

Sri Lanka: 31 Jan – 14 Feb, 2008 – Absolute Birding

Participants: Peter Nickless (organiser), Roger Dodds, Graham Mant, Graham Jones & Amila Salgado (Local ground agent, guide and author of this report).



Sri Lanka Blue Magpie

Serendib Scops Owl

Chestnut-backed Owlet

Red-faced Malkoha

"The island of Sri Lanka is a small universe; it contains as many variations of culture, scenery and climate as some countries a dozen times its size....If you are interested in people, history, nature and art – the things that really matter – you may find, as I have, that a lifetime is not enough"
- Sir Arthur C. Clarke

In the Forward to *The Colour of Serendipity* by Nishantha Gunawardena, 2007.

Abstract.

Four birders from England undertook a 15-day birding holiday in Sri Lanka from 31 Jan – 14 February, 2008, of which ground arrangements and bird guiding were done by me. We bagged a whopping 252 species of birds including all 33 endemics currently recognised, additional 42 endemic to South Asia and 9 of the 15 resident nocturnal birds, of which 7 were Owls. Special birding highlight was seeing a pair of the newly rediscovered breeding resident; Marshall's Iora at Lunugamwehera. We also had 2 sightings of Leopard at the Yala National Park, which included a prolonged sighting of a male resting on a rock. Another noteworthy non-birding highlight, at least for the author was thrashing 2 Brits at Scrabble at Sinharaja in a low-scoring thriller. This report details our birding hits and misses, mainly.

Keywords: Sri Lanka, Birding, Endemics, Owling, Cricket, Duckworth & Lewis & Scrabble.

Itinerary at a glance

Day 01	31 Jan	Arrival/Kithulgala
Day 02	1 Feb	Kithulgala
Day 03	2 Feb	Kithulgala/Sinharaja
Day 04	3 Feb	Sinharaja
Day 05	4 Feb	Sinharaja
Day 06	5 Feb	Udawalawe/Local Birding
Day 07	6 Feb	Tissamaharama/Local Birding
Day 08	7 Feb	Bundala & Yala National Parks
Day 09	8 Feb	Local birding /Yala National Park
Day 10	9 Feb	Tissamaharama/Nuwara Eliya /Hakgala
Day 11	10 Feb	Hakgala/Victoria Park/Local Birding
Day 12	11 Feb	Nuwara Eliya/Kandy
Day 13	12 Feb	Kandy/Kurunegala/Chilaw
Day 14	13 Feb	Puttlam /Kalpitiya/Katunayake
Day 15	14 Feb	Departure.



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Preamble

Going after birding targets in a limited period for me has always been like a tight run chase in a one day cricket match. With the number of endemics going up exponentially from 23 to 33 in the last 4 years or so and the number of Indian subcontinent endemic 'wants' too increasing significantly and one crucial variable; the number of days visiting birders devote to their holidays remaining a constant of around two weeks, it seems the 'required rate' has gone up before even a ball is faced by a bizarre twist of [Duckworth & Lewis](#). This is further exacerbated by the vagaries of tropical weather, in a world of global climatic destabilization resulting in 'no plays' with real 'Duckworth-&-Lewis' scenarios forcing us to chase the targets in reduced number of days.

In my humble opinion, this is when a sound game plan and leadership matter. On this holiday the first 5 nights were spent in the wet zone; around the steamy lowland rain forests in search of endemics and other Indian sub continent specialties. Needless to say this is the most crucial passage of play – the real [power play](#) period in strict cricketing terms.

There was a time when birding tour operators adopted a catchy sounding approach of 'saving the best for the last' by pushing the visits to these vital endemic hotspots towards the end of the holiday. In my opinion you are more likely to end 'well short of the target' with this approach, especially if bad weather rules out play at crucial junctures. Another issue is this leaves no time to execute those important plans Bs. Also in my opinion, most birders are at their enthusiastic best at early stages of their holiday and are more likely to show a 'go slow approach' towards the end of the holidays. So, it makes all the sense to strike while the iron is hot.

Coming back to Sri Lanka, the 2007/2008 North West monsoon, which brings rain to the entire country was slightly delayed with hardly any rain in the usually-rainy November in 2007. This resulted in a wetter-than-usual December in 2007 with floods reported in certain areas in Sri Lanka; not hit by floods for years. It also spilled over to early part of January in the wet zone areas, where we look for the endemics. So aware of all these ground realities and supported by a terrific team of players; with plenty of fire in the belly, my approach was to go firing in all cylinders and exploit the 'power plays' to good effect. This explosive start worked spectacularly well and we reached our 'target' with considerable ease as you will read in the rest of the report.

Daily diary

Day 01 31 Jan. My team who flew in Qatar Airways arrived at a civilized hour of 7.15 a.m. and after meeting them, a 5-minute detour saw us making an unscheduled stop at a garden at Katunayake to see a pair of Brown Hawk Owls in a day roost, which I stumbled this morning by a stroke of luck while making good use of my early arrival at the area. After enjoying fine views of a reasonably tolerate pair of these owls, we commenced our drive to the lush lowlands of Kithulgala. By the way, this owl wasn't a new bird to my team, a fact I came to realise increasingly during the course of the tour as they have been around a few places.

After enjoying our first of the many cups of Ceylon tea en route and also bagging a few common garden birds, we soon recommenced our journey. I was determined not to spend too much time over wayside birds, as we would be seeing these often during the course of the tour. Even with such rigorous discipline, our journey to the first accommodation saw us raking in no less than 6 raptor species, which included Black Eagle, Crested Serpent Eagle and the only Rufous-bellied Hawk Eagle of the trip. We reached our accommodation; Sisira's Lodge before noon, which gave us time for a shower before enjoying our first Sri Lankan rice and curry lunch, which was something eagerly anticipated by all. A thing we rarely anticipated was meeting two English birders; Ruth and Brad from Manchester who by a strange co-incidence had our identical itinerary for the first 13 days! They were guided by Jaya; one of my birding buddies and we often bumped into each other to share our hits and misses during the course of the trip.

After a brief post lunch rest, we did a stroll around the bird-rich hotel gardens seeing our first endemics of the trip in the form of Sri Lanka Junglefowl, Sri Lanka Green Pigeon, Black-capped Bulbul and Orange-billed Babbler. Placing ourselves strategically in a shady spot facing a few leafless trees at the edge of the Kelani River saw us being treated to fine views of the Green Imperial Pigeon, Brown-headed Barbet, Orange Minivet, Square-tailed Black Bulbul, Black-rumped Flameback, Black-hooded Oriole & the handsome



endemic; Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot. As the afternoon wore on, we moved up towards the Police station area, which proved fruitful with a steady flow of goodies including Indian Swiftlet, Chestnut-headed Bee-eater, Sri Lanka Swallow, Lesser Hill Myna & Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike showing up for us. Receiving some 'real-time ground intelligence' from an informant, we made a beeline to a nearby spot to enjoy cracking scope views of a pair of endemic Chestnut-backed Owlets. Moving back to the police station patch soon after, saw us adding Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill, Yellow-fronted Barbet and Layard's Parakeet to our growing tally of endemics.

As the dusk descended we reached the Kithulgala Forest to look for the newly discovered avian jewel; Serendib Scops Owl and were soon joined by Jaya' team at the site. To cut a long story short, the two guides did find the Owl but unfortunately it flew off, before we could show to our discerning visitors, which was excruciating! For all intents and purposes, it felt like getting run out just short of a sublime century. Luckily, my team mates didn't suffer from JBS - 'Jurong Bird-park Syndrome' and took the thrills and spills of the experience in good spirit. Hoping to try later, we retreated to our accommodation for drinks, dinner & checklist to end a high-scoring day 01.



Sri Lanka Junglefowl

Brown Hawk Owl

Indian Pitta

Spot-winged Thrush

Highlights: Black Eagle, Rufous-bellied Hawk Eagle, Crested Serpent Eagle, Oriental Honey Buzzard, Shikra, Brahminy Kite, **Sri Lanka Junglefowl**, Emerald Dove, **Sri Lanka Green Pigeon**, Green Imperial Pigeon, **Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot**, **Layard's Parakeet**, **Chestnut-backed Owlet**, Brown Hawk Owl, Blue-tailed Bee-eater, Chestnut-headed Bee-eater, **Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill**, **Yellow-fronted Barbet**, Brown-headed Barbet, **Sri Lanka Swallow**, Orange Minivet, Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike, **Black-capped Bulbul**, Square-tailed Black Bulbul, Asian Paradise Flycatcher, **Orange-billed Babbler**, Yellow-billed Babbler, Purple-rumped Sunbird, Pale-billed Flowerpecker, Oriental White-eye, Black-hooded Oriole, Brown Shrike, White-bellied Drongo, Ashy Woodswallow, Indian Jungle Crow, Indian Swiftlet & Lesser Hill Myna. Plus: Serendib Scops Owl (only seen by the guide). Day's tally: 56

Day 02 1 Feb Early tea before prebreakfast birding had a no show of two of our key players. We later learnt that their alarm clock had not worked. By the time we knew this, those present had already had their fills of two terrestrial delights in the form of Spot-winged Thrush and a stunning Indian Pitta. After my 'Spot-winged Thrush and Indian Pitta' wake up call, the absentees dragged themselves to draw level with us soon. Reunited and happy, we enjoyed cracking views of the diminutive Black-backed Dwarf Kingfisher, which was followed by Tickell's Blue Flycatcher, Brown-breasted Flycatcher & Stork-billed Kingfisher.

A 'pretty deer' call from the neighbouring tea patch betrayed the presence of another key suspect; Brown-capped Babbler and after having teased us enough inside the carpet of tea bushes, it disappeared out of radar completely. After a while, Roger picked them up a few metres away when they materialised at the edge of the tea bushes and it soon appeared out to feed in the open ground looking as if it had been transformed into a different bird, offering excellent views. Our post breakfast watch near the police station produced scope views of the only Banded Bay Cuckoo of the trip followed by another endemic; Sri Lanka Small Barbet.

Soon, we reached the Kithulgala Forest Reserve across the river for more endemics. Pausing at my Sri Lanka Spurfowl site deep inside the forest, our efforts met with half success when only the two Grahams succeeded in focusing their binocs when 3 individuals of this elusive terrestrial endemic showed up briefly. Penetrating deeper into the forest, we stumbled two more endemics; Sri Lanka Scimitar Babbler and Sri



Lanka Crested Drongo while the Coucal continued to elude us at its regular sites. After bagging a few more goodies such as Gold-fronted Leafbird, Yellow-browed Bulbul, Black-naped Monarch & Alexandrine Parakeet, we broke for half time.

