

Sri Lanka 2006

January 14th - January 30th

by Fran Boreham and John van der Dol

Steve Barnes, Fran Boreham, Graham Crick, Peter Dean, John van der Dol (Tour organiser),
Paul Howe, Jean Mc Dermott, Sheila Seed, Peter Van der Veken, Don Wilks & John Wilks

Local Leader: Amila Salgado

Itinerary

Saturday Jan 14th

It is with a great sense of relief that we step off the bus at Heathrow and into a warm terminal building knowing that for the next two weeks we will experience temperatures which are much more comfortable than we have in our country at this time of year. Even any rain is bearable. Our journey was without any problems and although our flight was delayed by an hour, the trip was uneventful. We stopped at Doha which gave the girls some time to purchase the gin required for our stay in the forest. Alcohol is required for bites and the tonic is just in case there is no medicinal need and we have to drink it to save carrying it around.

Sunday Jan 15th

We eventually met up with Amila Salgado of Birdwing Nature Holidays, our ground agent and tour leader for the duration of our trip. He escorted us to our bus and we set off on the road to Kithulgala and our first accommodation known as "Rafters Retreat". For the people who have never travelled with us before, this may have come as a bit of a surprise. The Hilton it is not, but an 'eco lodge' in the forest, which is a better name for a wooden hut with no glass in the windows, next to a torrent of a river, the noise of which does not even switch off at night, turned out to be very comfortable. Yes it had only cold water straight out of the river, but then it was refreshing. A quick bite to eat and a couple of beers and it was time for bed.

Monday Jan 16th

A cup of tea at 6.30 before a walk in the forest about 1 km upstream from our accommodation. Here we did some birding acclimatising those who had never birded in the east. We spent a couple of hours enthralled with the colourful plumages of different birds before having a tasty breakfast of spicy masala omelettes and toast and of course the compulsory cup of Ceylon tea. Further birding in this area and eventually back to our accommodation for lunch. By now we had seen Brahminy Kites, Oriental Honey Buzzard, the difficult to find endemic Green-billed Coucal, Layard's Parakeet, three species of Barbet (two of them endemic) and Indian Pitta. Not bad for one morning.

A short siesta and we were off to the Kelani Forest on the other side of the river which we had to cross in very narrow canoes, so narrow that one can not sit in them. One stands up for the whole crossing. Taking off our boots and socks until we got to the other side where we donned leech socks before our walk into the forest.

This is a lovely piece of rain forest and although it is harder to find birds in this type of habitat, those you do find tend to be good ones. Square-tailed Black Bulbul, a recent split, was added to the list and Legge's Flowerpecker added to the already growing list of endemics. We went out to try and find the Serendib's Scops Owl and although we heard it, it was quite a distance from where we were and heavy rain spoilt the party. We sheltered in an old farmer's hut which kept us reasonably dry. Already quite a good total was achieved which was quite bewildering for our 'novices' as was obvious from some of the names of the 'new species known to science'.

A wonderful dinner and a few bottles of Lion Beer and medicinal spirits to celebrate Paul's birthday and it was time for bed.

Tuesday Jan 17th

Up again at 6.30 for tea and an early walk to look for Chestnut-backed Owlet which we found and had great views of. The Pitta put in another appearance and many other species provided a show as the sun warmed the air. Orange Minivets, Sri Lanka Green Pigeons, Loten's and Purple-rumped Sunbirds all glistened in the strong

sunlight and we had not moved more than a few hundred yards from the restaurant.

After breakfast we caught the 'ferry' again and wandered off into the forest once more. A pair of Malabar Trogons gave a good display and a Rufous Woodpecker was playing games with us but eventually surrendered to everybody. Black-naped Monarchs gave good views and many more species were added. The sun was out and the butterflies were just fantastic. Although very humid, this was a lovely walk and we all shed a pound or two in anticipation of putting them back on later this evening.

An afternoon walk in the same place as yesterday gave stunning views of two Green-billed Coucals, a male rufous form Paradise Flycatcher and the usual parrots and parakeets. Some Dark-fronted Babblers also popped out of the thickets for a while. More tea in yesterday's guest house and Crested Serpent Eagles gave good displays.

Another great meal and more tonics and off to bed, a little later I seem to remember. Arrack, the local spirit (out of a bottle that is) was the order of the night, followed by a trek through the forest in order to locate our cabins. Hmmm!

Wednesday Jan 18th

Again up at 6.30 for our early cup of tea. A brief walk before breakfast in the forest surrounding the camp produced much the same as yesterday. We settled our bar bills, said our goodbyes and set off for the long drive to Martin's Lodge at Sinharaja, another 'up-market' accommodation. After a couple of stops en route, including a supermarket visit to top up on tonics for the insect bites, we eventually arrived at the Sinharaja Forest. We decamped from our bus into 4wheel drive jeeps and drove the bone-jarring three kilometres to the lodge. The accommodation had grown since our last visit there two years ago with Martin having added two dormitories sleeping ten in each and a lecture hall. These new facilities being aimed at student groups. Our accommodation had changed little although some rooms now have solar powered hot showers. However if you want to bird Sinharaja, then this has to be the place to stay. The views from the restaurant were still as wonderful as before.

After a delicious lunch we set off to explore the wonders that are Sinharaja. A walk through the forest with our sharp-eyed guides and the ever enthusiastic Amila was producing some stunning birds. The white ghostly shape of an old male Paradise Flycatcher impressed everybody present and the sight of a Sri Lanka Frogmouth on its nest was pretty smart also. Sri Lanka Junglefowl impressed Peter who has kept chickens in the past and the Sri Lanka Blue Magpie was enjoyed by all.

Amila had sent our tracker off and after an hour or so we were told to follow them into the forest. They took us on an incredibly difficult and steep path through thick and slippery forest down to a stream which we had to cross. It was more of a bog than a stream and some people ended up with their boots filled with mud, others sought a drier route. Eventually, all crowded together in a small spot, we were shown a bird that was first discovered in 2001 and still has only been seen by just a few people. A beautiful roosting Serendib's Owl in a vine-covered bush. Fantastic views were had of this very rare species. Only about 45 birds are currently known about in the world. It was well worth the assault course we had to conquer in order to see it. The most remarkable thing is how the tracker found it in the first place.

As if we needed an excuse, the whiskey flowed after dinner.

Thursday Jan 19th

Not quite such an early start this morning although I can not think why!

The whole day was spent in the forest only interrupted by lunch. A few good bird-flocks were found and new species added to the list, notably Ashy-headed Laughingthrush, Red-faced Malkoha, more Spot-winged Thrushes and two stunning Sri Lanka Scimitar Babblers. The butterflies here too were magnificent and Purple-faced Leaf Monkeys and Giant Squirrels were present to keep us all amused.

Some of the group went out for an evening walk but apart from two Sambars this proved a little fruitless.

Friday Jan 20th

An early pre-breakfast walk for Sri Lanka Spurfowl gave just one observer a brief glimpse of a shape in the dark. A little unsatisfactory to say the least. We packed our bags and prepared to leave this wonderful place allowing it to return back to its peaceful state which it so richly deserves. Not that we were noisy or anything, just busy!

We joined our jeeps and began our descent to our bus stopping in one place known for the species mentioned above. No success, but just a little further down the road there a pair walked across the track affording good views to all. This is not by any means an easy species and often missed by tour groups.

