



*Field Guides Tour Report*

**SRI LANKA 2016**

Oct 28, 2016 to Nov 14, 2016

Megan Edwards Crewe with Uditha Hettige

*For our tour description, itinerary, past triplists, dates, fees, and more, please [VISIT OUR TOUR PAGE](#).*



*This Sri Lanka Wood-Pigeon was one of six we found bathing in a little stream in the highlands. Photo by participant Merrill Lester.*

Our Sri Lanka tour is a grand tour of the southern half of the country, from the dense, verdant rainforests of the island's southwest to the salt lagoons and scrubby forests of its southeastern flank, and from the cool, grassy highlands to the bustling city of Kandy and the dry forests and scattered agricultural fields around the magma plug of Lion Rock in Sigiriya. And everywhere we went, there were plenty of special birds (plus lots of other critters) to enjoy.

Things started with a bang on our very first evening, when we found a pair of Brown Boobooks hunting emerging termites, and a wide-eyed Indian Scops-Owl -- right on the grounds of our airport hotel. And there were many other highlights to follow. A gang of fluorescent Sri Lanka Blue-Magpies investigated a hotel balcony, and another noisy group rummaged through treetops near the entrance to Sinharaja Forest Reserve with a couple of Red-faced Malkohas in tow. A pair of Serendib Scops-Owls peered sleepily from their daytime roosting place. A Sri Lanka Whistling-Thrush nibbled rice from a bit of corrugated tin. A pair of Sri Lanka Spurfowl scratched for pickings behind a roadside house, while a stunning male Sri Lanka Junglefowl photobombed in the foreground. A male Kashmir Flycatcher made flashing sorties from twiggy perches. A couple of Pied Thrushes played hide-and-seek among the branches. Six Sri Lanka Wood-Pigeons trundled around beside a little stream (with a few jumping in for quick baths). A perched Rufous-bellied Eagle surveyed a nearby field. A Leopard sprawled on a tree branch, feet and long tail dangling. A pair of Sri Lanka Frogmouths huddled in a dark bush. A couple of Spot-winged Thrushes trotted back and forth across the forest floor, scratching for insects practically at our boot tips. A white morph Indian Paradise-Flycatcher, long tail streaming, flashed like a streaming comet through a dark patch of forest. A pair of Brown Fish-Owls flapped in to their day roost just as we arrived at a nearby roadside.

A Chestnut-backed Owlet tooted challenges from the edge of a little pasture. A Sloth Bear shambled across a track as hordes of vehicles jockeyed for position. A courtyard fig tree attracted a host of fruit-eating birds: Brown-headed, Crimson-fronted and Coppersmith barbets, Malabar Pied- and Sri Lanka Gray hornbills, Sri Lanka Green-Pigeons, Black-hooded Orioles and more. Dozens of Orange-billed Babblers swarmed through the rainforest. A Lesser Adjutant strolled across a clearing. A Black Bittern froze on a grassy bank. A female Barred Buttonquail moon-danced across a sandy track, courting her male. A pair of Green-billed Coucals slipped, squirrel-like, along ever more slender branches before finally flying across the road and perching in the open. A family of Layard's Parakeets foraged on palm fruits. A Sri Lanka Bush-Warbler inexplicably decided to forego its skulking nature to preen in an early morning sunbeam in the wide open. Jewel-bright Velvet-fronted Nuthatches investigated tree trunks. An Indian Pitta whistled from an eye level branch right beside the road. An aptly named male Tickell's Blue-Flycatcher sang and hunted from a nearby tree branch. And, on several evenings, thousands of massive Indian Flying-Foxes rose from the trees (where they had hung like fruits all day) and passed in a slow-flapping river overhead.

Some places really stand out in the memory. How about that early morning visit to the marsh near the entrance to Bundala, where literally thousands of birds swirled around us, gobbling termites: armies of Gray-headed Swamphens, snow globes' worth of Barn and Bank swallows, Whiskered, White-

winged, and Gull-billed terns, statuesque Great Thick-knees, winter-dulled Watercocks, scattered Pacific Golden-Plovers and Pin-tailed Snipe, scores of herons, Blyth's and Clamorous reed-warblers, and more. Or the view from the top of Lion Rock, with the scattered remnants of the once spectacular fortress and castle behind us, and the green sea of treetops stretching to the horizons below us.

And, of course, who will soon forget our fascinating visit to the Temple of the Buddha's Tooth -- that extensive complex of intricately painted buildings, full of carved elephants, golden Buddha statues, noisy drums and horn players, beautifully painted palm leaf books, and hundreds and hundreds of pilgrims? Or the quiet serenity of the Royal Botanical Gardens in Kandy? Or the multitude of curries we sampled throughout the tour?

Thanks so much for joining Udi and me for the adventure. Your humor, fine companionship, and great spotting really added to the trip, and made it a fun one to lead. I hope to see you all again soon, somewhere else in the world!

-- Megan

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## KEYS FOR THIS LIST

One of the following keys may be shown in brackets for individual species as appropriate: \* = heard only, I = introduced, E = endemic, N = nesting, a = austral migrant, b = boreal migrant

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## BIRDS

### Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

**LESSER WHISTLING-DUCK** (*Dendrocygna javanica*) – Scores at Bundala National Park (NP), but our best looks came at Yala NP, where dozens stood in a line along the muddy edge of an island in a dwindling tank.

**COMB DUCK** (*Sarkidiornis melanotos*) – Seeing one of these would be a surprise, given that they were extirpated from Sri Lanka until 2010, when they reintroduced themselves to the Yala NP area. Seeing 47 at once, like we did at one of the Debrawewa tanks late one afternoon, was just outrageous!

**COTTON PYGMY-GOOSE** (*Nettapus coromandelianus*) – A dozen or so floated among the lily pads or zipped in flashing flight above the lake at Bundala NP. This tiny species (also sometimes called Cotton Teal) subsists primarily on waterlily flower buds.

**GARGANEY** (*Anas querquedula*) – A busy little gang splashed in the shallows or preened along the edges of a marshy pond near Bundala village, entertaining us as we waited for dusk to fall. Unfortunately, none of the males were in full breeding splendor.

### Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

**INDIAN PEAFOWL** (*Pavo cristatus*) – No matter how many you've seen in zoos, you can't fail to be impressed by a male in full booty-shaking display mode! These were almost ridiculously common in Udawalawe, Bundala and Yala NPs.

**SRI LANKA SPURFOWL** (*Galloperdix bicalcarata*) – We heard them first -- the loud, rollicking duet of a pair along the Ketlapathala road that had us all peering into the bushes. Fortunately, the birds themselves soon appeared at the bottom of a little hill behind a nearby house, giving us super views from the kitchen windows. [E]

**SRI LANKA JUNGLEFOWL** (*Gallus lafayetii*) – Plenty of fine encounters with this handsome species, including a young male who debated joining us in the shelter at Sinharaja during the downpour, and a couple of roosters bracketing an Indian Brown Mongoose on a bungalow lawn at Horton Plains. This is Sri Lanka's national bird. [E]

### Podicipedidae (Grebes)

**LITTLE GREBE** (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*) – A number of these small, dark grebes floated among the lily pads (or disappeared underneath them) in Bundala.

### Ciconiidae (Storks)

**ASIAN OPENBILL** (*Anastomus oscitans*) – Quite common, with dozens soaring in thermals over Bundala and Yala, and others stalking prey in marshes and rice paddies across the south. The unusual gap in their bill may help them to better grasp their favored prey -- snails.

**WOOLLY-NECKED STORK** (*Ciconia episcopus*) – Our first was a bird soaring high in a thermal above Yala NP, surrounded by a multitude of Asian Openbills. Fortunately, we saw a handful of others -- much closer, and on the ground -- foraging in a rice paddy en-route to Nuwara Eliya, and still more around Sigiriya, including a couple circling over Lion Rock, for those who climbed to the top.

**LESSER ADJUTANT** (*Leptoptilos javanicus*) – Our first strode around a treeless corridor at Udawalawe, but we had better views of our second, which stalked regally across a nearby clearing while we waited for the Sloth Bear to reemerge.

**PAINTED STORK** (*Mycteria leucocephala*) – Small numbers at Bundala and Yala, including one appearing to herd the Lesser Whistling-Ducks at a pond in Yala, and a group of five communing with the big spoonbill flock near Bundala village one evening.

### Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

**LITTLE CORMORANT** (*Microcarbo niger*) – The most common of the tour's cormorants, seen in most wet spots -- including a quartet that hung out on the rocks in the middle of the Kelani River and hundreds sprinkled around Bundala and the Debrawewa tanks.

**GREAT CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) – A white-bellied youngster sitting atop a dead snag in a tank near Sigiriya looked enormous compared to the Little Cormorants below it.

**INDIAN CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax fuscicollis*) – Reasonably common in wetlands across the country -- though it was a good week before we saw one that wasn't just flying over!

### Anhingidae (Anhingas)

**ORIENTAL DARTER** (*Anhinga melanogaster*) – Bundala was the epicenter for this species, with dozens dotted (spread-eagled) atop bushes or flying past with their long, thin necks extended.

### Pelecanidae (Pelicans)

**SPOT-BILLED PELICAN** (*Pelecanus philippensis*) – Regular along the south coast, with especially good studies of a gang preening atop one of the huge spreading Rain Trees at the Debrawewa tank; their distinctively spotty bills were clearly visible in the scopes.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

- YELLOW BITTERN** (*Ixobrychus sinensis*) – Scattered birds in the wetlands of the southeast, with especially nice looks at one crouched on a fence surrounding one of the submerged trees in the Debrawewa tank.
- CINNAMON BITTERN** (*Ixobrychus cinnamomeus*) – Quick views of one as it lifted out of some taller reeds near the Bundala entrance; unfortunately, it just flipped over the top of the reeds and dropped down on the other side -- out of view.
- BLACK BITTERN** (*Ixobrychus flavicollis*) – One flew in and landed along the edge of one of the Debrawewa tanks, then stood peering intently into the water. It shifted to another spot a bit further away -- but right in the open, allowing super scope views. This species is bigger than the previous two.
- GRAY HERON** (*Ardea cinerea*) – Common in the wetlands of the southeast, where they stood hunched along the edges of streams and water holes.
- PURPLE HERON** (*Ardea purpurea*) – A youngster, still sporting much of its gingery plumage, peered into the water on the far side the pond at the back edge of our airport hotel's grounds.
- GREAT EGRET (AUSTRALASIAN)** (*Ardea alba modesta*) – This, the largest of Sri Lanka's egrets, was reasonably common in wetlands across the country.
- INTERMEDIATE EGRET** (*Mesophoyx intermedia*) – The least common of the tour's egrets, but seen well among the lotus leaves on the Sigiriya tank.
- LITTLE EGRET** (*Egretta garzetta*) – Widespread, though in relatively small numbers, throughout the tour. Our biggest groups were around Bundala, where dozens scurried around chasing termites.
- CATTLE EGRET (EASTERN)** (*Bubulcus ibis coromandus*) – Incredibly common around Tissamaharama, with thousands following the tractors around the rice fields, and birds standing three abreast on some sleeping Asian Water Buffalo.
- INDIAN POND-HERON** (*Ardeola grayii*) – Our first up-close-and-personal views came right at the airport hotel, where one hunted the tiny ornamental pond right outside the hotel entrance. We saw hundreds of others throughout the tour, including flocks of dozens winging over the Debrawewa tanks, and a seemingly endless stream flying past at Bundala.
- STRIATED HERON** (*Butorides striata*) – Only a few caught a glimpse of this small species as it flapped off across behind the trees edging a pond at our airport hotel; most of us only it heard it calling as it went.
- BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (EURASIAN)** (*Nycticorax nycticorax nycticorax*) – Nearly as common in the southeast as the Indian Pond-Heron, with many flocks seen flying over the Debrawewa tanks and the Bundala village road as dusk fell, and others mingling with the cormorants drying out at the Sigiriya tank.

Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)

- GLOSSY IBIS** (*Plegadis falcinellus*) – A few small groups of these dark ibis foraged in the marshy area just before the entrance to Bundala NP, part of the things we saw on our fabulously birdy early morning there.
- BLACK-HEADED IBIS** (*Threskiornis melanocephalus*) – Particularly common in the rice fields, where they motored along, heads down, foraging among the growing plants.
- EURASIAN SPOONBILL** (*Platalea leucorodia*) – Our first was a line of four winging past over one of the Debrawewa tanks -- great spotting, Keith! We had fine views of about 40 more resting on a mudflat near Bundala village; they snoozed until dusk, when they proceeded en masse to the nearby channel to feed.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

- BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE** (*Elanus caeruleus*) – Those in Udi's van at Udawalawe had brief views of one as it flew past their van, but our best views came on the drive to Nuwara Eliya, when we found one hovering over a roadside rice paddy. This species has been split from North America's White-tailed Kite and the Australian Kite.
- ORIENTAL HONEY-BUZZARD** (*Pernis ptilorhynchus*) – One perched in a tree on the grounds of our airport hotel was a surprise -- great spotting, Lorena! We saw another while driving to Kitulgala. Despite its name, this species doesn't actually eat honey; instead, it feeds on bee larvae.
- JERDON'S BAZA** (*Aviceda jerdoni*) – All-too-brief views of one soaring beyond the trees near the start of our walk at Sinharaja one afternoon; it quickly disappeared beyond the thicker foliage.
- CRESTED SERPENT-EAGLE (CRESTED)** (*Spilornis cheela spilogaster*) – One of the more common raptors of the trip, often seen in flight -- where the broad white band on the trailing edge of the wing helped seal its identification. We had nice views of a perched bird at Lunugamwehera.
- CRESTED HAWK-EAGLE** (*Nisaetus cirrhatu ceylanensis*) – An adult perched atop a palm tree along the road between Kitulgala and Sinharaja brought us piling out of the bus -- to the amusement of the locals! We got terrific looks, and got to hear it calling as well. This was probably the most common raptor of the trip.
- MOUNTAIN HAWK-EAGLE** (*Nisaetus nipalensis*) – Our first was one seen in flight by some of the group (those who took the first ferry across the Kelani River) on our full day in the Makandawa Forest Reserve. We saw another circling over a ridge on our drive down from Nuwara Eliya to Kandy.
- RUFOUS-BELLIED EAGLE** (*Lophotriorchis kienerii*) – Two adults perched along the drive up to Sinharaja were a real treat, giving us the chance to study them closely in the scopes.
- BLACK EAGLE** (*Ictinaetus malaiensis*) – Single birds seen on a number of days, always in flight, where their very rectangular wings -- with all those big "fingered" primary feathers obvious at the tips.
- BOOTED EAGLE** (*Hieraaetus pennatus*) – An adult and a youngster soared above the dry forest at Yala NP, one of the last new species we saw in the park.
- CRESTED GOSHAWK** (*Accipiter trivirgatus layardi*) – Seen over the lush forests of Makandawa and Sinharaja on several days, including two different birds doing impressive, shallow-fluttering display flights.
- SHIKRA** (*Accipiter badius*) – The most widespread of the tour's accipiters, seen perched on several days, and flying on even more -- including one that nearly grabbed our perched Crested Treeswift at Yala.
- BESRA** (*Accipiter virgatus*) – All-too-brief views of one as it zipped past over our Kitulgala hotel, seen by a few as we birded on the driveway before heading across the river for the afternoon.
- BRAHMINY KITE** (*Haliastur indus*) – Regular throughout, with especially nice views of a couple of adults soaring around over the parking lot at our airport hotel.

**WHITE-BELLIED SEA-EAGLE** (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*) – A trio -- two adults and an older youngster -- coasted back and forth along the edge of the reservoir at Uda Walawe, giving us great views from the nearby highway.

**GRAY-HEADED FISH-EAGLE** (*Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus*) – A youngster chomped on some unidentified tidbit on a branch over the road at Bundala, and a regal adult surveyed its domain from a huge tree over one of the tanks at Yala (and later soared around above it).

**HIMALAYAN BUZZARD** (*Buteo refectus*) – Two birds circled over a distant ridge at Horton Plains, but our best views came further into the park, where we found one on the ground munching on a snake. This species was recently split from the Common Buzzard.

#### Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

**WHITE-BREASTED WATERHEN** (*Amaurornis phoenicurus*) – Common throughout, including a pair interacting behind a muddy pond on the airport hotel's grounds, one sneaking in to gobble corn at a house along the Ketalapathala road, and plenty in the wetlands of Bundala and Yala NPs.

**WATERCOCK** (*Gallinix cinerea*) – At least 2-3 foraged among the multitude of Gray-headed Swampheens in a marsh near Bundala's entrance -- including one that foraged in grass so tall that it occasionally disappeared completely. At this time of year, they're all in nonbreeding plumage.

**GRAY-HEADED SWAMPHEN** (*Porphyrio poliocephalus poliocephalus*) – Dozens and dozens and DOZENS congregated on the grassy marsh near the entrance to Bundala as the sun rose, gobbling up the innumerable giant termites that were emerging everywhere. This species was just recently split from the Purple Swamphen.

**EURASIAN MOORHEN** (*Gallinula chloropus*) – A few near Bundala, chugging across roadside ponds before we entered the park itself. This species was recently split from North America's Common Gallinule.

#### Burhinidae (Thick-knees)

**INDIAN THICK-KNEE** (*Burhinus indicus*) – A trio rested among some low bushes at Bundala; initially, they were flat out on the ground, but eventually they stood up and walked around a bit.

**GREAT THICK-KNEE** (*Esacus recurvirostris*) – A dozen or so, trotting around on the mudflats of Bundala, chasing those ubiquitous termites.

#### Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)

**BLACK-WINGED STILT** (*Himantopus himantopus*) – Quite common in the wetlands of the south, striding on long, pink legs across the salt pans and marshes.

#### Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

**BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER** (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – At least one winter-dulled bird trotted along a bund at the Bundala salt works.

**PACIFIC GOLDEN-PLOVER** (*Pluvialis fulva*) – A few -- all but one in their plainest nonbreeding plumage -- hunted the grassy fringes of the marsh near the entrance to Bundala NP; one still sported traces of its black breeding-plumage belly.