A longer post-lunch rest was what we needed to recharge our batteries and our afternoon session was limited to some arm-chair birding in the hotel gardens, which didn't add anything new. Nearer to dusk, we reached the forest again to look for the Serendib Scops Owl. Unfortunately no luck today too and we retreated to our accommodation to end an enjoyable Day 2.

Highlights: **Sri Lanka Spurfowl**, Banded Bay Cuckoo, Shikra, Stork-billed Kingfisher, Black-backed Dwarf Kingfisher, **Sri Lanka Small Barbet**, Indian Pitta, Gold-fronted Leafbird, **Spot-winged Thrush**, Tickell's Blue Flycatcher, Brown-breasted Flycatcher, Asian Brown Flycatcher, Black-naped Monarch, Yellow-browed Bulbul, White-browed Fantail, **Sri Lanka Scimitar Babbler**, Asian Paradise Flycatcher, **Brown-capped Babbler**, Loten's Sunbird, **Sri Lanka Crested Drongo** & White-rumped Munia. Day's tally: 55

Day 03 2 Feb One team member who got late due to the alarm trouble yesterday made a polite confession that he hadn't seen the colours of those two 'wake up call birds'. Apparently all what he had seen had been grey blobs as his eyes were still in the wake up phase! 'Not a problem sir!' & within minutes I made those fuzzy grey memories realise into vivid forms. Crested Goshawk, Alexandrine Parakeet and Crested Treeswift all seen in flight were the only prebreakfast highlights and after a filling breakfast, we drove on to Sinharaja 'World Heritage' rain forest where more endemics and specialties awaited us and reached our accommodation for three nights; Martin's Simple Lodge. After lunch and a brief rest, we undertook our first walk to Sinharaja along the former logging tracks, joined by our mandatory local guide; Sena. Our walk in this endemic hotspot got off to a promising start with a good-looking male Legge's Flowerpecker showing up well. This was followed by a Sri Lanka Blue Magpie, which caught a tree-snake as we trained our binocs on it, killing it instantly by tearing the head apart before beginning to devour on the succulent interiors; demonstrating the finest of Magpie etiquettes.

Along the way, we had what looked like a tail-end of a bird flock with a trailing Lesser Yellownappe to bear witness. Filtering through the various forest calls, I picked up one of the wanted Ashy-headed Laughingthrush and soon located a flock moving in the undergrowth for everybody. A flock of Dark-fronted Babbler operating in silence followed next. We then reached the virgin interiors to my Sri Lanka Scaly Thrush site. In December 2007 a rendition of a high pitched thrush-like call that I reinvented worked wonders to call it in and after repeating it here, I got a response almost immediately. Having alerted its direction we waited patiently as it closed in looking for the source. Three minutes of heated vocal exchanges and some deft work by Graham-eagle-eye-Jones saw us zeroing in on our high-value target in a thrilling drama.

Heading back, we paused in a site of the Serendib Scops Owl. While waiting for its time zone, a bird flying overhead caught our attention and it proved to be the majestic Brown-backed Needletail, which appeared to own the air. As we were enjoying its low powerful flights, a much larger bird in flight came interfering our scanning zone and proved to be the secretive Malayan Night-Heron. After this consolation tick, I decided to abandon the search for the owl at this spot in favour of another. This proved a very good decision as minutes after arriving at my site no. 2, I picked up a call of our prime suspect from the forest patch up the trail. Ten minutes more of intense scanning to find the source of its ventriloquial call and we were all enjoying cracking views of a Serendib Scops Owl, which had eluded the bird watchers until 2001 and us for a little over 2 days! Needless to say it was justifiably rated as the bird of the trip. Dinner was preceded by a few pints needed to replenish the lost liquids.

Highlights: Crested Goshawk, Alexandrine Parakeet, **Serendib Scops Owl**, Crested Treeswift, Brown-backed Needletail, Lesser Yellownappe, **Sri Lanka Scaly Thrush**, Bright Green Warbler, Dark-fronted Babbler, **Ashy-headed Laughingthrush**, **Legge's Flowerpecker**, **Sri Lanka Blue Magpie**, **Sri Lanka Myna**, Scaly-breasted Munia & Malayan Night Heron. Day's tally: 70

Day 04 3 Feb We enjoyed early tea with 4 Sri Lanka Blue Magpies, which laid siege to the open-sided restaurant area at Martin's to make an early meal of the insects found under lamps. A prebreakfast vigil for Sri Lanka Spurfowl down Martin's only yielded views for Graham J and me but a consolation came when a male Indian Blue Robin came into our scanning zone. As the light improved, cracking views were had of a pair of Besra in flight in addition to now familiar set of rain forest specials. After a big breakfast, we entered the forest on a longer walk. Our main objective was to find a bird flock, which would give a good chance to nab those elusive suspects.



However, we didn't come across the kind of flock we needed early in our walk and undeterred, I decided to reach a nest site of the Green-billed Coucal that I discovered in the deep forest last month. The walk to the nest site fell through my Scaly Thrush spot, and it was too tempting not to say hello to it, which was good enough to send one right up to a low branch ahead of our path to offer brilliant scope views. The Coucal's nest was not externally diagnosable as it was hidden inside a thicket of Rattan. A 10 minute vigil near it offered a fleeting glimpse of one of the nesting birds; which emerged out to show up for three of us before quickly melting away into the chaos of rain forest vegetation. Meanwhile Sena placing himself strategically on the other side of the thicket alerted us minutes later that he had got one up a tall tree. We quickly reached his spot to get neck-twisting views of it before it too disappeared in familiar fashion. Retreating to our earlier position to fetch our gear we had temporarily abandoned, we had our third looks of this scarce endemic when one of them showed up well in the under-storey.



Legge's Flowerpecker



our low-scoring thriller



Sri Lanka Scaly Thrush

No flocks yet. Anyway this wasn't a problem for Sena who found us the third most regular bird occurring in Sinharaja's bird flocks with a 61% presence; Malabar Trogon – a male operating under its own steam near the research camp. Heading back towards Martin's for lunch, our journey was delayed considerably when we got a full-blown bird flock, which had the Red-faced Malkoha that we badly needed followed by, some Sri Lanka White-eyes; a highland special recorded at Sinharaja in small numbers & White-faced Starling, which gave fly over views. A leisurely late afternoon session followed next enjoying arm-chair birding from the comforts of Martin's open-sided restaurant and viewing area facing the virgin jungle. A brief dusk vigil at a nearby patch for the Sri Lanka Frogmouth was met with half a success; getting a flight view only.

Drinks, checklist and dinner were followed by what is for me the top non-birding highlight of the trip; a high-browed game of scrabble, which saw me thrashing two Brits at Martin's, including an Oxford-educated scholar in a low-scoring thriller; 210 – 170 – 133. Howzzat?

Highlights: Besra, **Sri Lanka Spurfowl**, **Red-faced Malkoha**, **Green-billed Coucal**, Malabar Trogon, **Sri Lanka Scaly Thrush**, **Spot-winged Thrush**, Large-billed Leaf warbler, **Sri Lanka White-eye & White-faced Starling**. Day's tally: 47

Day 05 4 Feb This was the additional day in Sinharaja to clean up any remaining targets and to improve the views of any half ticks. A pre-dawn operation saw us getting cracking views of the missing Sri Lanka Frogmouth at low down. Soon, at least three Chestnut-winged Crested Cuckoos started calling in their respective territories and one of these flew away limiting our views to a silhouette. A thrush ahead of the trail caught my attention and upon inspection proved to be another Sri Lanka Scaly Thrush, which was our third sighting of this scarce endemic. A brief vigil at the entrance area after breakfast saw us getting scope views of the hoped-for Sri Lanka Myna and White-faced Starling. All lowland endemics & specialty wants bagged saving the newly spilt endemic; Crimson-backed Flameback; which occurs in several other sites visited, a decision was passed on to me at 8.30 a.m., declaring the rest of the day a holiday! The fact that it was the Sri Lanka's Independence Day commemorating 60 years of Independence from the British colonial rule didn't have any reason whatsoever for this. The luxuries of the public holiday that ensued saw a sharp increase in the extras bill for some and bagging a new bird in the form of a dark-morph Booted Eagle.



A vocal Sri Lanka Spurfowl below Martin's at mid morning was hard to resist for some of the leisure tourists and a 10-minute vigil on the tract down our accommodation yielded Roger his fill of a male when he deftly picked one up while scanning the calling zone across the stream. The same bird gave Peter a 'fleeting rear end view'; a polite phrase for a dip. The extremely sharp-eyed Peter was unlucky again when Graham J and I scored a female in a blind side try. It rained heavily in the late afternoon, which continued until 8.00 p.m. Swapping stories later with Jaya we learnt that they'd missed the Serendib Scops Owl today due to bad weather. Drinks, Checklist and Dinner marked the end of a relaxing day.

Highlights: Sri Lanka Frogmouth, Booted Eagle, **Sri Lanka Spurfowl**, Chestnut-winged Crested Cuckoo, **Sri Lanka Scaly Thrush**, **White-faced Starling** & **Sri Lanka Myna**. Day's tally: 37



Malabar Pied Hornbill



Udawalawe Reservoir



Pied Kingfisher

Day 06 5 Feb An early vigil near Martin's for Sri Lanka Spurfowl for Peter produced first a female, followed by a male in the exact scanning zone that I specified to have the binocs pre-focused to give a climactic end to Sinharaja. A 3 ½ hour drive after breakfast saw us reaching the dry plains of Udawalawe and to our cosy overnight accommodation; Safari Village Hotel. The Udawalawe National Park was closed down two weeks ago due to some local considerations (It has been re-opened effective, 1 March, 2008) but that didn't matter to me as I had faith in my local patches to get the job done. For birders what matters at the end of the day is seeing their target birds not site-seeing, although I admit it would have been nice to have visited the park. With this positive thinking, we embarked on our first session in the dry lowlands after lunch.

Scanning some Swallow flocks we picked up the migrant Red-rumped Swallows, soon to be followed with Jerdon's Bushlark and Paddyfield Pipit. Our first views of Black-shouldered Kite, White-bellied Sea Eagle, Spot-billed Pelican, Whiskered Tern, Darter and Great Cormorant were had at a wetland patch while the dry land closer to us held Yellow-wattle Lapwing, Ashy-crowned Sparrow-lark, Indian Robin, Indian Roller & the migrant; Blyth's Pipit. This session also saw us cleaning up the Prinias and Babblers supplemented by fine scope views of Jerdon's Leafbird, Orange-breasted Green Pigeon, Green Bee-eater and Coppersmith Barbet.