Our next stop on our road east was to be Udawalawe National Park. Our first stop was a wetland area not far from the park entrance where waders, herons and egrets could be seen in the distance. But some close pools attracted our attention as odd waders such as Temminck's Stint and Little Ringed Plovers and the odd sandpiper were noted. Two Blyth's Pipits were of great interest to those who are into this sort of thing. However it was another small pool which excited Amila the most as it held the unusual White Wagtail but also his first ever Citrine

Wagtail. This is a rare vagrant to Sri Lanka and always a nice bird to see.

We moved on to the park entrance where we transferred to two jeeps and set off to explore the dry savanna in search of dry zone birds and Elephants. It was not long before we found a family group of the latter including a baby heavily protected by the females in the group. A rather grumpy bull, in musth, gave a couple of 'mock charges' much to the amusement to others in the following jeep. One has to be careful though as they can be very dangerous and it is not wise to take unnecessary risks.

An opportunity for some stunning photographs though.

Black-winged Kites were fairly common, three Crested Hawk Eagles gave excellent views and the beautiful Orange-breasted Green Pigeons also vied for our attention. One interesting thing was an Alpine Swift which was overflying a pool and coming down to drink as it passed low over the water. We have never seen this species so low affording fantastic views.

This is a great place and I always feel we could do more but you could say that about most the places we visit.

It was dusk as we left the park and a few Night Herons took to the air followed by Flying Foxes. We arrived at our hotel and after showering and dinner (and the usual stuff your face with desserts even by people who don't eat desserts!) we did our checklists. It was a relatively early night for most as we still have had no opportunity to get rid of the jet lag. I got the impression some were getting a little tired, so a slightly later morning call was arranged. In the event it was not necessary to rise too early tomorrow.

Saturday Jan 21st

Breakfast at a more social hour and we checked out of our hotel. A brief check of the pools we visited yesterday where much the same birds were present. No wagtails but excellent views of a Blue-faced Malkoha made the stop worthwhile. Plenty of pipits and prinias were present for those who like 'little brown jobs'

We decided to take the inland route to Tissamaharama rather than the coastal road. This meant we could have lunch at a local restaurant and do some birding around it, which proved so successful two years ago. We arrived there in time for lunch and as the staff got everything ready for us we spent an hour or so birding. It was not the best time of day but good views of White-rumped Shama, Indian Cuckoo, Indian Pygmy Woodpecker, the amazing Stork-billed Kingfisher and Jungle Owlet confirmed that it was a good decision to come this way.

Sandwiches and chips by the river and we were off again, this time to the tanks of Tissamaharama. This is a large reservoir covered for the most part in vegetation and birds. Yellow Bittern was seen, but the target species was actually not on the lake but in a Palm Grove. We had waited not long when our target, a pair of White-naped Woodpeckers, appeared at a nest hole. Both the male and the female just sat there posing for us to get a good scope full. A group of local kids, the tour guides of the future, then took us into the Palm Grove and showed us a Brown Fish Owl followed immediately by an Indian Scops Owl. It just goes to show that you often need the locals if you want to see the owls. We would never have known that these birds were there.

As the Flying Foxes started appearing we knew it was time to depart. Another night, another hotel.

Sunday Jan 22nd

A pre-breakfast look at the Heron and Egret roost on an island in the lake just outside the back of our hotel was amazing. There were thousands of egrets all setting off to their daytime feeding grounds and four Night Herons were found amongst them. Cormorants were there too in huge numbers. This was followed by a brief visit to some tanks nearby in search of Black Bittern which had so far eluded us. We managed a close flight view but that was all. A number of waders were added to the list, mostly European species, but they all count. Two Yellow-eyed Babblers and an Indian Reed Warbler by the side of the road were oblivious to our presence in the bus so we had good views of them.

After breakfast we set off to Yala and just before lunch we checked in at the luxurious Yala Village Hotel which was going to be our base for the next three nights.

The accommodation here comprises of semi-detached chalets in dry scrubby woodland surrounding the main reception which included the bar, a watch tower with a bar and an enormous but very smart restaurant. A few years ago we might have felt a little out of place in our walking boots and shorts. I think we are getting used to these wonderful places and actually they are designed to take the likes of us! I think we were impressed that the wildlife is able to just walk through the hotel grounds including groups of cattle and wild elephants. For this reason you are supposed to be escorted to your rooms at night by the staff who are mostly no bigger than my ten year old son. I am not quite sure what protection they provide from a fully grown Elephant. Leopards also patrol the area but not when we were looking.

An afternoon safari brought back many memories for some of us. Here the targets are not so much birds as mammals and everything tends to be geared up towards finding Leopard and Sloth Bear.

A brief view of the latter by just one of our group was hardly satisfactory, but one can not expect the jackpot in just one drive. Birds however were spectacular with Black-necked Stork probably taking pride of place. Malabar

Pied Hornbills were seen well, Painted and Openbill Storks were present in good numbers. On our way back it was already dark by the time we left the park and not far from the hotel at a rocky outcrop a Brown Fish Owl was spotted in Amila's powerful torch allowing us all to get a good view. Unfortunately the Indian Nightjar did not show quite as well but did find its way on our list.

A wonderful meal and a few drinks ended a very exiting day and we were already looking forward to our early morning safari.

Monday Jan 23rd

A pre-dawn start with packed breakfasts on board and for most donned in fleeces and hats. Those who did not believe that it could be cold in the very early morning at 30mph suffered.

We did two safaris today interspersed by lunch and a siesta and a swim for some. Still no Leopard but wonderful views of a Sloth Bear as it foraged firstly in the woods, then out in the open grassland rolling over a couple of times and totally oblivious to our presence. Birds were much as yesterday although two magnificent Grey-headed Fish eagles were pulled out of the bag. A Leopard had been seen from the watch tower just before dusk making me wonder if I am ever going to see one.

Tuesday Jan 24th

An early morning walk along the beach to look for Small Pratincole was unsuccessful but very emotional for those who were here two years ago. The Yala Safari Lodge where we stayed and have such wonderful memories of is no longer there, it having been destroyed by the Tsunami taking with it several dozen people including most of the Executive staff. The floors are still there but the walls and everything else is piled up into heaps of rubble. I do hope the authorities clear the site. Experiences like these do put things into context and I am pleased that by returning we are able to put some money back into the local economy.

Safaris are dusty and bumpy affairs and so it was decided that this morning we would do the famous wader spot at Bundala. A pale phase Booted Eagle en route was a good find and interrupted the journey for a few minutes.

Again a jeep safari but without the dust and speed on bouncy roads. The place was covered in waders including nice species like Greater and Lesser Sandpipers, many Little Stints and Curlew Sandpipers in winter plumage which is not the way we are used to seeing them at home. A mixed flock of terns included Crested, Lesser Crested, Caspian and Gull billed which enabled us to compare their different features. Little, Whiskered and a single White-winged Black were also present giving us a nice list of terns for the day. A grey-phase Western Reef Egret was the only one found this year although views were a little distant.

We returned to the hotel for lunch only to find that there had been several Leopard sightings this morning. Well, I am afraid that means another safari late this afternoon. Some of the group stayed behind as the backs and rear ends were suffering from the jeeps and the dust was getting up their noses. They decided to do some local exploration.

So the rest set off yet again to tear around the reserve. I am told that continually driving round and listening for alarm calls from monkeys and deer is the way to see Leopard. Well we sat in a spot where Leopard had been seen twice this morning. After 15 minutes of staring into some bushes I thought I saw a patch of spots moving right. It can only have been a Leopard or perhaps just wishful thinking. I alerted the rest of our party and we all concentrated on that area. After another five minutes or so a female Leopard walked out into the open and just as quickly as it had arrived melted back into the thickets. We had seen the whole animal in one shot which I gather is more than some observations. But it had lasted only seconds. I was bemused and did not really know what to think. Was that good or what?

