumped Swallow, Lesser Cuckoo, Indian Silverbill, Grey-bellied Cuckoo, Common Kestrel, Pallid & Marsh Harriers, Black-shouldered Kite, Crested Hawk Eagle, Plum-headed Parakeet, Alpine Swift at Udawalawe & at the wet forest patch **Spot-winged Thrush**, Sri Lanka Frogmouth & if lucky **Serendib Scops Owl**.

Non-birding highlights: Asian Elephant present in fairly decent numbers at Udawalawe NP.



Legge's Flowerpecker

Boulder Garden Hotel

Serendib Scops Owl

Spot-winged Thrush

Overnight: Boulder Garden Hotel, Kalawana – This all-suite boutique hotel is the first of its kind in Sinharaja area. As the name implies the hotel is set in a boulder strewn landscape, which comprises of large rock paved pathways, natural caves and fern covered moist boulders presenting a unique setting. There are 10 non-air-conditioned suites with all having private balconies facing the lush tropical greenery. All these come with fan, attached bathrooms, tea / coffee making facilities, TV & telephone. The hotel has an inviting swimming pool. Dining here is 1st class - consistent with all the hotels used in this holiday. The hotel's restaurant & bar under the shade of natural caves are sure to take you back to the early stages of evolution!

Day 14-15 Saving the best for last we will explore the magnificent lowland rainforest, Sinharaja over the next few days. Sinharaja represents the largest expanse of lowland rainforest in Sri Lanka and the premier site for endemics where a 'mixed-species bird flock' could yield an exciting array of birds. According to a flock study done since 1981 at this world heritage site reserve, 59 species of birds have so far been observed to occur in bird flocks which include many sought-after endemics. Orange-billed Babbler and Sri Lanka Crested Drongo constitute the two nuclear species of the flock being present in 92 & 89 % of the flocks studied so far. By now we should have bagged most of the endemics 33 plus endemics and should be able to concentrate on the pending 'Sinharaja targets'.

Target species: **Red-faced Malkoha, Sri Lanka Blue Magpie, Green-billed Coucal, Sri Lanka Scaly Thrush, Ashy-headed Laughing Thrush, White-faced Starling, Sri Lanka Myna, Legge's Flowerpecker, Sri Lanka Spurfowl, Besra, Crested Goshawk, Rufous-bellied Hawk Eagle, Malabar Trogon, Lesser Yellownappe, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, Dark-fronted Babbler, Asian Paradise**



Flycatcher, Chestnut-winged Crested Cuckoo, Black-naped Monarch & Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike in this feeding frenzy. We will also look for 'Sri Lanka' Bay Owl in a day roost discovered in Jan 2007!

Non birding highlights: Kangaroo, Hump-nosed & Green garden Lizards, Dragonflies which include Dawn Dropwing, Luzon, Red & Purple Skimmers & Black-tipped Demoiselle, mammals which include 'Western' Purple-faced Leaf Monkey, Giant Squirrel & Layard's Squirrel, Butterflies which include Sri Lanka Birdwing, Cruiser, Plum Judy & Tree Nymph.

Overnight: Boulder Garden Hotel, Kalawana

Day 16 After a lie-in and breakfast followed by more chilling by the pool we will drive back to Taj Airport Garden Hotel, Katunayake our luxurious 5 star transit hotel. En route, we will pause at my residence at Bomiriya for a cuppa & to bag Brown Hawk Owl roosting in my garden, which would be our final 'tick'. My local patch contains 110 species including Chestnut-headed Bee-eater, Black-Bittern & Pied Kingfisher.

A final log & a fine farewell dinner at the hotel's specialty Chinese restaurant will mark the end of this exciting birding holiday.



Chestnut-headed Bee-eater Sri Lanka Scaly Thrush Brown Hawk Owl Pied Kingfisher

Target species: Brown Hawk Owl

Overnight/ Change rooms: Taj Airport Garden Hotel.

Non birding highlights: Bingy- My friendly bull dog & a couple of very bad cats.

Day 17 Departure at late night today or in the early hours tomorrow.

Tour Leader: Amila Salgado

Amila holds a record as the first birder from Colombo to visit Sinharaja rain forest in a tuktuk – an audacious feat achieved to bag the ultra-secretive Bay Owl in a daytime roost in Jan, 2007. He got hooked on birds in 1989 after a school project in St Peter's College, and made his first trip to Sinharaja the following year with a group of schoolmates, which earned him his first glimpses of the rare birding jewels & a host of birdie nicknames. He joined YZA, a local nature club, at an early age which was the beginning of the road to turn him into an all-round naturalist. Amila is a certified 'national-guide' under Sri Lanka Tourist Board. Before turning a full time naturalist guide, he was a Manager of a Wildlife tour company. He holds memberships in several local as well as



overseas bird clubs and contributes articles to their ornithological publications. Apart from birding, Amila enjoys thrashing his clients at Scrabble.

For rates and details e-mail info@birdwingnature.com or phone 0094-777-591155

Website: www.birdwingnature.com

Amila's Birding & Wildlife Blog: [Gallicissa...a birder in an endemic hotspot](#)



'Sri Lanka' Bay Owl, in a day roost discovered in Jan 2007

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