A dusk vigil for Indian Nightjar was a success on the way to our accommodation. We were the only guests in the hotel with the park's closure prompting other groups to reroute their itineraries to other areas. Having told to bring the binocs for dinner, I delivered a birding course in between our 4-course Chinese dinner by spot-lighting an Indian Scops Owl in the hotel gardens. Later today I learnt from Jaya that they had finally nailed the Serendib Scops Owl at a patch close to Sinharaja after a mid-tour amendment to stay back one more night there.

Highlights: **Sri Lanka Spurfowl**, Great Cormorant, Darter, Spot-billed Pelican, Yellow-wattled Lapwing, Black-shouldered Kite, White-bellied Sea Eagle, Indian Peafowl, Whiskered Tern, Orange-breasted Green Pigeon, Indian Scops Owl, Indian Nightjar, Green Bee-eater, Jerdon's Bushlark, Ashy-crowned Sparrow-lark, Red-rumped Swallow, Paddyfield Pipit, Blyth's Pipit, Forest Wagtail, White-browed Bulbul, Jerdon's Leafbird, Indian Robin, Coppersmith Barbet, Indian Roller, Grey-breasted Prinia, Plain Prinia, Ashy Prinia, Jungle Prinia, Blyth's Reed Warbler, Tawny-bellied Babbler, Yellow-eyed Babbler & Purple Sunbird. Day's tally: 88

Day 07 6 Feb A Blue-faced Malkoha that Peter found in the hotel gardens was our pre-breakfast highlight and after a filling breakfast, we headed off to the bird rich interiors of Tissamaharama (Tissamaharamarama according to some). A leg-stretch near a wetland en route at Tanamalwila was fulfilling with a good diversity comprising of Pheasant-tailed Jacana in full breeding regalia, Pintail Snipe, Pacific Golden Plover, Purple



Swamphen, Black-winged Stilt, Whiskered Tern, Black-tailed Godwit, Little Stint, Lesser Sand Plover, Marsh Sandpiper & Painted Stork adding to our burgeoning list. A calling Indian Pygmy Woodpecker close by drew our attention as did a pair of the wanted Sri Lanka Woodshrikes, which were seen well. A cursory glance at another wetland after resuming our journey yielded Cotton Pygmy-goose, Eurasian Spoonbill, Gull-billed Tern, Ruff & Garganey.



Our first Leopard at the Yala National Park, 7 Feb, 2007

Our first views of Common Iora, White-rumped Shama & Grey Tit were had in another leg stretch en route before finally reaching our cosy retreat for three nights; Priyankara Hotel, Tissa. After a super lunch and a compulsory midday break in the air-con comforts, we explored the Deberawewa Tank - part of the popular birding circuit. Special highlight was a stunning male White-naped Woodpecker that we were expecting to see later this afternoon. It spent a long time probing a dead branch offering cracking scope views. It was a fortuitous find for us as sightings at the regular site we were hoping to see it have died down due to habitat disturbance; which explained why some birders we met had dipped it. Our wetland walk produced Indian Reed Warbler, Tri-coloured Munia & Black Bittern while a large roost colony of Giant Fruit Bats was a non-birding special. Drinks, checklist and dinner marked the end of a high-scoring day.

Highlights: Black Bittern, Painted Stork, Black-headed Ibis, Eurasian Spoonbill, Lesser Sand Plover, Pheasant-tailed Jacana, Black-winged Stilt, Pacific Golden Plover, Red-wattled Lapwing, Little Stint, Ruff, Pintail Snipe, Black-tailed Godwit, Marsh Sandpiper, Purple Swamphen, Cotton Pygmy-goose, Gull-billed Tern, Asian Koel, Blue-faced Malkoha, Common Hoopoe, Indian Pygmy Woodpecker, White-naped Woodpecker, 'Grey-headed' Yellow Wagtail, White-rumped Shama, **Sri Lanka Woodshrike**, Common Iora, Zitting Cisticola, Indian Reed Warbler, Grey Tit & Tricoloured Munia. Day's tally: 109

Day 08 7 Feb An early start with packetted breakfasts and we were off to Bundala National Park; Sri Lanka's first RAMSAR wetland, which scored highly as one of the top birding sites on this tour. After obtaining our permits and picking up our compulsory local guide, we explored this bird rich National Park in an open-topped safari jeep. Filtering through the familiar aggregations of wetland birds, we had Indian & Great Thick-knees, Grey Plover, Kentish Plover, Brown-headed Gull, Caspian Tern & Eurasian Curlew early in our drive. Coming to a lagoon with a reedy edge, we had improved views of the Indian Reed Warbler and while we were observing this, our sharp-eyed local guide standing at the rear of the jeep picked up a Watercock that had come out to a grassy patch. Everybody was on it in a flash to get good and extended views of this difficult rallid. Two engrossed Yellow Bitterns at the edge drew our attention next. Driving on to a spot to have our packetted breakfasts we had three more separate sightings of Watercock, which was quite unusual. Our jeep came to an abrupt halt seeing some Painted Snipe at a wetland at the edge of the track, which comprised of 4 good-looking females and 3 drab-looking males.

Pied Cuckoo and Grey-bellied Cuckoo were the two post breakfast specials before we reached more open territory of the salt pans to further improve our wader tally. Graham, M in his element picked a Greater Sand Plover separating it from the masses of Lesser Sands while Peter zeroed in on a Broad-billed Sandpiper from



the carpets of Curlews Sandpipers, prompting the jeep come to an abrupt stop. He also found a Lesser Crested Tern soon after. I too had my moments of glory picking up a single Red-necked Phalarope in a mix bag of waders and a solitary white-morph Western Reef Egret, which was accepted without any debate. A few of us jumped in one voice seeing some Small Pratincoles including one doing a broken-wing display ahead of the jeep tract, indicating that it may be nesting close by.

We retreated to the air-con comforts of Priyankara Hotel for lunch and compulsory midday break. Having recharged our batteries sufficiently, we got on board a much larger jeep to explore the wilderness expanse of Yala National Park, which was re-opened on the 1 Jan, following a brief closure owing to some security concerns. We were fortunate to see a fair number of Malabar Pied Hornbills and a courting male offering a caterpillar to a female beak to beak was pleasing to watch. In addition to now familiar assemblages of dry zone avi-fauna, this session produced Brahminy Starling, Rosy Starling and Baya Weaver. Receiving some 'real-time ground intelligence' in the late afternoon, we made a beeline to the Buttawa Bungalow area to find an adult male Leopard resting on a rock, which was fantastic. It soon reclined to a sleeping posture and every now and then lifted its head to scan the surroundings and look at us who were his only spectators at the site. Drinks, checklist and a 5-course western style dinner marked the end of a brilliant day.

Highlights: Yellow Bittern, Little Heron, Watercock, Greater Painted-snipe, Indian Thick-knee, Great Thick-knee, Small Pratincole, Kentish Plover, Greater Sand Plover, Grey Plover, Curlew Sandpiper, Broad-billed Sandpiper, Green Sandpiper, Red-necked Phalarope, Brown-headed Gull, Caspian Tern, Lesser-crested Tern, White-winged Tern, Pied Cuckoo, Grey-bellied Cuckoo, Malabar Pied Hornbill, Brahminy Starling, Rosy Starling & Baya Weaver. Day's tally: 118



Brahminy Kite

Elephant Rock, Yala National Park

Greater Sand Plover

Day 09 8 Feb The rain we had in the previous the night was just what we needed to settle the dust before our second visit to Yala National Park this morning. We had two pending targets namely Sirkeer Malkoha and Grey-headed Fish Eagle. En route, our jeep driver spotlighted a Barn Owl, which was seen only by me briefly as it quickly flew off – ½ a tick for me. Entering the park, Graham J went 1-nil scoring a Sirkeer Malkoha perched atop a tree and basking in the morning light just 10 minutes into our game drive. Reaching the Buttawa tank inside the park for the Grey-headed Fish Eagle, Graham eagle-eye J went 2-nil spotting a distant blob, which upon close inspection proved to be the Eagle we wanted. Several Crested Hawk Eagles improved our raptor tally further while Black-headed Cuckoo-shrike & Small Minivet showed well close by as did a perched pair of Crested Treeswifts. While heading back, some smart work by our mandatory local guide saw us getting cracking views of our second Leopard of the tour after he spotted a male resting a few metres off the track hiding inside the greenery. It soon disappeared into the maze of shrubbery and it was time to head back for the half time break before doing the usual circuit around Tissa. Great birding we had in this session afforded two noteworthy sightings, which were Thick-billed Flowerpecker and improved views of Forest Wagtail.

Highlights: Black-crowned Night Heron, Crested Hawk Eagle, Grey-headed Fish Eagle, Sirkeer Malkoha, Common Barn Owl, Black-headed Cuckoo-shrike, Small Minivet, Crested Treeswift, Thick-billed Flowerpecker, Forest Wagtail, Greater Racket-tailed Drongo & White-rumped Shama. Day's tally: 107

Day 10 9 Feb I wanted to check the Barn Owl site again and having got my team interested, we visited the site before dawn. After arriving at the site, I heard some faint noises coming from a tree hole up nearby. Speculating that it to be a possible nest-hole, we waited in anticipation of a parent bird's arrival, which would justify our early start. Our guess was proved right as we got good views of a Barn Owl that arrived at



the nest-hole moments later giving me a proper tick of one of my bogey birds. After breakfast, we said good-bye to the friendly staff of Priyankara Hotel to go up to the cooler hills of Nuwara Eliya where more mouth-watering specials awaited us. A brief pause en route gave Peter a Barred Buttonquail, which was missed by others.

A stop en route at Lunugamwehera was made to have a final stab at the newly rediscovered breeding resident; Marshall's lora, which went to a trip list on a birding trip led by me in December, 2007; perhaps for the first time for a Sri Lankan birding trip involving overseas birders. Everybody was super-focused on to take all loras seriously and after about a half an hour, while observing a mixed flock of birds, which contained among other things Common lora, Peter and Graham J jointly claimed that they saw a different looking lora a bit high up, which they'd lost almost immediately. Moments later, a pair of loras materialised in a low-branch in front of us drawing our attention at once and three of us exclaimed in once voice; 'Marshall's lora!' This was the best sighting that I have had of this so far and amply justified our perseverance. Having bagged another new bird to the trip in the form of Large Cuckoo-shrike we drove on to the Grand Ella Motel facing the picturesque Ella gap for a sumptuous lunch.