Nevertheless Leopard is now on the list!

We returned to the hotel and told our tales perhaps more than once. Tomorrow we leave but perhaps there is still time to get a short two hour game drive in first thing. Are the others up for it?

Wednesday Jan 25th

Yes another early start, breakfast packed and back on the jeeps but again not for the whole group. Our last chance to get a longer view.

We drove around for nearly two hours without any sign when another jeep stopped us and told us there was a Leopard sitting on a rocky outcrop just round the corner. Why had they left it, was it still there, no it can't be. These were questions that were going through my mind. One must have faith. We turned a corner and there sitting high on the rocks was a large male Leopard. It stayed there while we took video footage and Amila got a good digiscoped shot (photograph on the home page). It was a little too far for most of our cameras but through the scope and binoculars views were stunning. After about five minutes it got up, stretched to show us its huge size and just casually walked off the rock and into the forest. What an experience and why had some of the others stayed behind? I have learned from this and Tigers in Northern India that you must have patience and a lot of luck

and must be prepared to put the time in. Very often after much trying ones success can literally be right at the last minute. I remember Kiwi in New Zealand and Tiger in Corbett National Park, both seen within minutes of leaving to go home. Let it be a lesson learned!

After lunch we set off to Bibile for a local guest-house, which is the only accommodation in the area and perfectly adequate but certainly not luxurious and one night is quite sufficient. So after checking in and lunch with more chips than the local chippie, we set off in our bus to Nilgala Forest. A lovely walk at the wrong time of day made us realise that this is a bird-rich area and good views were had of Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, brief views of Jungle Bush Quail and plenty of the brightly coloured Orange and Small Minivets. A nice area which could do with more exploration.

Great dinner, lists done and a few beers and off to bed.

Thursday Jan 26th

An early morning visit to the Nilgala Forest again produced excellent perched views of Yellow-footed Green Pigeon yet another Uva-avifaunal zone specialty according to Amila, Thick-billed Flowerpecker, Yellow-crowned Woodpecker and some more Jungle Bush Quails. Breakfast was followed by saying our goodbyes and off again, this time to the central highlands and the lovely town of Nuwara Eliya. En route we stopped at a little stream for Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush which we duly saw although the light was failing fast. This meant we did not have to get up in the middle of the night to go to Horton Plains before dawn to freeze our bits off.

We arrived at the luxurious Galway Forest Lodge, checked in, had a shower and a beer and did our lists. This was followed by dinner and more desserts that some never eat and yet another few beers.

Friday Jan 27th

An early morning start driving through the mist and up on to the Horton Plains. As the Whistling Thrush was already under our belts we were able to start later than was originally planned. As the sun rose and warmed the air birds starting appearing. The endemic Yellow-eared Bulbul was as lovely as ever, the Sri Lanka White-eyes gave close views, and the species of the trip for some was a party of three noisy Crimson-backed Flamebacks which flew round and round and perched right out in the open for all to see. They were truly spectacular. Sri Lanka Scimitar Babblers enthralled everybody whilst the Dull-blue Flycatcher had everybody wondering why it is so called. Indian Blue Robin sat out in the open but apart from flight views was only seen properly by one of us. Brief views of the Sri Lanka Bush Warbler and two Indian Blackbirds were added to the list. Sheila pulled her magic again at the Arrenga pool in finding a rarity in the form of Booted Warbler – she found a sunning Chestnut-winged Crested Cuckoo at this very place in 2004!

We spent the whole morning up here and although a little misty and not as warm as our previous visit, it was nevertheless a great experience.

Back for lunch and an early afternoon walk around the forest of the local area. The latter had to be abandoned as the rain set in. However it did not stop our late afternoon visit to Victoria Park and although the rain was unpleasant at times we achieved what we came for. Three target species, Pied Thrush, two males, a beautiful Kashmir Flycatcher and the skulky Slaty-legged Crake of which two were also seen. Fantastic views were had of all. A celebratory beer or two and peanuts in a local pub were just the job before dinner. Yet another wonderful dinner and a few gins and it was again time to retire. Some later than others!

Saturday Jan 28th

Early morning rain again stopped play. A leisurely breakfast followed by checking out and back on the bus. Driving through the hills of the Central Highlands and the perfectly manicured tea plantations on the slow road to Kandy. En route we had a stop at a tea factory where we learnt how they turn a green leaf and bud into a lovely cup of tea. The fact that the Hill Swallow had a nest inside the factory had nothing to do with our visit there.

We arrived in Kandy in time for lunch at the same place we had visited two years ago. We had a lovely lunch again, all apart from Don who was still feeling under the weather. The rain had not ceased so we decided to visit a batik factory close to the restaurant. Amila set up his scope inside the shop's back entrance to look at a party of 13 Lesser Hill Mynas and some Layard's Parakeets much to the bemusement of the staff. I can't see us getting away with that in Marks and Spencers.

Back on the bus and onwards to the our next accommodation. The Amaya Resorts in the hills just outside Kandy. An up-market hotel up a narrow track through the outskirts of Kandy, so narrow that our bus had difficulty navigating it at times. Once settled in we went for an evening walk with the intention of finding some owls, but no luck. We did not give it long and returned to the hotel for a shower and a wonderful dinner, with yet again lots of desserts for those who never eat desserts.

Yeah right!

Sunday Jan 29th

A brief walk in the hills behind the hotel produced some fleeting and frustrating flight views of Indian Blue Robin and a Crested Goshawk was the cause of much discussion. Another Scimitar Babbler gave reasonably good views. A nice walk with some nice leeches for Graham to admire (he does attract the little beasts). Four Sri Lanka Wood Pigeons gave better views than we had had up on Horton Plains and we improved on our views of Alexandrine Parakeets.

A nice walk followed by a stunning breakfast and we were off again. The road to the coast was a long and windy affair but by teatime we had arrived. We paused briefly for Paul to purchase a ring for a special someone followed by a visit to local Spice Garden was very interesting and a complimentary head and shoulder and back massage was nice but made your shirt stick to your back. We birders have to put up with much discomfort!

The Taj Airport Hotel just five minutes from the airport was luxurious to say the least. We checked in, showered and had our farewell dinner in the 'in house' Chinese Restaurant. A few short speeches, a few drinks and off to bed to prepare for an early flight home tomorrow morning.

Monday Jan 30th

Sadly we had to say our final farewells to Amila and our driver and assistant who had all looked after us so well over the past two weeks. We entered the airport, checked in and our journey back to the disgustingly cold weather of Kent went smoothly.

Systematic List

by

John van der Dol & Amila Salgado

Since our last trip two years ago, the taxonomy of bird species in this region has undergone considerable change. Mainly responsible for this is the recently published '*Birds of South Asia, The Ripley Guide*'. Vols. 1 and 2. published by Smithsonian Institution and Lynx Edicions, Washington, D.C. and Barcelona by Rasmussen, P.C. & Anderton, J.C. (2005). According to this long awaited publication, several sub-species have been elevated to full species level. Recent discovery of Serendib Scops Owl an endemic bird species new to science (Warakogoda and Rasmussen 2004) and elevation of several subspecies to full species level have pushed the number of endemics to 33 making this island nation a top global birding hotspot. This number is likely to see further increase following publication of several pending work.