**YELLOW-WATTLED LAPWING** (*Vanellus malabaricus*) – Scattered pairs, particularly in the dry flatlands of Bundala and Yala. This is a smaller, generally less obvious lapwing than the next species.

**RED-WATTLED LAPWING** (*Vanellus indicus*) – Large, noisy and plentiful, particularly in the country's southeast; also common among the many rice paddies we passed.

**LESSER SAND-PLOVER** (*Charadrius mongolus*) – Very common at Bundala, with a few others scattered around the watering holes at Udawalawe.

**KENTISH PLOVER (INDIAN)** (*Charadrius alexandrinus seebohmi*) – A few of these small plovers pattered around among their larger Lesser Sand-Plover cousins at the Bundala salt pans. This species was recently split from North America's Snowy Plover.

**COMMON RINGED PLOVER** (*Charadrius hiaticula*) – Those in Udi's van at Udawalawe spotted one among the Little Ringed Plovers at one of the waterholes.

**LITTLE RINGED PLOVER** (*Charadrius dubius*) – Very common at Udawalawe and Bundala, where they trotted back and forth along the edges of ponds and water holes. The longer wings, yellow eyering, and pale, skinny legs of this species help to separate them from the other small plovers.

#### Jacaniidae (Jacanas)

**PHEASANT-TAILED JACANA** (*Hydrophasianus chirurgus*) – Plentiful on the marshes of Bundala, and around the Debrawewa tanks, but only a handful of the males still sported the long tail plumes of their breeding plumage.

#### Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

**BLACK-TAILED GODWIT** (*Limosa limosa*) – Small numbers around Bundala, including several flocks in flight (where their black and white wing patterns were particularly striking) and a gang foraging on the mudflats near the Garganey on our evening visit.

**RUDDY TURNSTONE** (*Arenaria interpres*) – A scattered few along the bunds at the Bundala salt works gave themselves away when they flew with a flurry of boldly patterned wings. Most of them foraged low along the rocky edges to some of the ponds.

**BROAD-BILLED SANDPIPER** (*Calidris falcinellus*) – One foraged along the edge of a salt pan at Bundala, conveniently close to several other species for good comparisons. Its distinctively split supercilium was clearly visible.

**CURLEW SANDPIPER** (*Calidris ferruginea*) – Several big groups waded, up to their bellies in the waters of the Bundala salt pans, probing for tidbits. They were all in their sober nonbreeding plumage.

**LITTLE STINT** (*Calidris minuta*) – Scores of these small shorebirds pattered over the salt pans at Bundala and along the shores of various puddles and tanks.

**PIN-TAILED SNIPE** (*Gallinago stenura*) – Small numbers in the marshes around Bundala and the Debrawewa tanks, including a trio probing the flats not far from our golden-plovers.

**RED-NECKED PHALAROPE** (*Phalaropus lobatus*) – One took a vigorous bath in a salt pan at Bundala, not far from our Broad-billed Sandpiper.

**COMMON SANDPIPER** (*Actitis hypoleucos*) – A few teetered along the edges of wetlands and water holes at Bundala and Yala, and one flew off across the lawn of Victoria Park as we searched for Kashmir Flycatcher on our first afternoon in Nuwara Eliya. This species is closely related to North America's Spotted Sandpiper.

**GREEN SANDPIPER** (*Tringa ochropus*) – Our first were a couple sparring along the edge of a watering hole in Udawalawe, showing well their distinctive black underwings as they jostled for position. We saw others at Bundala. This is the sister species of North America's Solitary Sandpiper, which it strongly resembles.

**COMMON GREENSHANK** (*Tringa nebularia*) – A scattered few at Bundala, including one conveniently close to a Common Redshank for direct comparison.

**MARSH SANDPIPER** (*Tringa stagnatilis*) – Our first poked along the edge of a water hole in Udawalawe, and we saw others at Bundala. The very pale plumage and very slim, pointed beak of this species help to quickly identify it.

**WOOD SANDPIPER** (*Tringa glareola*) – One or two at Udawalawe (poking around in the same watering hole where the Green Sandpipers were chasing each other around) with considerably more at Bundala, particularly in the salt pans.

**COMMON REDSHANK** (*Tringa totanus*) – Very common at Bundala, with others around Udawalawe. The wide, white trailing edge of this species (visible in flight) and its long red legs make it quickly identifiable.

#### Turnicidae (Buttonquail)

**BARRED BUTTONQUAIL** (*Turnix suscitator leggei*) – We spotted a couple of furtive birds along the edge of the track at Udawalawe (seen as we were racing back to the entrance to beat the gate closing for the night), but our best views came at Bundala, where we saw a couple near the sea cliff. The brightly-colored female was doing a courtship display, moon-walking her way back and forth across the track.

#### Glareolidae (Pratincoles and Coursers)

**ORIENTAL PRATINCOLE** (*Glareola maldivarum*) – A trio, high over the Debrawewa tank one evening towards dusk, were the only ones we saw.

**SMALL PRATINCOLE** (*Glareola lactea*) – Quite common along one of the bunds edging the saltworks at Bundala; most were little more than small heads poking above the scanty vegetation, but a few stood out in the "wide open", allowing scope views. Their name is certainly appropriate!

#### Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

**LITTLE TERN** (*Sterna albifrons*) – Small numbers of these small terns flapped among their larger cousins at Bundala, occasionally breaking into noisy chases.

**GULL-BILLED TERN** (*Gelochelidon nilotica*) – Numbers in Bundala, especially over the big marsh along the road to the entrance -- where they looked bigger and paler than the more numerous Whiskered Terns.

**CASPIAN TERN** (*Hydroprogne caspia*) – A few of these big terns (the world's largest!) towered over the other terns and shorebirds on the mudflats of Bundala; we also saw a couple in flight, where their big red bills were particularly noticeable.

**WHITE-WINGED TERN** (*Chlidonias leucopterus*) – Some of these smaller gulls whirled among the Whiskered Terns over the Bundala marshes, picked out by their whitish rump patches.