Yellow-eared Bulbul

Sri Lanka Myna

Chestnut-headed Bee-eater

Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher

Thereafter, we made a traditional birding stop at the Surrey Estate to further improve our Owl tally. This proved successful as I was able to spot a pair of Brown Wood Owls in a thicket to give good views. I followed this up finding a perched pair of Sri Lanka Wood Pigeons, which proved to be the only sighting. A Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher was our final tick at this site before resuming our journey. En route, we made an unscheduled stop at the Hakgala Botanical Gardens, which produced two new montane endemics in the form of Yellow-eared Bulbul and Dull-blue Flycatcher; offering phenomenal views before we reacquainted with Sri Lanka White-eye and Sri Lanka Scimitar Babbler. Reaching my Sri Lanka Whiting Thrush site, we bumped into some familiar faces and had immediate success when a male of the Endangered Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush materialised at the exact perch that I predicted, 2 minutes before my predicted time. I soon shared this with those familiar people who had laid siege at a different spot along the same patch. With 5 out of the 6 montane endemics bagged by our first night in the highlands, we reached our overnight retreat for two nights; Alpine Hotel, Nuwara Eliya with glee. Drinks, checklist, dinner & English Premier League Footie for some marked the end of a wonderful day.

Highlights: Barred Buttonquail, **Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon**, Brown Wood Owl, Large Cuckoo-shrike, **Yellow-eared Bulbul**, **Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush**, **Dull-blue Flycatcher**, Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher, **Sri Lanka Scimitar Babbler**, **Sri Lanka White-eye & drum roll...Marshall's lora.** Day's tally: 108

Day 11 10 Feb After an early sit-down breakfast at the hotel, we visited the Victoria Park just 2-minutes drive from the hotel in search of its high-profile Himalayan delights. Faint calls of one of our primary targets; Pied Thrush were in the air in the first point of call but it skilfully dodged detection remaining hidden high up in the foliage. We then moved to a different patch of this urban park to only get the same result. Moving slightly away, a different Thrush call grew in intensity in response to my renditions and a brown bird materialised in a low branch 6 m away from us and proved to be a Sri Lanka Scaly Thrush, which didn't help its reputation one bit! I decided to go back to the first spot and minutes after, we had a close response and a male Pied Thrush emerged out of its foliage cover to offer cracking views for all except one. It then disappeared out of the radar for a brief moment before Peter found a male in a low Japanese Mahonia to give great views for everybody.



The Kashmir Flycatcher was proving to be elusive and juggling with the options, I decided to move to a different birding patch in Hakgala to bag our remaining montane endemic; Sri Lanka Bush Warbler and met with success almost immediately when this dark brown job skulked low in a bush, giving everybody good eye-level views. Minutes before this, we had a pair of the newly split Indian Blackbirds, which could potentially get split again in the fullness of time. Entering the Botanical Gardens in Hakgala soon after for the missing Kashmir Flycatcher and reaching its hotspot, I picked a little brown job that flew overhead into a low bush. We were on it in a flash and it proved to be a beautiful male Kashmir Flycatcher, which completed our primary montane list by 8.30 a.m. & just 5 minutes after entering the park! In the session of free-style birding that ensued, a noteworthy addition was Velvet-fronted Nuthatch in a mixed party of birds, which contained a few familiar ones in the form of Large-billed Leaf Warblers, Orange Minivet had more Dull-blues. I followed this with a beautiful montane endemic; Rhino-horned Lizard, which was featured in Darwin's classic; 'Descent of Man'.



Great Thick-knee

Birding at the Chilaw Sandspits

Brown Fish Owl

Rhino-horned Lizard

A brief look at the Bomuru-ellla Forest had nothing exciting but we had several Pied Bushchats and Hill Swallows on the way. Thereafter following an age-old local birding tradition after bagging the montane targets, we visited the local Pub in Nuwara Eliya for a cultural diversion. Afternoon session to try for the Victoria Park special; Slaty-legged Crake was called off by my team following some rain and other exigencies. I felt the need to get my dosage of birding for this afternoon and after telling where to find me, I made a beeline to the Crake spot, which already had several visitors and they at once pointed me to a Slaty-legged Crake that was walking furtively. The stream was gushing following the rains and due to this it was in the more open margins affording great views of this elusive rallid. A special 5-course dinner at the St Andrew's Hotel joined by Brad, Ruth and Jaya marked the end of a yet another special day.

Highlights: Hill Swallow, Indian Blue Robin, Pied Bushchat, Pied Thrush, **Sri Lanka Scaly Thrush**, Indian Blackbird, **Sri Lanka Bush Warbler**, Kashmir Flycatcher, & Velvet-fronted Nuthatch. Slaty-legged Crake (Guide only). Day's tally: 40

Day 12 11 Feb A long morning vigil at the Crake site saw only Peter and Graham, J getting any views of the Slaty-legged Crake and after breakfast, we drove up the Horton Plains road to bag two more montane specials; Himalayan Buzzard and Black-throated Munia, which weren't difficult. After lunch, we descended to the former hill capital; Kandy, stopping en route at the Glenloch Tea Factory to see its nesting Hill Swallows and the production process of Ceylon tea. Reaching Kandy at 4.40 p.m., we made a beeline to the Udawattekele Forest for the pending Crimson-backed Flameback. Soon after entering the forest, we bagged our Owl no: 7 of the trip; a roosting Brown Fish Owl, which showed up well in the open. I had prior intel of a reliable spot to look for our main target here from a local patcher and senior bird guide; Upali Ekanayake. After a brief spell of searching, I was able to scope a female about 60 m away close to Upali's site, which was followed by a pair a little bit away hanging around some nest-holes, which saw a clean-up act of the endemics. Victorious, we reached our luxurious 4 star wind down hotel; Amaya Hills, for one night. This hotel is situated at the foothills of the Hantana hills and offers panoramic view of the surrounding hills and the Kandy town 7 kms away and on Roger's request; I secured deluxe rooms with views, which was appreciated. Drinks & daily log was followed by the first full-blown buffet dinner of the trip with a fabulous spread of eastern and western specials.

p.s. At the check-in, with all the deluxe rooms occupied, the friendly receptionist at the Amaya Hills was kind enough to upgrade the 'guide room' to a junior suite on the 3rd floor, overlooking some breathtaking scenery, which I thought was very appropriate. A good percentage of the power generation in Sri Lanka is now through Thermal sources (mostly oil-fired) as the demand has grown above the supply levels of hydro-



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power used traditionally. In a bit to save the planet earth, I turned off the air-con to enjoy the natural air, which was as cool as the air con with a slight disad being non-responsive to the remote supplied. It also had a built-in auto timer set to get a wee bit cooler by dawn, which was just how I liked to enjoy the luxury of our first lie-in to follow.

Highlights: Slaty-legged Crane, Himalayan Buzzard, Brown Fish Owl, **Crimson-backed Flameback**, Lesser Hill Myna & Black-throated Munia. Day's tally: 44

Day 13 12 Feb Waking up at a very civilized hour of 8.15 a.m. for some one day cricket in the curtain raiser of the CB series in Down Under between Sri Lanka & India was just how I liked it. Having both doors on either side of my room opened in the morning, I discovered that the natural air-con worked perfectly. This also allowed me to listen to the birds; Crimson-backed Flameback being a noteworthy one. No birding was needed for my team but a Besra in flight while sipping my first cuppa enjoying the fabulous views of the misty hills was inevitable. After enjoying a big breakfast at a social hour followed by more chilling, we left this cosy hotel at 10.30 a.m. to reach the coastal lowlands of Chilaw. En route at Kurunegala, we paused for a leg stretch at the Mixed deciduous forests enveloping the prominent Elephant rock and had a new trip bird in the form of an uncommon migrant; Grey Drongo, which I picked up at eye-level near the colossal Seated Buddha statue. After having lunch at Kurunegala, we reached the shorebird patch; Chilaw Sandspits in time for some late afternoon birding. A flock of over 40 Sanderlings feeding at the beach was a pleasing sight and Peter in his element picked up the hoped-for Eurasian Oystercatchers. He also spotted a flock of Pintail heading south, which to me looked like a migrant flock just on arrival. Some non-breeding plumaged Common Terns were a cause for considerable deliberation and we retreated to our overnight accommodation; Chilaw Resthouse to end a nice and easy day after checklist and dinner.

Crimson-backed Flameback



Highlights: Northern Pintail, Eurasian Oystercatcher, Sanderling, Whimbrel, Common Tern & Ashy Drongo. Day's tally: 54

Day 14 13 Feb A pair of Heuglin's Gulls spotted by Graham, M just as I was settling the bills was a very good addition to our list as it is usually found 'Up North'. One of the reasons why we visited Chilaw was to start early to visit Kalpitiya in search of the Crab Plover, which everybody understood was a long shot as its actual range is further up in the Mannar Island, which is now out of bounds. I had some gen from one of my local birding clients who had seen a Crab Plover at a site called Kandakkuliya close to Kalpitiya in April 2007 and a decision to check this site on this tour was made following a recce that I did in August 2007. Although I couldn't find any Crab Plovers at that visit, I left convinced that the area could potentially attract this sought-after wader with the vast expanse of secluded beach area looking promising. Thanks to the good roads for much of the way, we were able to reach the area reasonably early. Apart from a few regular shorebirds and 8 Great Thick-knees, we had no luck with our prime target. Returning to our final hotel, we paused at the Palawi Salt pans to get our first Great Crested Terns in a mixed bag of Terns. It started to rain by the time we reached the Nawadamkulama Tank, which was our final point of call for birding and a cursory glance at this massive tank/wetland produced some locally scarce Common Coot, which proved to be our 252th bird of the trip and where the trip list stood.

Finally, we reached our luxurious 5 star transit hotel; Taj Airport Garden, Katunayake, which is just 5 minutes from the airport. Drinks and final log at the Cricketer's Arm Pub was followed by a valedictory dinner at the Hotel's specialty Chinese Restaurant offering Szechuan cuisine and it turned out to be a blast taking the form of a special valentine's-day eve Chinese buffet dinner! Overnight stay at the luxurious deluxe rooms was just perfect to get a good night sleep.

Highlights: Heuglin's Gull, Stork-billed Kingfisher, Great Crested Tern, Great Thick-knee, Grey Plover and Common Coot. Day's tally: 66

Day 15 14 Feb Departure at 0830 hours meant we left the hotel at a civilized hour of 6.00 a.m. to end this great birding holiday.



Species List

"Here is a sort of Bird they call *Carlo*, which never lighteth on the ground, but always sets on very high Trees. He is as big as a Swan, the colour black, the Legs very short, the Head monstrous, his Bill very long, a little rounding like a *Hawks*, and white on each side of the head, like ears: on the top of the crown growth our a white thing, somewhat like to the comb of a Cock....
The bodies of the Fowls are good to eat"
- Robert Knox, 1681

The classification and nomenclature adopted in this species list by me follows the Birds of South Asia The Ripley Guide (2005) by Pamela C. Rasmussen and John C. Anderton (the BSA, hereafter) except for where taxonomic changes taken place since its publication. These include treating Grey Tit *Parus cinereus* distinct from Great Tit *Parus major* complex as per Packert et al in 2005.