Where vernacular and scientific names have been changed following taxonomic revisions in Rasmussen and Anderton (2005), we have accepted it and adopted these changes. Thus we have adopted Eastern Cattle Egret *Bubulcus coromandus* for Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* in our recent literature. Where country name appears in bird names we have used Sri Lanka, which is the present geo-political name (since 1972) which is also followed in the widely accepted '*An Annotated Checklist of the Birds of the Oriental Region*' by Inskipp, T., Lindsey, N., and Duckworth, W. (1996) published by Oriental Bird Club (OBC), Sandy, UK. Thus we have retained Sri Lanka Spurfowl in place of Ceylon Spurfowl.

Where scientific name has been subjected to change in Rasmussen and Anderton (2005) due to various valid reasons, which do not result in the elevation of species to a new one, we have used the revised scientific name but retained the vernacular name as per Inskipp *et al* (1996). Thus we have adopted *Eumyias sordidus* for *Eumyias sordida* but retained Dull Blue Flycatcher as per Inskipp *et al* (1996) instead of Dusky Blue Flycatcher. In all other cases where vernacular names have been changed in Rasmussen and Anderton (2005), we have retained the established names of Inskipp *et al* (1996). Thus we have retained Pied Cuckoo in place of Jacobin Cuckoo.

(E) denotes endemic to Sri Lanka. Species that have been heard only have been listed within brackets.

1. Little Grebe *Trachybaptus ruficollis*

Eight at Debarawewa tank at Tissamaharama and a single between Yala and Bibile

2. Little Cormorant *Phalacrocorax niger*

Commonly found in all suitable wetland areas

3. Indian Cormorant *Phalacrocorax fuscicollis*

Also commonly found in all suitable areas and an estimate of 200 or more at Udawalawe

4. Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

A count of 15 at Udawalawe followed by one or two en route to Yala

5. Darter *Anhinga melanogaster*

Up to six on five dates and an estimated total of 100 between the tanks at Tissa and Yala

6. Spot-billed Pelican *Pelicanus philippensis*

Only seen at Udawalawe and Yala with counts of up to 30 and a maximum of 100 at Yala and Bundala combined. There was a single from the bus on the way to Kandy

7. Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis*

Singles on two occasions near Tissa

8. Black Bittern *Dupetor flavicollis*

Just one in flight only at a tank near Tissa

9. Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Eight near Udawalawe, four in the Heron roost in front of Tissamaharama Resthouse and a single at Yala

10. Little Heron *Butorides striata*

Two at Yala was the only record

11. Indian Pond Heron *Ardeola grayii*

Commonly found throughout

12. Eastern Cattle Egret *Bubulcus coromandus* (**Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis*)

Seen in good numbers on a daily basis

13. Western Reef Egret *Egretta gularis*

A single dark morph was seen at Bundala

14. Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Seen in small numbers most days

15. Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia*

Small numbers throughout

16. Great Egret *Egretta alba*

Smaller numbers than the previous few species but still seen in all suitable areas

17. Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Only seen in Udawalawe and Yala with a maximum count of 25 on the day we visited Tissa tanks and Yala

18. Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

Up to ten on five dates

19. Painted Stork *Mycteria leucocephala*

Up to 20 in the wetland areas on five dates. Excellent views were had of birds in a pool by the side of the road at Yala

20. Asian Openbill *Anastomus oscitans*

Up to 50 on six dates in the lowland areas

21. Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus*

Singles at Yala on two occasions

- 22. Black-necked Stork** *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*
An adult female was seen on three occasions at Yala
- 23. Lesser Adjutant** *Leptoptilos javanicus*
A single fly-over in Yala
- 24. Black-headed Ibis** *Threskiornis melanocephalus*
Commonly found in the wetland areas
- 25. Eurasian Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia*
Up to 30 on four dates in Yala
- 26. Greater Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus roseus*
A flock of 11 was encountered at Bundala
- 27. Lesser Whistling-duck** *Dendrocygna javanica*
Eight at Udawalawe, 30 at Tissa and up to 50 at Yala on four dates
- 28. Garganey** *Anas querquedula*
A count of 162 at Yala was followed by up to 44 there on the next three days
- 29. Northern Shoveler** *Anas clypeata*
A flock of about 20 at Tissa was the sole record
- 30. Oriental Honey Buzzard** *Pernis ptilorhynchus*
Between one and three seen virtually daily and six were counted on the road from Kithulgala and Sinharaja
- 31. Black-shouldered Kite** *Elanus caeruleus*
About 15 birds at Udawalawe, two at Tissa and two singles in the Central Highlands
- 32. Brahminy Kite** *Haliastur indus*
Up to eight on nine dates in lowland areas
- 33. White-bellied Sea Eagle** *Haliaeetus leucogaster*
Up to three between Tissa and Yala on four dates and a single in the Amaya Hills on the last biding day
- 34. Grey-headed Fish Eagle** *Icthyophaga ichthyaetus*
Excellent views were had of two birds at Yala
- 35. Crested Serpent Eagle** *Spilornis cheela*
Up to four on most days
- 36. Crested Goshawk** *Accipiter trivigatus*
Certainly one, may be two Accipiters could have been attributed to this species in the Amaya Hills
- 37. Shikra** *Accipiter badius*
Singles on most days and three in the Nilgala area
- 38. Besra** *Accipiter virgatus*
Singles in the Kelani Forest and Yala were unfortunately only seen by a few people
- 39. Himalayan Buzzard** *Buteo burmanicus*
Two on Horton Plains was the only record
- 40. Black Eagle** *Ictinaetus malayensis*
A single on the road to Sinharaja, two in Sinharaja itself and another single on the road to Kandy
- 41. Booted Eagle** *Hieraaetus pennatus*

A single pale phase bird on the way to Bundala from Yala was the only record of this rare species for Sri Lanka

42. Crested Hawk Eagle *Spizaetus cirrhatus* (Formally **Changeable Hawk Eagle** which is now *S.limnaeetus*)
Between one and three on six dates

43. Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis*

A bad view of a single flying over our jeep at Yala was most unsatisfactory for a potential new bird for the whole group

44. Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus peregrinator* (**Shaheen**)

Singles at Yala on two days

45. Jungle Bush Quail *Perdica asiatica ceylonensis*

Four on both days at Nilgala

46. Sri Lanka Junglefowl *Gallus lafayetii* (**E**)

Up to seven seen on most days

47. Sri Lanka Spurfowl *Galloperdix bicalcarata* (**E**)

One heard in Sinharaja was followed by three seen on our last day there

48. Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus*

Only seen in open areas in the lowlands, particularly Yala where they are very common. Counts of up to 30 a day

49. Barred Buttonquail *Turnix suscitator leggei*

Four at Udawalawe, five three and two at Yala represents a good series of records.