**WHISKERED TERN** (*Chlidonias hybrida*) – Hundreds, all in their winter plumage, spun over the flats of Bundala, and we saw others at Udawalawe, Sigiriya, along the coast by our airport hotel, and over roadside rice paddies. This is by far the most common tern in Sri Lanka -- at least in the south.

**COMMON TERN** (*Sterna hirundo*) – Reasonably common in the big flock of terns resting on a mudflat in the marshy area along the road into Bundala -- and relatively easy to pick out thanks to the dark carpal bars on their folded wings.

**GREAT CRESTED TERN** (*Thalasseus bergii*) – Quite common around Bundala, including a number of them flying past the cliff top overlooking the sea, and hundreds snoozing on one of the bunds edging the salt works.

**LESSER CRESTED TERN** (*Thalasseus bengalensis*) – A handful sprinkled among the multitudes of Great Crested Terns resting along the edge of the saltworks at Bundala, picked out by their bright orange beaks and smaller size.

#### Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

**ROCK PIGEON** (*Columba livia*) – Quite common in cities and towns throughout, with a couple of "wild type" birds apparently nesting in a dead snag standing in one of the watering holes at Yala.

**SRI LANKA WOOD-PIGEON** (*Columba torringtoniae*) – A chance stop on our drive back from Horton Plains netted us SIX of these handsome pigeons; first we spotted one perched in a nearby tree, and eventually another five dropped down to a flat space near a little roadside creek for a nibble and a bath. Wow! [E]

**SPOTTED DOVE** (*Streptopelia chinensis*) – One of the tour's "every day" species -- particularly along roadside wires. They're certainly well named!

**ASIAN EMERALD DOVE** (*Chalcophaps indica robinsoni*) – We had fleeting glimpses of a few around Kitulgala and at Sinharaja, but our best views came at the house where we saw our Sri Lanka Spurfowl, where we watched a trio gobbling con.

**ORANGE-BREADED PIGEON** (*Treron bicinctus leggei*) – Fleeting glimpses of one at Bundala, and far more satisfying views of several pairs at Yala and more in a fruiting tree at our Sigiriya hotel. This species is found across much of southeast Asia.

**SRI LANKA GREEN-PIGEON** (*Treron pompadora*) – Plenty of good looks at these handsome endemic pigeons -- formerly part of the Pompadour Pigeon complex -- and plenty of good listens too, to their wonderful, "radio tuning" whistled song. [E]

**GREEN IMPERIAL-PIGEON** (*Ducula aenea*) – We saw plenty of these big pigeons on the first half of the tour, including a group of 8 or 10 resting in a bare tree on the drive up to Sinharaja one morning.

#### Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

**GREEN-BILLED COUCAL** (*Centropus chlororhynchus*) – We heard these scarce coucals in several places around Makandawa (always somewhere with incredibly thick, dense vegetation), and finally laid eyes on a confiding pair along the Ketalapathala road. They clambered up through trees right near the road, and sat singing from a conveniently open branch. That pale bill is certainly distinctive -- and easy to see. [E]

**GREATER COUCAL** (*Centropus sinensis*) – Our first trundled around right in the middle of a dirt road along the edge of our airport hotel's grounds, and we had nice looks at another investigating a bamboo frame along the Ketalapathala road.

**RED-FACED MALKOHA** (*Phaenicophaeus pyrrhocephalus*) – We found these big endemic cuckoos a few times around Sinharaja, including two with a gang of Sri Lanka Blue-Magpies near the entrance to the park and a couple with a big flock of Orange-billed Babblers along the Ketalapathala road. [E]

**BLUE-FACED MALKOHA** (*Phaenicophaeus viridirostris*) – A couple of fleeting glimpses for some in the group -- for Udi and Jesper while most of us were looking at the Chestnut-winged Cuckoo and for a number of folks along one of the tracks at Bundala. This wary species is always a tough one to see well.

**CHESTNUT-WINGED CUCKOO** (*Clamator coromandus*) – One sitting out in the open on a wire near the Udawalawe reservoir was a surprise -- this is usually a secretive forest species! The flash of its well-named wings was certainly eye-catching.

**PIED CUCKOO** (*Clamator jacobinus*) – Singles or pairs on several days, including two flicking back and forth across the track at Yala. This is far smaller than the previous species, and lacks the Chestnut-winged Cuckoo's distinctively colored wings.

**ASIAN KOEL** (*Eudynamis scolopaceus*) – Quite common in the lowlands, including on the grounds of our airport hotel, where we saw a loudly begging youngster being fed by a Large-billed Crow. Clearly, this species is a brood parasite!

- BANDED BAY CUCKOO** (*Cacomantis sonneratii waiti*) – Quick views of a flyby that shot up the road ahead of us as we walked towards the Makandawa Forest Preserve on our morning's visit there.
- GRAY-BELLIED CUCKOO** (*Cacomantis passerinus*) – Several birds seen in the scruffy brush of Udawalawe.
- FORK-TAILED DRONGO-CUCKOO** (*Surniculus dicruroides*) – We heard the loud, rising whistles of this species around Sigiriya on several days, and had great scope views of one singing from a treetop near the road around the Lion Rock.
- COMMON HAWK-CUCKOO** (*Hierococcyx varius*) – Our first was a fairly cooperative bird in Sinharaja. Most had good views of another perched in a dead tree along the road on our drive back from the far end of Horton Plains NP. The second -- which we'd initially thought was a Shikra when it glided in for a landing -- particularly showed how it earned its name!
- LESSER CUCKOO** (*Cuculus poliocephalus*) – Normally, this is a rare winter visitor to Sri Lanka; its the first year we've seen one on this tour. However, they appear to have had a banner breeding year, as we saw at least 5 around Kitulgala -- including four hunting in one field at Makandawa Forest Park.
- INDIAN CUCKOO** (*Cuculus micropterus*) – Especially nice views of a singing bird near the start of the road at Lunugamwehera NP, plus another hunting caterpillars in the wet forest at Sinharaja, and one more at Sigiriya.