Where vernacular and scientific names have been subjected to change following taxonomic revisions suggested in the BSA, I have accepted and adopted those changes. Therefore I have used Eastern Cattle Egret *Bubulcus coromandus* for Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*. Where country name appears in bird names I have used Sri Lanka, which is the present geo-political name (formulated through [Sri Lanka Republic Act 1972](#) –An Act passed in the British Parliament that saw our country name being renamed to Sri Lanka from Ceylon effective, 22nd May, 1972), which is also the country name followed in the widely accepted 'An Annotated Checklist of the Birds of the Oriental Region' by Inskipp et al in 1996 published by the Oriental Bird Club (the OBC checklist, hereafter). Therefore, I have retained the established vernacular; Sri Lanka Spurfowl in place of Ceylon Spurfowl as referred in the BSA.

Where a scientific name has been subjected to change in the BSA due to various valid reasons, which does not result in the elevation of a species to a new one, I have used the revised scientific name but again retained the established vernacular as per the OBC checklist. Thus I have adopted *Eumyias sordidus* for *Eumyias sordida* of the OBC checklist but retained Dull-blue Flycatcher as per the latter instead of 'Dusky Blue Flycatcher' referred in the BSA. In all other cases where vernacular names have been changed in the BSA, I have retained the already established names of the OBC checklist. Thus I have retained Black-shouldered Kite in place of Black-winged Kite.

For some of the splits, justifications for the treatment as separate species have appeared in scientifically valid publications and the rest are being done by avian taxonomists and it is likely that the number of endemics of Sri Lanka may go up in time to come as several more forms from Sri Lanka that were lumped as subspecies of allopathic polytypic species in the great lumping era of the early 20th century (*embracing the biological species concept*) go under the scrutiny of the splitters. It should be noted that most of these splits treated as endemic to Sri Lanka in the BSA were considered to be endemic to Sri Lanka when they were originally described in the 19th century - in the colonial era of natural history exploration before they were lumped subsequently in the early 20th century.

Coming back to this systematic list, the number of days each bird is observed is listed in parenthesis. Udawalawe refers to the general area not the National Park. Yala and Bundala refer to the National Park. Endemic bird names are shown in bold-faced text in addition to mentioning this in the comment that follows their names. Those birds that were 'heard only' are not mentioned in this list.

PODICIPEDIDAE

1. Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* (4) Fair numbers. Easily over 100 in Nawadamkulama.

PHALACROCORACIDAE

2. Little Cormorant *Phalacrocorax niger* (11) The commonest Cormorant.
3. Indian Cormorant *Phalacrocorax fuscicollis* (4) Fair numbers in the dry zone.
4. Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* (3) Scarce Resident seen in the dry zone.

ANHINGIDAE

5. Oriental Darter *Anhinga melanogaster* (4) Small numbers at Tissa, Bundala & Yala.

PELECANIDAE

6. Spot-billed Pelican *Pelecanus philippensis* (5) Good views at Bundala.

ARDEIDAE



7. Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* (11) Commonest Egret.
8. Great Egret *Egretta alba* (7) Encountered in reasonable numbers in the wet & dry zones.
9. Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia* (5) Fairly common.
10. Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* (7) Encountered in reasonable numbers in the wet & dry zones.
11. Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* (5) Fairly common.
12. Eastern Cattle Egret *Bubulcus coromandus* Common. Split from *B. ibis*.
13. Western Reef Egret *Egretta gularis* (1) A single white morph individual observed at Bundala.
14. Indian Pond-Heron *Ardeola grayii* (12) Common.
15. Little Heron (Striated H) *Butorides striata* (1) Only sighting was at Bundala.
16. Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* (1) Just one individual seen at Tissa.
17. Malayan Night Heron *Goraschius melanolophus* (1) One chance encounter at Sinharaja.
18. Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis* (2) Seen well at Bundala NP & Deberawewa
19. Black Bittern *Dupetor flavicollis* (2) Good views of 3 birds at Deberawewa.

CICONIIDAE

20. Painted Stork *Mycteria leucocephala* (5) Seen in small numbers in the dry zone.
21. Asian Openbill *Anastomus oscitans* (9) Common.

THRESKIORNITHIDAE

22. Black-headed Ibis *Threskiornis melanocephalus* (6) All sightings in the dry zone.
23. Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* (4) Seen at Tanamalwila, Tissa, Bundala & Yala

ANATIDAE

24. Lesser Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna javanica* (5) Locally common in the dry zone wetlands.
25. Cotton Pygmy-goose *Nettapus coromandelianus* (2) Tanamalwila & Weerawila.
26. Northern Pintail *Anas acuta* (1) A flock of 35 flying overhead at Chilaw.
27. Garganey *Anas querquedula* (4) Fair numbers in Tanamalwila, Tissa & Bundala.

ACCIPITRIDAE

28. Oriental Honey-Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus* (4) Seen well in flight and perched.
29. Black-shouldered Kite (B-winged K) *Elanus caeruleus* (3) Seen at Udawalawe & Yala.
30. Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus* (7) Common.
31. White-bellied Sea-Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster* (6) Mostly above dry zone tanks/wetlands.
32. Grey-headed Fish-Eagle *Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus* (1) A distant perched bird at Yala.
33. Crested Serpent-Eagle *Spilornis cheela* (6) Endemic race: *spilogaster* was fairly frequent.
34. Crested Goshawk *Accipiter trivagatus* (2) A fly over at Kithulgala. Endemic race: *layardi*
35. Shikra *Accipiter badius* (3) Good views of the nominate race at Kithulgala.
36. Besra *Accipiter virgatus* (1) Excellent flight views of a pair at Sinharaja.
37. Himalayan Buzzard *Buteo burmanicus* (1) 2 perched views. Split from *B. buteo*.
38. Black Eagle *Ictinaetus malayensis* (4) Fine views at Kithulgala and Sinharaja.
39. Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus* (1) A dark morph bird observed from Martin's in Sinharaja.
40. Rufous-bellied Eagle *Hieraaetus kienerii* (1) An immature seen in flight while on the way to Kithulgala. Smaller nominate race.
41. Crested Hawk-Eagle *Spizaetus cirrhatus* (3) The endemic race; *ceylanensis* was seen well at Bundala and Yala. An Indian Sub continent endemic.
42. Common Kestrel *Falco tinnuculus* (3) Seen at Udawalawe and Tissa & Yala.

PHASIANIDAE

43. **Sri Lanka Spurfowl** *Galloperdix bicalcarata* (4). Endemic species. We had excellent views of this ultra-elusive endemic in Kithulgala and Sinharaja with a total of 8 birds seen between us.
44. **Sri Lanka Junglefowl** *Gallus lafayetii* (7) Endemic species. Quite habituated in Sinharaja,
45. Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus* (5) We saw this Indian subcontinent endemic at the dry zone.

TURNICIDAE

46. Barred Buttonquail *Turnix suscitator* (1) Endemic race: *leggei* seen only by Peter at Bundala.

RALLIDAE



47. Slaty-legged Crake *Rallina eurizonoides* (2) 1 seen well by myself alone one late afternoon at Victoria Park when rainy weather & other exigencies prompted the rest of the team to stay back. 1 bird seen by 2 participants on the following morning.
48. White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus* (9) Common.
49. Watercock *Gallicrex cinerea* (1) 4 sightings of female-type ones at Bundala.
50. Purple Swampphen (6) *Porphyrio poliocephalus* Common. A recent split from *P. porphyrio*.
51. Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* (3) Seen at Bundala, Yala & Tissa
52. Common Coot-*Fulica atra* (1) Only sighting of this scarce resident was at Nawadamkulama proved to be our 252nd and the last new bird of the trip.

JACANIDAE

53. Pheasant-tailed Jacana *Hydrophasianus chirurgus* (6) Locally common. Many were sporting breeding regalia at Tanamalwila, Tissa, Bundala, Yala & Nawadamkulama.

ROSTRATULIDAE

54. Greater Painted-snipe *Rostratuka benghalensis* (1) A total of 7 birds comprising of 4 dull-looking males and 3 good-looking females of this scarce breeding resident presented excellent views at close quarters at Bundala.

HAEMATOPODIDAE

55. Eurasian Oystercatcher (1) *Haematopus ostralegus* A pair of this scarce migrant, which usually winter in north-western and northern Sri Lanka was seen at the Chilaw Sandspits.

CHARADRIIDAE

56. Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* (3) Good views at Bundala.
57. Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* (2) Seen at Bundala & Palawi Salt pans.
58. Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* (4) Seen at Tanamalwila, Bundala, Yala & Chilaw
59. Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* (4) Seen at Bundala, Yala, Chilaw & Kalpitiya.
60. Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* (1) Only sighting at Bundala was quite good.
61. Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus* (4) Seen at Tanamalwila, Bundala, Yala & Chilaw.
62. Yellow-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus malabaricus* (3) Good views at Udawalawe. A subcontinent endemic.
63. Red-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus* (7) Common. The endemic race: *lankae*.

SCOLOPACIDAE

64. Pintail Snipe *Gallinago stenura* (1) Good views at Tanamalwila, Bundala & Yala.
65. Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* (4) Fairly large concentrations at Bundala.
66. Eurasian Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* (2) Seen at Chilaw & Kalpitiya.
67. Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata* (2) Two at Bundala & Kalpitiya.
68. Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* (2) Fair numbers at Bundala, Yala & Kalpitiya.
69. Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* (4) Fair numbers at Bundala, Yala & Kalpitiya.
70. Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* (5) Seen at Tanamalwila, Bundala, Yala and Kalpitiya.
71. Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* (1) A single bird at Bundala.
72. Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* (6) Common.
73. Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* (6) Common!
74. Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* (2) Small numbers at Bundala & Yala.
75. Sanderling *Calidris alba* (1) Over 50 at the Chilaw Sandspits.
76. Little Stint *Calidris minuta* (5) Seen at Bundala, Yala, Chilaw & Kalpitiya.
77. Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* (2) Seen at Bundala and Kalpitiya.
78. Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* (1) Small numbers at Bundala.
79. Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* (2) Very small numbers at Tanamalwila and Bundala.

RECURVIROSTRIDAE

80. Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* (4) Seen well at Tissa, Bundala & Yala. One 'Australian-type' individual with black hind neck was also seen.

PHALAROPODIDAE

81. Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* (1) A solitary bird at Bundala offered good views.

BURHINIDAE



82. Indian Thick-knee *Burhinus indicus* (1) The only sightings were reported at Bundala. This is a split from Eurasian Stone-Curlew *B. oedicnemus*.