50. Slaty-legged Crake *Rallina eurizonoides*

Two in Victoria Park, Nuwara Eliya gave stunning views and was a new bird for all concerned

51. White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus*

Found throughout in small numbers

52. Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus indica*

Three at Tissa and one at Yala were the only records

53. Purple Swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio*

Single figure counts at Tissa and Yala

54. Pheasant-tailed Jacana *Hydrophasianus chirurgus*

Seen in small numbers on most lilly-covered tanks

55. Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

Five at Udawalawe were followed by larger numbers at Yala and 400 at Bundala

56. Indian Stone Curlew *Burhinus indicus* (formerly considered conspecific with **Eurasian Thick-knee** *B. oedicemus*)

One at Yala was the sole record

57. Great Thick-knee *Esacus recurvirostris*

A count of 19 at Yala was followed by four and a single there

58. Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

Up to six in wetland areas on six dates

59. Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

A count of 18 at Yala was followed by eight there the next day

- 60. Lesser Sand Plover** *Charadrius mongolus*
Small numbers at Yala on three dates
- 61. Greater Sand Plover** *Charadrius leschenaultii*
About 30 at Bundala
- 62. Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva*
Ten at Tissa were followed by three at Bundala
- 63. Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola*
A single at Yala and three at Bundala were the only sightings
- 64. Yellow-wattled Lapwing** *Vanellus malabaricus*
Two at Udawalawe, four at Tissa and between ten and 20 at Yala on four dates
- 65. Red-wattled Lapwing** *Vanellus indicus*
Commonly found in all suitable areas
- 66. Little Stint** *Calidris minuta*
Found in large numbers at Yala and Bundala
- 67. Temminck's Stint** *Calidris temminckii*
Two at Udawalawe and two singles at Tissa and Yala
- 68. Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea*
Found in large numbers at Tissa, Yala and Bundala
- 69. Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax*
A single at Yala was the sole record
- 70. Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa*
A flock of 40 at Tissa were followed by uncounted numbers at Yala and Bundala
- 71. Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus*
Two on the rocks on the beach at Yala
- 72. Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus*
Small numbers at Tissa, Yala and Bundala
- 73. Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis*
Good numbers at Tissa, Yala and Bundala
- 74. Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia*
Up to ten in the wetland areas
- 75. Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus*
Three at Tissa and two at Yala
- 76. Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola*
Small numbers at Tissa and Yala
- 77. Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos*
Up to four most days
- 78. Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres*
A flock of 14 at Bundala and five the next day on the beach at Yala
- 79. Brown-headed Gull** *Larus brunnicephalus*

Two and six at Yala and about 20 at Bundala

80. Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*

Small numbers in the wetland areas of Tissa and Yala

81. Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*

Four at Yala were followed by groups of 20 and five there on subsequent days

82. Large Crested Tern *Sterna bergii*

Forty at Bundala and 11 at Yala gave good views

83. Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*

Six at Bundala mixed in with other terns gave a good opportunity for comparison

84. Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*

Singles at Tissa and Yala were followed by 40 at Bundala

85. Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus*

The commonest tern of the wetland areas and seen on most tanks and at Yala with no serious counts being attempted

86. White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*

A single in winter plumage was difficult to pick up at Bundala

87. Rock Pigeon *Columba livia*

As ever present including some wild flocks

88. Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon *Columba torringtonii* (E)

Two at Sinharaja, three on Horton Plains and another four in the Amaya Hills represents a good series of records

89. Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis*

Ubiquitous

90. Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps indica*

Between one and four seen on six dates all in forested areas

91. Orange-breasted Green Pigeon *Treron bicincta*

Three at Udawalawe were followed by up to 30 at Yala and six at Nilgala

92. Sri Lanka Green Pigeon *Treron pompadora* (E) (formerly **Pompadour Green Pigeon**)

Up to ten at Kithulgala and Sinharaja and three at Nilgala

93. Yellow-footed Green Pigeon *Treron phoenicopterus phillipsi*

An endemic sub species, two of which were seen at Nilgala

94. Green Imperial Pigeon *Ducula aenea*

Seen virtually daily with a maximum count of 40 in the Kelani forest

95. Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot *Loriculus beryllinus* (E)

Up to a dozen a day at Kithulgala and Sinharaja and one or two in the Amaya Hills

96. Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria*

Singles in the Kelani Forest and Udawalawe and five and 15 in the Amaya Hills

97. Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*

Commonly found throughout

98. Plum-headed Parakeet *Psittacula cyanocephala*

Four at Udawalawe and a single at Nilgala

99. Layard's Parakeet *Psittacula calthropae* (E)

Up to ten at Kithulgala and Sinharaja on a daily basis and a male just outside the City of Kandy

100. Pied Cuckoo *Clamator jacobinus*

Singles at Tissa and Yala

101. Common Hawk Cuckoo *Hierococcyx varius ciliaris*

One heard at Horton Plains and excellent views of one in the Botanical Gardens at Kandy. A potential split

102. Indian Cuckoo *Cuculus micropterus*

Excellent views of a bird at Tasks Camp were followed by two single females at Yala

103. Grey-bellied Cuckoo *Cacomantis passerinus*

Two at Udawalawe included a hepatic female and then between one and four on four dates at Yala

(Drono Cuckoo *Surniculus lugubris*)

Unfortunately just one heard at Nilgala

104. Asian Koel *Eudynamis scolopacea*

Singles on seven dates and two on one day

105. Blue-faced Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus viridirostris*

A single gave stunning views at Tasks Camp, another at Yala and two more at Nilgala

106. Red-faced Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus pyrrhocephalus* (E)

Although only two were seen at Sinharaja in a mixed bird flock, we did get excellent views of this enigmatic species

107. Green-billed Coucal *Centropus chlororynchus* (E)

A single at Kithulgala was followed by two there the next day and another was seen at Sinharaja. Good views were obtained of a sometimes difficult to see species

108. Southern Coucal *Centropus (sinensis) parroti* (Formally **Greater Coucal**)

Two were seen at Kithulgala after which singles were seen almost daily

109. Indian Scops Owl *Otus bakkamoena* (formerly known as **Collared Scops Owl**, which is now *O. lettia*)

A recent split from Collared Scops and occurring throughout the Indian Subcontinent. A single was seen during the day in the palm grove at Tissamaharama

110. Serendib Scops Owl *Otus thilohoffmanii* (E)

A single heard in the Kelani Forest was followed by one seen at a day time roost at Sinharaja two days later. Fantastic views were had of a bird not many people have ever seen, let alone during daylight hours. Likely to be one of the rarest Owls in the world discovered in 2001.. We were very lucky to get such amazing views

111. Brown Fish Owl *Ketupa zeylonensis*

Singles in the Palm grove at Tissa and in the spot light and in flight on our return from a jeep safari at Yala. Excellent views of the latter bird

112. Jungle Owlet *Glaucidium radiatum*

One heard at Sinharaja was followed by excellent views of a bird at Tasks Camp

113. Chestnut-backed Owlet *Glaucidium castanonotum* (E)

One seen at a nest hole at Rafters Retreat, Kithulgala gave fantastic views. Two further ones were heard there and Sinharaja

114. Sri Lanka Frogmouth *Batrachostomus moniliger*

A male on the nest at Sinharaja was seen on two consecutive days

115. Indian Nightjar *Caprimulgus asiaticus*

Although one or two were seen after dark on four occasions at Yala, we never had a decent view

116. Crested Treeswift *Hemiprocne coronata*

This very impressive Swift was seen in good numbers on eight days with maximum counts of 20 on three dates at Yala where one was also seen on a nest precariously perched on a branch

117. Indian Swiftlet *Aerodramus unicolor*

Numbers up to 50 throughout

118. Brown-backed Needletail *Hirundapus giganteus*

Ten at Sinharaja were followed by singles at Tissa and Yala

119. Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba*

A single drinking water from a pool at Udawalawe gave amazing views of a species that is mostly seen high in the sky

120. Little Swift *Apus affinis*

Small numbers up to 15 on six dates

121. Asian Palm Swift *Cypsiurus balasiensis*

Up to 30 seen virtually daily

122. Malabar Trogon *Harpactes fasciatus*

A pair at Kelani Forest and three during mixed bird flocks at Sinharaja all gave excellent views

123. Stork-billed Kingfisher *Pelargopsis capensis*

Singles at Kithulgala on two consecutive days and two at Tasks Camp were the only records of this amazing bird

124. White-throated Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis*

Commonly found throughout, often in double figures

125. Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

One or two on many days

126. Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher *Ceyx erithaca*

A single bird was heard on a number of occasions at Rafters Retreat and at one time it flew right through the restaurant but was still only seen by a couple of people

127. Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis*

One at Tissa and three at Bundala

128. Little Green Bee-eater *Merops orientalis*

Very common at Yala. A count of 60 was made along the road to Tissamaharama

129. Blue-tailed Bee-eater *Merops phillipinus*

A common bird of open country with counts of up to 40 on most days

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

One to three on six dates

131. Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis*

Up to four on seven dates

132. Common Hoopoe *Upupa epops ceylonensis*

One to four on four dates and a count of about 15 at Yala one particular afternoon

133. Malabar Pied Hornbill *Anthracoceros coronatus*

Two at Udawalawe were followed by up to eight at Yala on four consecutive days. Excellent views of this amazing bird were had as they perched in dead trees

134. Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill *Ocyrceros gingalensis* (E)

Up to three a day at Kithulaga and Sinharaja

135. Brown-headed Barbet *Megalaima zeylanica*

Up to three on seven dates seen but many more heard in all areas

136. Yellow-fronted Barbet *Megalaima flavifrons* (E)

Up to ten a day in Kithulgala and Sinharaja and a further six in the Amaya Hills

137. Sri Lanka Small Barbet *Megalaima rubricapillus* (E)

Four in the Botanical Gardens in Kandy were surprisingly the only records

138. Coppersmith Barbet *Megalaima haemacephala*

Two or three at Udawalawe, Yala and the Surrey Estate

139. Indian Pygmy Woodpecker *Dendrocopus nanus*

A female at Tasks Camp was followed by another at Nilgala

140. Yellow-fronted Pied Woodpecker *Dendrocopus mahrattensis*

Singles at Tissa, Yala and two at Nilgala

141. Rufous Woodpecker *Micropternus brachyurus*

A single of this uncommon resident gave excellent views in the Kelani Forest

142. Lesser Yellownape *Picus chlorolophus wellsi*

One or two on three dates in the Kelani Forest and in mixed flocks in Sinharaja

143. Black-rumped Flameback *Dinopium benghalense psarodes*

This "red-backed" form is endemic to southern Sri Lanka whereas in the north of the island this species has an olive-golden back as in the birds of the Western Ghats (*D.b. Jaffnense*). As our travels did not reach the north of the island we did not see this latter form. However one or two of the red variety were seen on seven dates in all areas

144. Crimson-backed Flameback *Chrysocolaptes stricklandi* (E)

Recently split from **Greater Flameback** (*C.lucidus*). This amazing very vociferous bird was first heard in the Kelani Forest and three were subsequently seen very well on top of the Horton Plains. A stunning bird and for some, one of the birds of the trip

145. White-naped Woodpecker *Chrysocolaptes festivus*

A pair was watched at a nesthole for some considerable time in the Palm Grove at Tissamaharama affording superb view

146. Indian Pitta *Pitta brachyura*

This enigmatic species was well watched on three consecutive mornings at Rafters Retreat where it was also well photographed as it sat on a branch out in the open and remained very approachable. All this not typical of the species. Further singles were seen twice at Yala and Victoria Park

147. Jerdon's Bushlark *Mirafra affinis* (Formally considered Conspecific with **Rufous-winged Bushlark** *M. assamica*)

Four at Udawalawe and then between two and eight on four days at Yala

148. Ashy-crowned Finch-lark *Eremopterix griseus* (also **Ashy-crowned Sparrow-lark**)

A bird of dry areas and 25 were seen at Udawalawe, 26 at Yala and between two and eight on another four dates

at Tissa and Yala

149. Oriental Skylark *Alauda gulgula*

Two were seen briefly at Yala

150. Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

A single and a two at Yala and another single at Bundala

151. Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Small numbers throughout

152. Hill Swallow *Hirundo domicola*

Ten birds including a nest were found at the tea factory we visited in the Central Highlands. Good views were therefore possible as they sat on ledges inside the building

153. Sri Lanka Swallow *Hirundo hyperythra* (Formally considered conspecific with **Red-rumped Swallow** *H. daurica*) (E)

This beautiful “brick-coloured” red-rumped-type swallow was seen in small numbers in the lowlands on a daily basis

154. Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica nipalensis*

Five at Udawalawe, four at Tissa and a single at Yala were the only records

155. Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi*

A single at Udawalawe and three there the next day

156. Paddyfield Pipit *Anthus rufulus*

Between six and ten at Tissa and Yala on a daily basis and another ten at Horton Plains

157. Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii*

Two at Udawalawe were closely scrutinised

158. Forest Wagtail *Dendronanthus indicus*

One or two in most forested areas on most days while 50 were seen going to roost at Udawalawe

159. Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava thunbergi* (sub-species colloquially known as **Grey-headed' Yellow Wagtail**)

A single at Udawalawe was followed by three there the next morning

160. White Wagtail *Motacilla alba dukhunensis*

A single at Udawalawe was an unusual find and in the same spot at the previous and following species

161. Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*

A vagrant to Sri Lanka and a new bird for our guide! A single was seen at Udawalawe

162. Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

Up to three on a daily basis at Kithulgala and Sinharaja and five between Victoria Park and Horton Plains

163. Sri Lanka Woodshrike *Tephrodornis affinis* (recently split from Common Woodshrike *T. pondicerianus*) (E)

A single at Yala was followed by three there two days later, two at Nilgala and another there the next morning

164. Large Cuckooshrike *Coracina macei*

Singles at Tasks Camp, Nilgala and Amaya Hills

165. Black-headed Cuckooshrike *Coracina melanoptera*

Between one and three on five dates in Yala and the Highlands

166. Orange Minivet *Pericrocotus flammeus* (usually considered Conspecific with **Scarlet Minivet** *P. speciosus*)
Only found in forested areas in single figures up to eight.

167. Small Minivet *Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*
Three at Tissa, two at Yala and four at Nilgala on both visits

168. Bar-winged Flycatcher-Shrike *Hemipus picatus*
A party of eight in Kithulgala after which just one to three were seen on seven dates in all areas

169. Black-capped Bulbul *Pycnonotus melanicterus* (E)
Two in the Kelani Forest, three and four on consecutive days at Sinharaja and ten in Nilgala Forest

170. Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer*
Ubiquitous

171. Yellow-eared Bulbul *Pycnonotus penicillatus* (E)
Fifteen on Horton Plains gave excellent views

172. White-browed Bulbul *Pycnonotus luteolus*
Four at Sinharaja, two and eight at Yala and a dozen between Yala and Nilgala combined

173. Yellow-browed Bulbul *Iole indica*
Up to a dozen a day at Kithulgala and Sinharaja and four at Amaya Hills

174. Square-tailed Black Bulbul *Hypsipetes ganeesa* (Usually considered conspecific with **Black Bulbul** *H. madagascariensis/leucocephalus*)
Up to 20 a day at Kithulgala and Sinharaja

175. Jerdon's Leafbird *Chloropsis jerdoni* (Formerly Conspecific with **Blue-winged Leafbird** *C. cochinchinensis*)
One and two at Kithulgala, four at Yala and two at Nilgala

176. Gold-fronted Leafbird *Chloropsis aurifrons*
One at Sinharaja was the only record

177. Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia*
Up to six on eight days

178. Indian Blue Robin *Luscinia brunnea*
Two at Horton Plains proved difficult to see although one observer had one sitting out in the open for a while but not long enough to get others on it. Two were heard plus flight views of another in the Amaya Hills on the last day also proved unsatisfactory