#### Strigidae (Owls)

- SERENDIB SCOPS-OWL** (*Otus thilohoffmanni*) – Yahoo! After nearly giving this species up for lost, we got lucky -- our Sinharaja guide tracked down a pair snoozing in a dense thicket on the back side of a pond near the park's entrance. It meant a tough "off piste" hike across streams and logs, under vines and up slippery hills -- with plenty of hungry leeches to brave along the way -- but we all agreed that the end result was definitely worth it! This species was only described in 2004. [E]
- INDIAN SCOPS-OWL** (*Otus bakkamoena*) – It took a bit of patience, but we finally all heard the soft, musical, "water drop" song of this small owl. And with even more patience, we managed to track it down to where it sat, tucked among the dense leaves of a tree along the entrance drive into the Gateway Hotel.
- ORIENTAL SCOPS-OWL (ORIENTAL)** (*Otus sunia leggei*) – We heard a couple calling from the ruins site at Sigiriya on our first evening, and eventually, one of them moved into the tree right over our bus, giving us great views.
- BROWN FISH-OWL** (*Ketupa zeylonensis*) – First one, and then a second, flashed along the edge of the Sigiriya moat and perched in the open, giving us super early morning views as the light slowly strengthened. These big owls eat fish (as their name suggests), but also frogs, various mammals, monitor lizards, the occasional bird, and even crabs.
- JUNGLE OWLET** (*Glaucidium radiatum*) – One sang from a tree in the side yard of a house in Debrawewa in broad daylight, peering around as it tooted. Its mate came in a bit later, but perched out of view higher in the same tree.
- CHESTNUT-BACKED OWLET** (*Glaucidium castanotum*) – One flashed across the road in front of us as we walked back towards the canoe ferry in the village of Makandawa. It landed about 5 feet up a tree at the edge of a field -- perfect for eye-level views and leisurely scope studies. [E]
- BROWN WOOD-OWL** (*Strix leptogrammica ochrogenys*) – One on a day roost at the Surrey Bird Sanctuary tolerated us all ogling it through the scope and the great views we got made all of that slipping and sliding up and down hills worthwhile!
- BROWN BOOBOO** (*Ninox scutulata*) – Two, very actively hunting emerging termites as dusk fell on our first evening, gave us many fine views as they perched again and again on the same nearby branches. This species was formerly known as the "Brown Hawk-Owl".

#### Podargidae (Frogmouths)

- SRI LANKA FROGMOUTH** (*Batrachostomus moniliger*) – A pair, snuggled nose to tail in a thick bush along a muddy track at Sinharaja were a nice late afternoon treat; our park guide found another pair near our Serendib Scops-Owls to catch Bart up the next day.

#### Caprimulgidae (Nightjars and Allies)

- JERDON'S NIGHTJAR** (*Caprimulgus atripennis aequabilis*) – We heard one singing from the forest as dawn broke in Yala (huddled outside our bus, but close enough to run if elephants approached!), and spotted another sitting on the road near Bundala village after dark later the same day. Some of the group saw another perched on a bare snag (in Udi's spotlight) across a lotus-filled tank near Sigiriya as we drove back to the hotel one evening.
- INDIAN NIGHTJAR** (*Caprimulgus asiaticus eidos*) – A couple of these small nightjars called from an open field near Bundala, and -- with a little encouragement from Udi -- one of them flew in to land on a nearby sand bank, where we could get the spotlight on it.

#### Apodidae (Swifts)

- BROWN-BACKED NEEDLETAIL** (*Hirundapus giganteus*) – A few circled over Martin's Forest Lodge (down the hill a bit from Sinharaja) late one afternoon.
- INDIAN SWIFTLET** (*Aerodramus unicolor*) – Easily the most common of the tour's swifts, seen on many days. This widespread species was the medium-large, unicolored one.
- ALPINE SWIFT** (*Apus melba*) – One of these huge swifts (they have a wingspan of almost two feet!) zoomed back and forth across the forest around Lion Rock, dwarfing the nearby Little Swifts.
- LITTLE SWIFT (INDIAN)** (*Apus affinis singalensis*) – Scores coursed back and forth over the waters of the reservoir at Udawalawe, flashing those distinctive white rump patches, and other chattering groups swirled over the forest at Sigiriya.
- ASIAN PALM-SWIFT** (*Cypsiurus balasiensis*) – Small numbers on scattered days, including little groups chasing around over Makandawa. The long, pointed tail of this diminutive species is distinctive.

#### Hemiprocnidae (Treeswifts)

- CRESTED TREESWIFT** (*Hemiprogne coronata*) – Regular on the first half of the tour, typically in flight -- though we did spot a few perched birds among the big trees at Yala.

#### Trogonidae (Trogons)

- MALABAR TROGON** (*Harpactes fasciatus fasciatus*) – Some fine spotting by one of our jeep drivers netted us a pair of these handsome birds along the track up to Sinharaja. The male, in particular, was pretty showy, perching repeatedly in trees right near the road.

#### Upupidae (Hoopoes)

- EURASIAN HOOPOE** (*Upupa epops*) – A few seen at Yala, including one in a tree right near the entrance, seen as we waited our turn to go through the gate.

#### Bucerotidae (Hornbills)

**SRI LANKA GRAY HORNBILL** (*Ocyrceros gingalensis*) – Almost ridiculously common around Kitulgala and Sigiriya, where they were raiding the fruiting trees. [E]

**MALABAR PIED-HORNBILL** (*Anthracoceros coronatus*) – Several small gangs of these big black and white hornbills surveyed Udawalawe NP from some of the biggest emergent dead trees along the roadway.

#### Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

**COMMON KINGFISHER** (*Alcedo atthis*) – Plenty of these little gems seen nicely, including one studying the water from a patch of dead reeds near our airport hotel, several gleaming in the sun at Bundala, and one on a low, sweeping bow over one of the few puddles left near Sigiriya.

**STORK-BILLED KINGFISHER** (*Pelargopsis capensis*) – One of these -- largest kingfisher of the tour -- hunted along the little ditch edging the garden at our airport hotel, and we saw others at Bundala.

**WHITE-THROATED KINGFISHER** (*Halcyon smyrnensis*) – Recorded nearly every day of the tour, with dozens spotted patiently hunting from wires over rice paddies and wetlands across the whole country.