83. Great Thick-knee *Esacus recurvirostris* (4) Fair numbers at Bundala, Yala and at the beach at Kandakkuliya, which contained 8.

GLAREOLIDAE

84. Small Pratincole (Milky P) *Glareola lactea* (1) Exceptional views. Only sighting was at Bundala saltpans. Appeared to be nesting on the track judging by 'broken-wing behaviour'.

LARIDAE

85. Brown-headed Gull *Larus brunnicephalus* (4) Good views at Bundala and Palawi Saltpans.

86. Heuglin's Gull *Larus heuglini* (1) A Pair seen in flight in the sea in front of the Chilaw Resthouse was a good record for this Gull, which usually winters north-western/northern coastal zone in Sri Lanka.

STERNIDAE

87. Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* (6) Common.

88. Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia* (4) Seen well at Bundala & Palawi Saltpans.

89. Lesser Crested Tern *Thalasseus bengalensis* (2) Good views at Chilaw.

90. Great Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii* (2) Seen at Bundala & Palawi Saltpans.

91. Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* (2) Seen well in Chilaw and Kalpitiya.

92. Little Tern *Sternula albifrons* (4) Small numbers at Tissa, Bundala, Chilaw & Kalpitiya.

93. Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida* (7) Common.

94. White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* (7) Seen well at Yala & Bundala.

COLUMBIDAE

95. Rock Pigeon *Columba livia* (7) Common with wild populations in Tissa & Yala.

96. **Sri Lanka Woodpigeon** *Columba torringtoni* (1) Endemic species. Cracking views of a pair at eye-level at the Surrey Estate was the only sighting.

97. Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis* (12) Common. The endemic race *ceylonensis*.

98. Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps indica* (3) Endemic race; *robinsoni* was seen well at Kithulgala.

99. Orange-breasted Green Pigeon *Treron bicinctus* (4) Endemic race; *leggei* seen well at Udawalawe and Bundala and Yala.

100. **Sri Lanka Green-Pigeon** *Treron pompadora* (6) Endemic species. Recent split. Formally 'Pompadour Green-Pigeon' *T. pompadora*, which is now being split into several different species. Seen well at Kithulgala, Sinharaja & close to Tissa.

101. Green Imperial-Pigeon *Ducula aenea* (9) Common.

PSITTACIDAE

102. **Sri Lanka Hanging-Parrot** *Loriculus beryllinus* (7) Endemic species. Rather common.

103. Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria* (6) Small numbers generally.

104. Rose-ringed Parakeet (Ring-necked P) *Psittacula krameri* (9) Common.

105. **Layard's Parakeet** *Psittacula calthropae* (6) Endemic species. Great views at Kithulgala.

CUCULIDAE

106. **Green-billed Coucal** *Centropus chlororhynchos* (1) Endemic species. Missed out on the usually reliable site in Kithulgala but got cracking views of a pair at a nest site in the deep forest in Sinharaja, which I had found in late Jan, 2008

107. Southern Coucal *Centropus sinensis* (7) Common.

108. Sirkeer Malkoha *Taccocua leschenaultii* (1) Great views of a basking bird at Yala in one morning was the only view of this scarce resident. Endemic to the Indian subcontinent.

109. **Red-faced Malkoha** *Phaenicophaeus pyrrhocephalus* (1) Endemic species. A single bird was seen well in a bird flock in Sinharaja was the only sighting.

110. Blue-faced Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus viridirostris* (2) Seen in the hotel gardens of Safari Village, Udawalawe and again at Yala.

111. Chestnut-winged Crested Cuckoo *Clamator coromandus* (1). A calling bird at dawn at Sinharaja flew away revealing its silhouette.

112. Pied Cuckoo (Jacobin C) (1) *Clamator jacobinus* Seen well at Bundala

113. Asian Koel *Eudynamis scolopaceus* (2) Seen at Udawalawe and Katunayake.

114. Banded Bay Cuckoo *Cacomantis sonneratii* (1) After hearing a few on Day 1, obtained scope views of a perched bird at Kithulgala on Day 2.

115. Grey-bellied Cuckoo *Cacomantis passerinus* (1) Only sighting was at Bundala.



TYTONIDAE

116. Common Barn-Owl (Barn Owl) *Tyto alba* (2). The first encounter at Tissa at pre-dawn was seen only by me. A vigil on the following morning yielded excellent views when an adult bird visited a nest-hole, which contained nestlings judged from constant noises heard from it.

STRIGIDAE

117. **Serendib Scops-Owl** *Otus thilohoffmanni* (2) Endemic species. Discovered in 2001 and described in 2004. Exceptional views at Sinharaja after a heartbreaking initially encounter at Kithulgala seen only by me and another guide, but not our discerning visitors. One of the 2 Sri Lankan endemics in the [IUCN Red List](#) of Threatened species.

118. Indian Scops-Owl *Otus bakkamoena* (1) An excellent nighttime observation of a single at the hotel gardens in Udawalawe. Spilt from Collared Scops-Owl *O. lempiji* of South East Asia.

119. Brown Fish-Owl *Bubo zeylonensis* (1) A single bird in a day roost in Udawattekele Kandy. Endemic race: *zeylonensis*.

120. Brown Wood-Owl *Strix leptogrammica* (1) A pair seen at the traditional day roost at Surrey Tea Estate. Easily disturbed.

121. **Chestnut-backed Owlet** *Glaucidium castanonotum* (1) Endemic species. A pair at Kitulgala provided cracking views on Day 1.

122. Brown Hawk Owl (B Boobook) *Ninox scutulata* (1) A roosting pair in a well-wooded garden in close to the airport was our first tick of the tour. Race: *hirsuta* endemic to South-West India and Sri Lanka.

PODARGIDAE

123. Sri Lanka Frogmouth (Sri Lanka F) (2) *Batrachostomus moniliger* A single bird seen in flight at dusk was uncooperative, but a male in the following morning offered cracking views, low down. Endemic to South India and Sri Lanka.

CAPRIMULGIDAE

124. Indian Nightjar (I Jungle N) *Caprimulgus asiaticus* (1) A single bird observed well at dusk at Udawalawe. Endemic race: *eidos*.

APODIDAE

125. Indian Swiftlet *Aerodramus unicolor* (2) Seen at Kithulgala and Sinharaja. Endemic to SW India and Sri Lanka.

126. Brown-backed Needletail *Hirundapus giganteus* (2) Excellent views in Sinharaja.

127. Asian Palm-Swift *Cypsiurus balasiensis* (10) Common.

128. Little Swift *Apus affinis*: (9) Common.

HEMIPROCINIDAE

129. Crested Treeswift *Hemiprocne coronata* (5) Flight views seen at Kithulgala, Sinharaja, Udawalawe but the sighting at Yala NP topping up with a pair of these seen perched at close quarters.

TROGONIDAE

130. Malabar Trogon *Harpactes fasciatus* (2) Great views at Sinharaja. Endemic to southern India and Sri Lanka. Endemic nominate race.

ALCEDINIDAE

131. Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* (6) Generally common.

132. Black-backed Dwarf Kingfisher *Ceyx erithaca* (1) Cracking views at Kithulgala.

133. Stork-billed Kingfisher *Pelargopsis capensis* (2) Seen at Kithulgala and Katunayake.

134. White-throated Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis* (10) Common.

135. Pied Kingfisher (Lesser P K) *Ceryle rudis* (3) Seen well at Bundala and Yala.

MEROPIIDAE

136. Green Bee-eater (Green B-e) *Merops orientalis* (5). A regular in the dry zone. Endemic race: *ceylonicus*.

137. Blue-tailed Bee-eater *Merops philippinus* (8) Common.

138. Chestnut-headed Bee-eater *Merops leschenaulti* (5) Seen well in Kithulgala.

CORACIIDAE

139. Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis* (5) Seen regularly in the dry zone mostly in wayside.



UPUPIDAE

140. Common Hoopoe (Eurasian H) *Upupa epops* (3) Seen well in Bundala and Yala. Endemic race: *ceylonensis*

BUCEROTIDAE

141. **Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill** *Ocyrceros gingalensis* (4) Endemic species. Seen well in Kithulgala and Sinharaja.

142. Malabar Pied Hornbill *Anthracoceros coronatus* (2) Great views at Yala. A subcontinent endemic.

CAPITONIDAE

143. Brown-headed Barbet *Megalaima zeylanica* (8) Common. An Indian subcontinent endemic. Endemic nominate race.

144. **Yellow-fronted Barbet** *Megalaima flavifrons* (7) Endemic species. Regularly sightings in the wet zone.

145. **Sri Lanka Small Barbet** (Crimson-fronted B) *Megalaima rubricapillus* (4) Endemic species. Good views at Kithulgala, Kudawa, Udawattekele & Kurunegala.

146. Coppersmith Barbet *Megalaima haemacephala* (3) Seen well at Udawalawe and Kurunegala.

PICIDAE

147. Indian Pygmy Woodpecker (Brown-capped PW) *Picoides nanus* (2) The endemic race; *gymnophthalmus* was seen well at Tanamalwila and Yala. An Indian subcontinent endemic.

148. Lesser Yellownappe *Picus chlorolophus* (2) Endemic race; *wellsi*, seen at Sinharaja.

149. Black-rumped Flameback *Dinopium benghalense* (3) The endemic race: *psarodes* was encountered at Kithulgala, Sinharaja and Yala.

150. **Crimson-backed Flameback** *Chrysocolaptes stricklandi* (1) Endemic species. Spilt from Greater Flameback (*C.lucidus*). A pair seen well in Udawattekele, which saw a clean up act of the endemics. Heard from my room in the Amaya Hills Hotel in Kandy. Silent in other areas visited.

151. White-naped Woodpecker (W-n Flameback) *Chrysocolaptes festivus* (1) A prolonged view of a cracking male of the endemic race: *tantus* of this Indian sub continent endemic at a roadside tree at Tissa was pure luck. Sightings are uncommon at the traditional site at Deberawewa owing to disturbance.

PITTIDAE

152. Indian Pitta *Pitta brachyura* (4) Excellent views at Kithulgala and was a good filler at the Victoria Park while starting at the muck for S-I crane. Wintering Indian Subcontinent endemic.

ALAUDIDAE

153. Jerdon's Bushlark *Mirafra affinis* (5) Seen well at Uda Walawe, Tissa, Bundala & Yala. Split from *M.assamica*. An Indian sub continent endemic.

154. Oriental Skylark *Alauda gulgula* (2) Only seen at Bundala.

155. Ashy-crowned Finch-Lark (A-c Sparrow-Lark) *Eremopterix grisea* (2) Seen well at Udawalawe and Yala. An Indian subcontinent endemic.