179. White-rumped Shama *Copsychus malabaricus*
Singles at Tasks and Yala

180. Oriental Magpie Robin *Copsychus saularis*
Up to ten seen daily

181. Pied Bushchat *Saxicola caprata atratus*
This race only occurs in the highlands of Sri Lanka where five were seen on the Horton Plains

182. Indian Robin *Saxicoloides fulicatus*
Five at Udawalawe were followed by up to ten on another seven days in the lowlands

183. Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush *Myiophoneus blighi* (E)
A female was seen in poor light but at very close to Nuwara Eliya therefore avoiding a very early start the next morning to Horton Plains where in fact another was heard

184. Spot-winged Thrush *Zosterops spiloptera*
Three, four and a single in Sinharaja

185. Pied Thrush *Zosterops wardii*
Two males in Victoria Park, Nuwara Eliya, gave close views

186. Indian Blackbird *Turdus simillimus*
Two at Horton Plains and 1 at Victoria Park

187. Sri Lanka Bush Warbler *Elaphrornis palliseri* (E)
Two on Horton Plains were only seen by a few

188. Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*
Between one and six on four dates in the lowlands and a single on the Horton Plains

189. Grey-breasted Prinia *Prinia hodgsonii*
Six at Udawalawe, a single at Tissa, two at Yala and four at Nilgala

190. Plain Prinia *Prinia inornata insularis*
Only seen in the lowlands on three days with a maximum of seven at Udawalawe

191. Ashy Prinia *Prinia socialis brevicauda*
The same applies as for the previous species with a maximum of four

192. Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius*
Up to four a day on most days

193. Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*
Two at Udawalawe and three in Victoria Park

194. Indian Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus meridionalis* (Clamorous Reed Warbler)
Two at Tissa were the only record

195. Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata*
Only seen at Horton Plains at the Arrenga pool feeding low in the thickets.

196. Bight Green Warbler *Phylloscopus nitidus* (Often considered race of **Greenish Warbler** *P. trochiloides*)
Only seen in the forested areas of the South-west in ones and two on a daily basis.

197. Large-billed Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus magnirostris*
Between one and six on a daily basis in the SW forested areas and singles at Nilgala and Horton Plains

198. Tickell's Blue Flycatcher *Cyornis tickelliae jerdoni*
Two a day at Kithulgala and singles at Nilgala on both dates

199. Dull Blue Flycatcher *Eumyias sordidus* (E)
Two up at Horton Plains gave stunning views

200. Brown-breasted Flycatcher *Muscicapa muttui*
Between two and five at Kithulgala and two at Sinharaja

201. Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica*
A single at Kithulgala on two dates, two at Sinharaja and a single at Tasks

202. Kashmir Flycatcher *Ficedula subruba*
A single male in Victoria Park gave close and prolonged views even if it was on the side of a rubbish tip

203. Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher *Culicapa ceylonensis*

Three on at Surrey Estate and Nilgala followed by three at the latter site the next day

204. White-browed Fantail *Rhipidura aureola*

A single at Tasks was followed by up to three on four dates at Yala, Nilgala and Horton Plains

205. Black-naped Monarch *Hypothymis azurea*

Up to six in the Kelani and Sinharaja Forests, a single at Yala and up to three at Nilgala and Horton Plains

206. Asian Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi*

Singles on six dates, two on one day and four one day in Sinharaja including long-tailed males in both white and orange phases, some of which gave just stunning views and as always are one of the birds of the trip

207. Brown-capped Babbler *Pellorneum fuscicapillus* (E)

Two at Sinharaja gave good views for such a difficult species

208. Sri Lanka Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus (schisticeps) melanurus* (E) (Formally regarded as conspecific with **Indian Scimitar Babbler** *P.s.horsfieldii*)

Twice heard before two were seen at Sinharaja, four seen on Horton Plains and one heard and another seen in the Amaya Hills

209. Dark-fronted Babbler *Rhopocichla atriceps*

Four at Kithulgala, ten at Sinharaja and a dozen or more at Horton Plains

210. Yellow-eyed Babbler *Chrysomma sinense*

A single at Udawalawe was followed by two and a single at Yala

211. Orange-billed Babbler *Turdoides rufescens* (E)

Only seen in Kelani Forest and Sinharaja with a maximum of 60 in one day at the latter site. Said to be the “steering wheel” of bird-flocks and it was then when the biggest numbers were noted. There were another four dates with between ten and 30

212. Yellow-billed Babbler *Turdoides affinis*

Much more common than the previous species and found in all habitats and generally not counted

213. Ashy-headed Laughingthrush *Garrulax cinereifrons* (E)

Difficult species to get a good view of as they feed in the thickest undergrowth available and also are often associated with the bird-flocks when one is distracted. However a couple turned out on to the path where everybody was able to get excellent views. Six were seen on just one of the days in Sinharaja

214. Great Tit *Parus major*

Three at the Surrey Estate were followed by eight at Nilgala and two in the Amaya Hills

215. Velvet-fronted Nuthatch *Sitta frontalis*

Three at Sinharaja were followed by up to six at Nilgala and Horton Plains

216. Purple-rumped Sunbird *Leptocoma zeylonica*

Anything up to dozen a day in all areas

217. Loten's Sunbird *Cinnyris lotenius*

One or two on seven dates

218. Purple Sunbird *Cinnyris asiaticus*

Up to four a day in the lowlands

219. Thick-billed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum agile*

One at Nilgala was followed by two there the next day

- 220. Legge's Flowerpecker** *Dicaeum vincens* (E)
Two at Kithulgala were followed by three and six at Sinharaja
- 221. Pale-billed Flowerpecker** *Dicaeum erythrorhynchos*
One or two on many days and eight on one day in Sinharaja
- 222. Oriental White-eye** *Zosterops palprobosus*
Between one and four on five dates
- 223. Sri Lanka White-eye** *Zosterops ceylonensis* (E)
Thirty on Horton Plains
- 224. Black-hooded Oriole** *Oriolus xanthornus*
One or two on seven dates
- 225. Brown Shrike** *Lanius cristatus*
Seen daily with a maximum of eight one day in Yala
- 226. Ashy Drongo** *Dicrurus leucophaeus*
Singles at Yala on two dates
- 227. White-bellied Drongo** *Dicrurus caerulescens*
Between one and ten on ten dates
- 228. Sri Lanka Crested Drongo** *Dicrurus lophorinus* (E) (formerly considered conspecific with **Greater Racket-tailed Drongo** *D. paradiseus*)
Between one and three on four dates in Kithulgala and Sinharaja
- 229. Greater Racket-tailed Drongo** *Dicrurus paradiseus ceylonensis*
A single of this stunning bird with a full tail with rackets was seen at Nilgala
- 230. Ashy Woodswallow** *Artamus fuscus*
Two at Yala were followed by two on the last day on the road back to the coast
- 231. Sri Lanka Blue Magpie** *Urocissa ornata* (E)
Five in Sinharaja were followed by a single there the next day
- 232. House Crow** *Corvus splendens*
Present in large numbers near all habitation
- 234. Indian Jungle Crow** *Corvus (macrorhynchos) culminatus* (Formally Large-billed Crow)
Present in all areas
- 235. White-faced Starling** *Sturnia albofrontata* (E)
This highly scarce endemic was encountered on three consecutive days at Sinharaja with counts of between one and nine. Good views were had on the last morning there
- 236. Brahminy Myna** *Temenuchus pagodarum* (Brahminy Starling)
Six at Yala were followed by four there the next day
- 237. Rosy Starling** *Sturnus roseus* (Rose-coloured Starling/Pastor)
A flock probably totalling 1000 was noted at Udawalawe after which just two flocks of 25 and eight were seen at Yala
- 238. Common Myna** *Acridotheres tristis*
Commonly encountered particularly near human habitation and in agricultural fields
- 239. Sri Lanka Myna** *Gracula ptilogenys* (E)