**PIED KINGFISHER** (*Ceryle rudis*) – Regular in the southeast, especially throughout Bundala, where they hovered like animated crossword puzzles above the salt pans and marshes. We saw a few others over the tanks around Sigiriya.

#### Meropidae (Bee-eaters)

**GREEN BEE-EATER** (*Merops orientalis*) – Common in the dry, open country of Udawalawe, Bundala and Yala -- where their gleaming, metallic colors caught the sun on many occasions -- with smaller numbers around Sigiriya.

**BLUE-TAILED BEE-EATER** (*Merops philippinus*) – Easily the most common and widespread of the tour's bee-eaters, seen on most days -- from the salt pans at sea level right along the coast at Bundala to the cool, grassy heights of Horton Plains NP.

**CHESTNUT-HEADED BEE-EATER** (*Merops leschenaulti*) – We didn't get much in the way of looks until we headed from Nuwara Eliya towards Kandy; then, a trio of birds hunting from trees right beside the road gave us some excellent views.

#### Coraciidae (Rollers)

**INDIAN ROLLER** (*Coracias benghalensis*) – A few watched from bare, dead snags in Udawalawe.

**DOLLARBIRD** (*Eurystomus orientalis irisi*) – One sat in a dead tree high on the ridge across from our Kitulgala hotel, occasionally leaping off its branch to hawk passing insects. Though it was pretty far away, we could clearly see that coral-red bill against its dark plumage.

#### Megalaimidae (Asian Barbets)

**CRIMSON-FRONTED BARBET** (*Psilopogon rubricapillus*) – Our first was a "where's Waldo" bird high in a tree at the Kandy Botanical Garden. Fortunately for our neck muscles, we spotted another in a much lower tree near Lion Rock, and enjoyed comparisons between this and the next species in a fruiting fig tree at our Sigiriya hotel.

**COPPERSMITH BARBET** (*Psilopogon haemacephalus indicus*) – Most of the group got good looks at one of these little dry-country barbets in the courtyard at Kalu's Hideaway. Those who didn't caught up -- in spades -- at the fruiting tree on the grounds of our Sigiriya hotel, where several mingled with the mobs of barbets, hornbills, orioles and more gobbling figs.

**BROWN-HEADED BARBET** (*Psilopogon zeylanicus*) – The common barbet of the tour, seen (and heard!) on many days. We had particularly nice views of five on our very first morning, as they bounced through one of the bare trees near the entrance to our hotel.

**YELLOW-FRONTED BARBET** (*Psilopogon flavifrons*) – Common in the wetter forests around Kitulgala and Sinharaja, with others at the Surrey Bird Sanctuary and Uda Wattakele. [E]

#### Picidae (Woodpeckers)

**BROWN-CAPPED WOODPECKER** (*Dendrocopos nanus gymnophthalmus*) – A couple of these tiny woodpeckers bounced around in the top of a dead tree along the Ketalapathala road on our first full day in Sinharaja; they didn't look much bigger than nuthatches!

**YELLOW-CROWNED WOODPECKER** (*Dendrocopos mahrattensis*) – Two hitched their way around in one of the biggest trees left in Udawalawe. The very plain face of this species is distinctive.

**LESSER YELLOWNAPE** (*Picus chlorolophus wellsi*) – Our first, part of a mixed flock near the entrance to Sinharaja Forest Reserve, proved elusive in the fading light of our first afternoon. Fortunately, we spotted a much more satisfying pair a couple of days later. That primarily green plumage is distinctive.

**BLACK-RUMPED FLAMEBACK (RED-BACKED)** (*Dinopium benghalense psarodes*) – Common and widespread, including a noisy pair on the grounds of our airport hotel, one that displaced the White-naped Woodpeckers in Debrawewa (checking out the nest hole they had just left), and a few near the Kitulgala police station.

**CRIMSON-BACKED FLAMEBACK** (*Chrysocolaptes stricklandi*) – Less common than the previous species, but still reasonably widespread, with particularly good studies of one along the Ketalapathala road (showing its paler face and white throat) and of others zooming back and forth over the forest at Horton Plains -- clearly having a serious border dispute!

**WHITE-NAPED WOODPECKER** (*Chrysocolaptes festivus*) – A pair clinging to the sides of a tall coconut palm in Debrawewa allowed repeated scope studies.

#### Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

**EURASIAN KESTREL** (*Falco tinnunculus*) – One glided past several times over the tussocky humps of grass on Horton Plains.

**ORIENTAL HOBBY** (*Falco severus*) – One shot over our heads late in the evening at the Debrawewa tank, showing as little more than a dark silhouette against the sky.

**PEREGRINE FALCON** (*Falco peregrinus*) – One sailed over the forest at Sigiriya, vanishing beyond trees before we got much more than a fleeting glimpse. The subspecies found here -- peregrinator -- is sometimes broken out as a separate species, the Shaheen.

#### Psittaculidae (Old World Parrots)

**ALEXANDRINE PARAKEET** (*Psittacula eupatria*) – Regular in the lowlands, particularly around Makandawa and Sigiriya, with others over Kandy. Most of the birds we saw were in flight, though we did get scope looks at a noisy flock perched atop a huge spreading tree across the river from our Kitulgala hotel.

**ROSE-RINGED PARAKEET** (*Psittacula krameri*) – Common and widespread throughout much of the tour, with especially nice studies of small groups along the many tracks at Bundala.

**PLUM-HEADED PARAKEET** (*Psittacula cyanocephala*) – Our best views came at a random roadside stop en route to Embilipitiya, where we spotted a handful -- including a gorgeous male -- while searching for some Small Minivets that had flown across the road.