HIRUNDINIDAE

156. Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* (7) Common.

157. Hill Swallow *Hirundo domicola* (2) Seen at Pattipola and inside the Glenloch tea factory. Split from Pacific Swallow *H. tahitica*. Endemic to south-west India and Sri Lanka.

158. Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* Seen over Udawalawe reservoir.

159. **Sri Lanka Swallow** *Hirundo hyperythra* (3) Endemic species. Good views at Kithulgala. Split from Red-rumped Swallow (*H.dauma*)

MOTACILLIDAE

160. Forest Wagtail *Dendronanthus indicus* (5) Seen well at Tissa and Victoria Park.

161. Grey-headed Wagtail *Motacilla [flava] thunbergi* (1) Seen at Tanamalwila.

162. Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* (6) Seen at a few places including Victoria Park.

163. Paddyfield Pipit *Anthus rufulus* (8) common.

164. Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii* (2) Seen well at Udawalawe.

CAMPEPHAGIDAE

165. Black-headed Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina melanoptera* (1) Good views at Yala.

166. Large Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina macei* (1) Seen close to Tissa. Endemic race: *layardi*.



169. Small Minivet *Pericrocotus cinnamomeus* (2) Seen at Yala and close to Tissa.
 170. Orange Minivet *Pericrocotus flammeus* (6) Rather common in the wet zone. Considered distinct from Scarlet Minivet *P. speciosus*. A sub continent endemic.
 171. Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike (Pied F-s) *Hemipus picatus* (5) Good views at lowland wet and dry zones and highlands Endemic race *leggei*.
 172. **Sri Lanka Woodshrike** *Tephrodornis affinis* (2) Endemic species. Good views at Tanamalwila and Yala. Split from Common Woodshrike *T. pondicerianus*.

MONARCHIDAE

173. Asian Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi* (7) Good views of the migrant white morph as well as the red morph of the endemic race; *ceylonensis* with well-endowed tail streamers.
 174. Black-naped Monarch *Hypothymis azurea* (3) Good views of the endemic race; *ceylonensis* at Kithulgala and Sinharaja.

RHIPIDURIDAE

175. White-browed Fantail *Rhipidura aureola* (5) Seen well at Kithulgala and dry zone.

PYCNONOTIDAE

176. **Black-capped Bulbul** (Black-crested B) *Pycnonotus melanicterus* (6) Endemic species. Good sightings in Kithulgala and Sinharaja.
 177. Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer* (13) Ubiquitous. The endemic race: *haemorrhousus*.
 178. **Yellow-eared Bulbul** *Pycnonotus penicillatus* (3) Endemic species. Cracking views of this good-looking montane endemic were had at the Victoria Park and Hakgala.
 179. White-browed Bulbul *Pycnonotus luteolus* (5) A top teaser which kept eluding us every time we lifted our binocs for a good 4 days before our proper sighting at Yala. An Indian subcontinent endemic, and represented here by the endemic race; *insulae*.
 180. Yellow-browed Bulbul *Hypsipetes indica* (3) Good views at Kithulgala and Sinharaja in bird waves. Endemic to southwest India and Sri Lanka.
 181. Square-tailed Black Bulbul *Hypsipetes ganeesa* (7) Split from *H. leucocephalus* and now endemic to south-west India and Sri Lanka. Endemic race: *humii* offered good views at Sinharaja.

AEGITHINIDAE

182. Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia* (2) After only hearing at several locations seen at Lunugamwehera where it is sympatric with the species below. Race: *multicolor* endemic to South-West India and Sri Lanka.
 183. Marshall's Iora (White-tailed I) *Aegithina nigrolutea* (1) Cracking views of an agitated pair at Lunugamwehera. It showed prominent white tips on upper as well as lower tail, white on tail sides and broadly white edged tertials. A male observed had the above diagnostics and a black cap. The FOGSL found this population after they rediscovered a breeding population of this bird species at the Yala East (Kumana) National Park in the South East Sri Lanka in March, 2006 according to Kalutota (2006). This was following its addition to the Sri Lankan inventory of birds by Wells et al., 2003, based on a re-identified a specimen of this species (collected from Nilgala in the Uva avi-faunal zone in 1948 by Major W.W. A Phillips) lodged in BMNH, attributed as an aberrant *A. tiphia*. Thereafter The BSA announced this to wider audiences in 2005.

CHLOROPSEIDAE

184. Gold-fronted Leafbird (Golden-f L) *Chloropsis aurifrons* (3) Seen at Kithulgala and Sinharaja.
 185. Jerdon's Leafbird *Chloropsis jerdoni* (3) Scope views of one at Udawalawe the best of the sightings. Split from Blue-winged Leafbird *C. cochinchinensis*.

LANIIDAE

186. Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus* (10) Common. Race: *lucionensis* not noted.

TURDIDAE

187. Pied Thrush (P Ground T) *Zoothera wardii* (1) After a bit of a runaround initially, a male descended lowdown on to offer good views. A Himalayan breeder almost exclusively wintering in Sri Lanka. An Indian subcontinent endemic.
 188. **Spot-winged Thrush** *Zoothera spiloptera* (4) Endemic species. Great views in Kithulgala and Sinharaja.



189. **Sri Lanka Scaly Thrush** *Zoothera imbricata* (4) Endemic species. 3 sightings in Sinharaja including scope views and a single bird in Victoria Park at point blank range while trying for Pied Thrush, didn't help its reputation as a tough cookie. Split from Scaly Thrush *Z. dauma*.

190. Indian Blackbird (Nilgiri B) (1) *Turdus simillimus* A pair was seen at Hakgala. Split from Eurasian Blackbird *T. merula* and is considered to be an endemic to the southern Indian subcontinent. Endemic race *kinnisii* is dark bluish-slate with reddish-orange bill and orbital skin is likely to be split within a split 'in the fullness of time'.

191. **Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush** (1) *Myophonus blighi* (1) A male of this ultra secretive endemic appeared just 2 minutes before the 'predicted time' but it was mildly redeeming when it cooperated to appear in the predicted perch to give prolonged views at Hakgala. This used to be the sole endemic representative of the [IUCN Red List's](#) 'Endangered' category from Sri Lanka before Serendib Scops Owl entered the scene.

MUSCICAPIDAE

192. Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica* (6) Good views were had of this common migrant in several sites with the best being near Martin's at Sinharaja.

193. Brown-breasted Flycatcher (Layard's F) *Muscicapa muttui* (5) This regular migrant was encountered in Kithulgala, Sinharaja and close to Tissa. Named after the Tamil Cook; Muttu of its discoverer; Edgar L. Layard (pers.com. Bo Beolens, the Fat birder-lead author of Whose Bird?)

194. Kashmir Flycatcher *Ficedula subrubra* (1) A cracking adult male of this high profile Indian sub continent endemic which almost exclusively winter in the Sri Lankan hills was had at Hakgala.

195. **Dull-blue Flycatcher** (Dusky-b F) *Muscicapa sordidus* (2) Endemic species. 7 birds seen at the Hakgala on our first day in the highlands.

196. Tickell's Blue Flycatcher *Muscicapa tickelliae* (4) Good views of the endemic race; *jerdoni* was had at Kithulgala, Sinharaja and the Surrey Estate.

197. Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher *Culicicapa ceylonensis* (2) Seen well at the Surrey Estate, Bomuru-ella Forest Reserve and Hakgala.

198. Indian Blue Robin *Erithacus brunnea* (1) Fine views of this Himalayan winter visitor was had when a striking male appeared within our scanning zone while looking for a certain Spurfowl. It was also another 'filler' at the S-I Crane site in Victoria Park.

199. Oriental Magpie-Robin *Copsychus saularis* (12) Common.

200. White-rumped Shama *Copsychus malabaricus* (2) The endemic race; *leggei* seen well close to Tissa.

201. Indian Robin *Saxicoloides fulicatus* (5) Common resident in the dry zone. The local race, *leucoptera*, along with of South Indian *fulicata*, has glossy blueblack upperparts, unlike the northern races, which are brown above. An Indian subcontinent endemic.

202. Pied Bushchat *Saxicola caprata* (2) Good view in an around Nuwara Eliya. Endemic race; *atrata*.

TIMALIIDAE

203. **Ashy-headed Laughingthrush** *Garrulax cinereifrons* (2) Endemic species. Great views of this only Laughingthrush of Sri Lanka was had at Sinharaja where they occur in bird waves.

204. **Brown-capped Babbler** *Pellorneum fuscocapillus* (3) Endemic species. A pair of these showed well at Kithulgala and again at Sinharaja.

205. **Sri Lanka Scimitar Babbler** *Pomatorhinus melanurus* (3) Endemic species. Cracking views at Kithulgala, Sinharaja and Hakgala.

206. Tawny-bellied Babbler *Dumetia hypertythra* (3) Good views were had of the white-throated endemic race; *phillipsi* at Udawalawe, Bundala and Yala. Endemic to Indian subcontinent.

207. Dark-fronted Babbler *Rhopocichla atriceps* (3). Good views of the endemic race *nigrifrons* were had at Kithulgala and Sinharaja. Endemic to southern India and Sri Lanka

208. Yellow-eyed Babbler *Chrysomma sinense* (2) Good views of the endemic race; *nasale* was had at Udawalawe and Yala.

209. **Orange-billed Babbler** *Turdoides rufescens* (5) Endemic species. Good views at Kithulgala and Sinharaja where it is nucleus species in the bird waves with a 92 % presence.

210. Yellow-billed Babbler *Turdoides affinis* (10) Common. An Indian sub continent endemic. Endemic race *taprobanus*

CISTICOLIDAE

211. Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis* (4) All sightings in the dry zone of the race: *cursitans*.

212. Grey-breasted Prinia *Prinia hodgsonii* (3) Seen at Udawalawe & Tissa. Endemic race: *leggei*



213. Ashy Prinia *Prinia socialis* (3) The endemic race: *brevicauda* seen at Udawalawe, Tissa, and Pattipola. Endemic to Indian sub continent.
214. Jungle Prinia *Prinia sylvatica* (2) Endemic race *valida* was seen well at Udawalawe and Tissa. Endemic to Indian sub continent.
215. Plain Prinia *Prinia inornata* (2) The endemic race: *insularis* was seen at Udawalawe.
216. Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius* (4) The endemic nominate race seen in the lowlands and the darker-toned *fernandornis* of highlands seen well in Nuwara Eliya.