Five birds were seen on two consecutive days in Sinharaja

240. Lesser Hill Myna *Gracula indica* (formerly Conspecific with **Hill Myna** *G. religiosa*)

Endemic to Sri Lanka and the Western Ghats. Two and three at Kihulgala on two dates, two at Nilgala, 13 in Kandy and another four in the Amaya Hills

241. House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Present

242. Baya Weaver *Ploceus philippinus*

Six at Udawalawe and four at Yala were the only records

243. Indian Silverbill *Euodice malabarica*

Two only at Udawalawe

244. White-rumped Munia *Lonchura striata*

A single at Kithulgala, two at Yala and 13 at Nilgala

245. Scaly-breasted Munia *Lonchura punctulata*

Up to 30 on seven dates

246. Black-headed Munia *Lonchura malacca* (**Tricoloured Munia** in Rasmussen)

Fifty at Udawalawe, two on two days at Yala, 25 and a single at Nilgala

MAMMALS

1. Palm Squirrel *Funambulus palmarum*

Common throughout

2. Giant Squirrel *Ratyfa macroura*

Seen regularly with counts of up to six a day

3. Layard's Squirrel *Funambulus layardi* (E)

One or two on three days

4. Black-naped Hare *Lepus nigricollis*

Between two and five a day in Yala

5. Toque Macaque *Macaca sinica* (E)

Small numbers often in urban areas

6. Grey Langur *Semnopithecus priam*

Seen commonly in Yala

7. Purple-faced Leaf Monkey *Trachypithecus vetulus*

Four seen in Kithulgala are of a different sub species than those seen in Sinharaja, the latter of which are black with grey rumps as opposed to the grey animals of the lowlands. Four, of the highland race *moticola* known as "Bear Monkey" were seen on the Horton Plains. These are a much heftier and hairier animal and more able to cope with the cold temperatures

8. Leopard *Panthera pardus kotiya*

A single female was seen briefly but well at Yala one late afternoon whilst the following morning an adult male sat out of a rocky outcrop for about five minutes before giving a full stretch and wandering off into the jungle. The highlight of the whole trip for some. See front cover of this report

9. Brown Mongoose *Herpestes brachurus*

A single at Kithulgala

10. Ruddy Mongoose *Herpestes smithii*

Commonly encountered

11. Golden Jackal *Canis aureus*

Only seen in small numbers at Bundala and Yala

12. Sloth Bear *Melursus ursinus*

One was seen badly by one observer one afternoon in Yala whilst the next evening excellent and fairly prolonged views of a single foraging and rolling over in the grass were enjoyed by all

13. Asian Elephant *Elephas maximus maximus*

Particularly common at Udawalawe where we were charged by a grumpy bull and several, including a couple of Tuskers, were seen at Yala.

14. Wild Water Buffalo *Bubalus arnee*

Seen at Yala

15. Spotted Deer *Axis axis*

One at Udawalawe and common at Yala

16. Sambar *Cervus unicolor*

Two at Sinharaja, one and three at Yala and a single “tame” individual on Horton Plains

17. Wild Boar *Sus scrofa*

Common in Yala

18. Giant Fruit Bat *Pteropus giganteus*

Seen in good numbers at several places but many thousands in the Botanical gardens in Kandy takes some beating

BUTTERFLIES

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Blue Mormon <i>Papilio polmnestor parinda</i> | 25. Common Tiger <i>Danaus genutia</i> |
| 2. Common Mormon <i>Papilio polytes romulus</i> | 26. Dark Blue Tiger <i>Tirumala septentrionis</i> |
| 3. Lime Butterfly <i>Papilio demoleus</i> | 27. Glassy Tiger <i>Parantica aglea</i> |
| 4. Common Rose <i>Pachliopta aristolochiae</i> | 28. Plum Judy <i>Abisara echerius</i> |
| 5. Crimson Rose <i>Pachliopta hector</i> | 29. Red-spot Duke <i>Dophla evelina</i> |
| 6. Common Birdwing <i>Troides darsius</i> | 30. Great Orange-Tip <i>Hebomoia glaucippe</i> |
| 7. Tailed Jay <i>Graphium agamemnon</i> | 31. Leopard <i>Phalanta phalantha</i> |
| 8. Psyche <i>Leptosia nina</i> | 32. Banded Peacock <i>Papilio crino</i> |
| 9. Lemon Emigrant <i>Catopsilia pmona</i> | 33. Great Eggfly <i>Hypolimnas bolina</i> |
| 10. Three-spot Grass Yellow <i>Eurema blanda</i> | |
| 11. Common Jezebel <i>Delias eucharis</i> | |
| 12. Clipper <i>Parthenos sylvia cyaneus</i> | |
| 13. Common Sailor <i>Neptis hylas</i> | |
| 14. Danaid Eggfly <i>Hypolimna misippus</i> | |
| 15. Grey Pansy <i>Junonia atlites</i> | |
| 16. Chocolate Soldier <i>Junonia iphita</i> | |
| 17. White Four-ring <i>Ypthima ceylonica</i> | |
| 18. Nigger <i>Orsotriaena medus</i> | |
| 19. Glade-eye Bushbrown <i>Nissanga patnia</i> | |
| 20. Common Palmfly <i>Elymnia hypermnestra</i> | |
| 21. Ceylon Tree Nymph <i>Idea iasonia</i> | |
| 22. Common Indian Crow <i>Euploea core</i> | |
| 23. Great Crow <i>Euploea phaenareta</i> | |
| 24. Plain Tiger <i>Danius chrysippus</i> | |

REPTILES

1. Marsh Crocodile (Mugger) *Crocodylus palustris*
2. Land Monitor *Varanus bengalensis*
3. Water Monitor *Varanus salvator*
4. Common Garden Lizard *Calotes versicolor*
5. Green Garden Lizard *Calotes calotes*
6. Sri Lanka Kangaroo Lizard *Otocryptis wiegmanni*
7. Fan-throated Lizard *Sitana ponticeriana*
8. Four-clawed Gecko *Gehyra mutilata*
9. Asian House Gecko *Hemidactylus frenatus*
10. Kandyan Day Gecko *Knemaspis kandianus*
11. Flapshell Terrapin *Lissemys punctata*
12. Common Skink *Mabuia carinata*
13. Green Vine Snake *Ahaetulla nasuta*
14. Common Bronzeback Tree Snake *Dendrelaphis tristis*
15. Common Rat Snake *Ptyas mucosa*

Acknowledgments

This, our eleventh tour, was our second visit to Sri Lanka. As two years ago the holiday was put together with the help of Amila Salgado who has now formed his own company Birdwing Nature Holidays. As usual he did a splendid job paying great attention to detail in relation to our accommodation, transport and food requirements etc.

As our guide for the two weeks his enthusiasm and great humour made for a 'fun-filled' tour as well as achieving a long list of birds and other fauna. His knowledge of the flora and fauna of the island is unlikely to be surpassed and we all benefited from it.

I would like to thank him again for a wonderful trip and also to wish him luck with his new company which I know will grow from strength to strength.

My thanks also go to the participants of the trip for as usual there would be no holiday without you. I also would like to express special thanks for our repeaters from Sri Lanka Trip 2004, Fran Boreham, Graham Crick & Sheila Seed & for their great company and contributing to the success of the holiday. It was a great pleasure to travel with you all.

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John
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