SYLVIIDAE

217. **Sri Lanka Bush Warbler** *Elaphrornis palliseri* (1) Endemic species. A single bird skulked inside a bush ahead of a trail in Hakgala to present eye-ball views without too much pain. Moved from the earlier genus *Bradypterus* to a monotypic genus as the BSA.
218. Blyth's Reed-Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* (2) Seen well in Udawalawe and Bundala.
219. Indian Reed-Warbler *Acrocephalus brunnescens* (2) Good views at Deberawewa and Bundala. Endemic race: *meridionalis*.
220. Bright-green Warbler *Phylloscopus nitidus* (3) Seen at Sinharaja, Tissa and Hakgala.
221. Large-billed Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus magnirostris* (2) Heard more often. Encountered in Sinharaja and Nuwara Eliya.

PARIDAE

222. Grey Tit *Parus cinereus* (3) Seen at the riverine forests in near Tanamalwila, Nuwara Eliya and Kandy. f

SITTIDAE

223. Velvet-fronted Nuthatch *Sitta frontalis* (1) Seen in bird wave in Hakgala.

DICAEIDAE

224. **Legge's Flowerpecker** (White-throated F) *Dicaeum vincens* (3). Endemic species. Cracking views at Sinharaja.
225. Pale-billed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum erythrorhynchos* (9) Common. Endemic race: *ceylonense*.
226. Thick-billed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum agile* (1) The endemic race: *zeylonicum* was seen near Tissa.

NECTARINIIDAE

227. Purple-rumped Sunbird *Leptocoma zeylonica* (9) Common. Endemic nominate race. An Indian Sub continent endemic.
228. Purple Sunbird *Cinnyris asiatica* (5) All sightings in the dry zone.
229. Loten's Sunbird (Long-billed S) *Cinnyris lotenius* (7) Longer billed endemic nominate race was reasonably common. Endemic to southern India and Sri Lanka.

ZOSTEROPIDAE

230. **Sri Lanka White-eye** *Zosterops ceylonensis* (4) Endemic species. Few joining flocks at Sinharaja. Locally common in Nuwara Eliya.
231. Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus* (3) Seen well at Kithulgala, Udawalawe & at the Surrey Estate. Endemic race: *egregia*

ESTRILDIDAE

- 232 White-rumped Munia *Lonchura striata* (4) The nominate race seen well at Kithulgala.
233. Scaly-breasted Munia *Lonchura punctulata* (5) Frequently encountered on wayside fields.
234. Tricoloured Munia (Black-headed M) *Lonchura malacca* (2). Seen at Bundala and Yala. Found only in southern half of India and Sri Lanka.
235. Black-throated Munia *Lonchura kelaarti* (1) Exceptional views of this potential split at the access road to Horton Plains.

PASSERIDAE

236. House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* (6) Common.

PLOCEIDAE

237. Baya Weaver *Ploceus philippinus* (2) Seen a few in a nest colony in Yala.

STURNIDAE



238. **White-faced Starling** *Sturnia albofrontata* (2) Endemic species. After several fly over views, finally got perched views at Sinharaja close to the entrance.
239. Brahminy Starling *Temenuchus pagodarum* (1) Only sighting of this migrant was at Yala. Endemic to South Asia.
240. Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus* (1) Only sighting of this migrant was at Udawalawe.
241. Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis* (12) Common. The darker toned endemic race *melanosternus*, which also shows a larger yellow facial patch than other races.
242. **Sri Lanka Myna** *Gracula ptilogenys* (3) Endemic species. Excellent views at Sinharaja. Mostly flight views with one good perched view.
243. Lesser Hill-Myna (Southern H M) *Gracula indica* (3) Split from the larger Hill Myna *G. religiosa*. Seen well in Kithulgala and Udawattekele Forest Reserve, Kandy.

ORNIOLIDAE

244. Black-hooded Oriole *Oriolus xanthornus* (11) Common. Endemic race: *ceylonensis*.

DICRURIDAE

245. White-bellied Drongo *Dicrurus caerulescens* (8) Common. 2 endemic races; *leucopygialis* ('white-vented') in the wet zone and *insularis* ('white-bellied') in the dry zone were seen well. An Indian subcontinent endemic.
246. **Sri Lanka Crested Drongo** *Dicrurus lophorinus* (4) Endemic species. Excellent views at Kithulgala and Sinharaja. A nucleus species of the bird flocks in Sinharaja with an 89 % presence. Split from *D. paradiseus*.
247. Greater Racket-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus paradiseus* (1) The endemic race; *ceylonicus* seen only by Peter at Yala.
248. Ashy Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus* An uncommon migrant seen at eye-level from the top of 'Elephant Rock' (Athugala) at Kurunegala. It was diagnosable with its long and deeply forked tail compared to White-bellied Drongo, grey wash in the belly and clear red-eye.

ARTAMIDAE

249. Ashy Woodswallow *Artamus fuscus* (2) Observed while on the move.

CORVIDAE

250. **Sri Lanka Blue Magpie** *Urocissa ornata* (4) Endemic species. Fine views at Sinharaja including 5 birds that visited Martin's open -sided restaurant/viewing area at the crack of dawn. Before that seen feeding on a snake.
251. House Crow *Corvus splendens* (10) Common.
252. Indian Jungle Crow *Corvus culminatus* (9) Common. A recent spilt from Large-billed Crow *C. macrorhynchos*. Thus this is an Indian subcontinent endemic.

List of other fauna.

Mammals:

1. Asian Elephant *Elephas maximus* Around 6 at Udawalawe.
2. Leopard *Panthera pardus kotiya* 2 sightings at Yala including 1 prolonged sighting.
3. Sri Lanka Golden Pal-cat *Paradoxurus zeylonensis* Seen only by me at Kithulgala.
4. Grey Mongoose *Herpestes edwardsii* Seen at Yala.
5. Ruddy Mongoose *Herpestes smithii* Seen at Yala.
6. Black-naped Hare *Lepus nigricollis* Seen at Yala
7. Jackal *Canis aureus*. Seen at Yala.
8. Purple-faced Leaf Monkey *Trachypithecus vetulus* including 'Bear Money' at Hakgala.
9. Toque Macaque *Macaca sinica* Endemic species. Seen frequently. Endemic:
10. Grey Langur *Semnopithecus priam* Seen frequently in the dry zone.
11. Layard's Squirrel *Funambulus layardi* Seen regularly in mixed species bird flocks.
12. Giant Squirrel *Ratufa macroura* Seen at Sinharaja, Tissa and Yala.
13. Palm Squirrel *Funambulus palmarum* Common.
14. Giant Fruit Bat *Pteropus giganteus* Large roost in Kandy and several in other sites.



15. Yellow-striped Chevrotain *Moschiola kathygre* Endemic (recent split!) Expertly spotted by Graham J in association with a Mixed-species bird flock in Sinharaja. This is known to follow birds in the mixed species bird flocks in Sinharaja according to the FOGSL. Extremely wary and sightings during daytime are very rare.
16. Wild Boar *Sus scrofa* Seen at Yala.
17. Spotted Deer *Axis axis* Common at Yala.
18. Sambur *Cervus unicolor* Seen at Yala
19. Wild Buffalo *Bubalus arnee* Seen at Bundala and Yala
20. Wild Ass *Equus asinus* Locally common at Kandakkuliya, Kalpitiya.

Butterflies: These were some of the inevitable distractions.

1. Common Birdwing *Troides darsius* Cracking views at Sinharaja.
2. Crimson Rose *Pachilioptia hector* Seen at Udawalawe.
3. Common Rose *Pachilioptia aristolochiae* – Seen at Udawalawe.
4. Lime Butterfly *Papilio demoleus* Seen well at Udawalawe and Tissa
5. Common Mormon *Papilio polytes* – Seen at Sinharaja.
6. Blue Mormon *Papilio polymnestor* Very hard to ignore in Sinharaja.
7. Common Bluebottle *Graphium agamemnon* Seen at Sinharaja.
8. Tailed Jay *Graphium agamemnon* Seen at Sinharaja.
9. Common Jazebel *Delias eucharis* Seen at Tissa.
10. Three-spot Grass Yellow *Eurema blanda* Seen at Sinharaja.
11. Tree Nymph *Idea iasonia* Inevitable at Sinharaja.
12. Plain Tiger *Danaus chrysippus* Seen at Udawalawe
13. Common Crow *Euploea core* – Seen at most places
14. Great Crow *Euploea phaenareta* Seen well at Sinharaja.
15. Chocolate Soldier *Junonia iphita* Seen at the Elephant Rock, Kurunegala.
16. Common Sailor *Neptis hylas* Seen at Sinharaja.
17. Tawny Coster *Acraea violae* Seen at Udawalawe.
18. Red Pierrot – Seen at Udawalawe.

Reptiles:

1. Marsh Crocodile (Mugger) *Crocodylus paluster*: Seen at Bundala and Yala.
2. Land Monitor *Varanus bengalensis*: Frequently encountered in the dry zone.
3. Water Monitor *Varanus salvator*: Seen frequently in wetland sites.
4. Green Garden Lizard *Calotes calote*: Seen at Sinharaja.
5. Black-lipped Lizard *Calotes nigrilabris*: Endemic. Seen at Nuwara Eliya
6. Rhino-horned Lizard *Ceratophora stoddartii*: Endemic. One cracking individual at Hakgala.
7. Sri Lanka Kangaroo Lizard *Otocryptis wiegmanni*: Endemic. Seen at Kithulgala and Sinharaja
8. Star Tortoise *Geochelone elegans*: One encountered at Tanamalwila it was crossing the road.
10. Flapshell Turtle *Lissemys punctata*: Seen at several dry zone wetlands.
11. Common Bronzeback Tree Snake *Dendrelaphis tristis*: Seen thanks to a SL Blue Magpie.

Acknowledgements.

A big thank you for Peter Nickless for arranging this birding holiday and for his leadership. A guide cannot find over 250 birds on a 15 day Sri Lankan birding tour single-handedly and I wish to express my gratitude for everybody for chipping in to make this holiday a success. And for declaring 4th of Feb a Public holiday! Our driver; Sam (Sampath Jayasakara) did a terrific job in driving us safely and keeping our vehicle clean despite us reversing that at a regular basis. Sitting at the front seat, Roger Dodds who had been on guided birding trips from late Paleocene didn't even bother to wear seat belts at times, which speaks volumes of how confident he felt with Sam behind the wheels. I wish he'd have equally good drivers in his next two birding trips to Antarctica and Bhutan this year! I owe my gratitude for the staff in the accommodations used for their efficient service and being flexible to accommodate our unique needs. Special thanks must go to Jaya & his clients; Ruth and Brad for their company and for sharing their hits & misses generously. A big thank you to all the local informants, site guides and jeep drivers for their local knowledge and assistance in the field. Finally, I wish to thank for the Receptionist at the Amaya Hills for his 'creative manoeuverability' (thanks, Sir Humphrey Appleby); I will continue to use your hotel for my clients!



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