**LAYARD'S PARAKEET** (*Psittacula calthrapae*) – A little family group in the palms right outside the restaurant of our Kitulgala hotel provided a nice start an afternoon's walk; it can be tough to see this species well on the ground! We saw others in flight around Sinharaja. [E]

**SRI LANKA HANGING-PARROT** (*Loriculus beryllinus*) – Quite common on the wet side of the island, including a couple hanging upside down to nibble palm flowers from a tree in Makandawa, and others doing the same along the Ketlapathala road. We regularly heard their high-pitched calls as they rocketed past. [E]

#### Pittidae (Pittas)

**INDIAN PITTA** (*Pitta brachyura*) – As usual, we heard far more of these winter visitors than we saw -- but we saw a number of them very well indeed. Our first was a singing bird perched on a bare branch up the hill from where we waited for folks to use a kindly offered restroom en route to Kitulgala. But our best view

#### Vangidae (Vangas, Helmetshrikes, and Allies)

**SRI LANKA WOODSHRIKE** (*Tephrodornis affinis*) – Scattered pairs at Udawalawe and Bundala, but our best views came at the coconut stand near Sigiriya, where a little group of them swirled right over our heads. [E]

**BAR-WINGED FLYCATCHER-SHRIKE** (*Hemipus picatus leggei*) – Seen in a few places across our tour route, but our best views came at Pattipola, where we had super views of at least two with the mixed flock that followed our Kashmir Flycatcher sighting.

#### Artamidae (Woodswallows)

**ASHY WOODSWALLOW** (*Artamus fuscus*) – A handful hunted from wires over roadside rice paddies, seen on our drive from Colombo to Kitulgala.

#### Aegithinidae (Ioras)

**COMMON IORA** (*Aegithina tiphia*) – Common through much of the tour, with especially nice views of a pair in small trees near the Kitulgala police station on our second visit there, interrupting our search for Green-billed Coucals.

**WHITE-TAILED IORA** (*Aegithina nigrolutea*) – Our best views came at Udawalawe, where a trio of birds swirled through the thorny scrub along the main track. This species shows far more white in the wing (and the tail, of course) than does the previous species.

#### Campephagidae (Cuckooshrikes)

**SMALL MINIVET** (*Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*) – After an all-too-brief first encounter while driving to Embilipitiya, we had far more satisfying views of a little group hunting in the treetops at Lunugamwahera NP, more in a mixed flock with Orange Minivets near the entrance to the Kandy Botanical Garden, and a handful around Sigiriya.

**ORANGE MINIVET** (*Pericrocotus flammeus*) – Regular throughout, typically in small flocks that boiled through the treetops. A group hunting the edge of a pond along the track up to Sinharaja (seen when we piled out to scope the Rufous-bellied Eagle) and another group near where we'd parked the bus at the Surrey Bird Sanctuary showed especially well. This species was recently split from the Scarlet Minivet.

**BLACK-HEADED CUCKOOSHRIKE** (*Lalage melanoptera sykesi*) – Our best views came on our very last morning, when we found one singing from a tree right near the road, allowing long, leisurely, repeated scope studies. Many in the group had seen more distant birds along a side road while en route to Kitulgala or in Sinharaja.

#### Laniidae (Shrikes)

**BROWN SHRIKE** (*Lanius cristatus*) – Common in the lowlands throughout -- particularly at Yala, where they seemed to be perched on every bush top! This is a winter visitor to Sri Lanka.

#### Oriolidae (Old World Orioles)

**BLACK-HOODED ORIOLE** (*Oriolus xanthornus ceylonensis*) – Another common and widespread species, seen well on many occasions -- including the singing, courting pair flashing around the "back entrance" to the ruins at Sigiriya one morning.

#### Dicruridae (Drongos)

**WHITE-BELLIED DRONGO (WHITE-VENTED)** (*Dicrurus caerulescens insularis*) – We finally caught up with this dry zone subspecies on the very last morning of the tour, perched up near our Black-headed Cuckooshrike.

**WHITE-BELLIED DRONGO (WHITE-VENTED)** (*Dicrurus caerulescens leucopygialis*) – By far the most common drongo of the trip, seen most days in all but the driest of habitats (where it was replaced by the previous subspecies).

**GREATER RACKET-TAILED DRONGO** (*Dicrurus paradiseus ceylonicus*) – One of the last new birds of the trip -- FINALLY, after three days of trying to find one -- seen by those who decided to forego the climb up Lion Rock. A calling pair responded near the back entrance to the ruins site at Sigiriya.

**SRI LANKA DRONGO** (*Dicrurus lophorinus*) – Regular in the thicker forests of the island's wet zone, typically with mixed flocks. Our first was with a gang of Yellow-browed Bulbuls in the Makandawa Forest Reserve, but our best views came in and around Sinharaja -- including one perched up conveniently close to a White-bellied Drongo along the Ketlapathala road. [E]

#### Rhipiduridae (Fantails)

**WHITE-BROWED FANTAIL** (*Rhipidura aureola*) – Our first were a pair flitting through a big tree along the roadside on our journey towards Kitulgala. We saw others in the dry zones of Udawalawe, Yala, Bundala, and Sigiriya.

#### Monarchidae (Monarch Flycatchers)

**BLACK-NAPED MONARCH** (*Hypothymis azurea ceylonensis*) – Several pairs in and around Sinharaja, including a pair hunting along the Ketlapathala road. In poor light, this handsome species can look black and white!

**INDIAN PARADISE-FLYCATCHER** (*Terpsiphone paradisi*) – Very common throughout, with plenty of good views -- including some fine studies of a white male darting like a comet back and forth through the trees along a track near Sigiriya.

#### Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

**SRI LANKA BLUE-MAGPIE** (*Urocissa ornata*) – A gang of six noisy birds bounced through some trees near the entrance to Sinharaja, then flew across the marsh to some trees on the other side. Even better were the trio checking the walls and trees near the lights of Martin's Forest Lodge for resting moths. Yowza, what a gorgeous bird! [E]



**HOUSE CROW** (*Corvus splendens*) – Seen on most days, particularly around the cities and towns we passed through; flocks of 20-30 swarmed over piles of garbage along the road, and dozens flapped, calling, over our airport hotel.

**LARGE-BILLED CROW** (*Corvus macrorhynchos*) – Very common throughout -- though typically in much smaller groups than the previous species - with scope studies of some on the grounds of our airport hotel.

#### *Alaudidae (Larks)*

**ASHY-CROWNED SPARROW-LARK** (*Eremopterix griseus*) – We spotted a handful of these striking birds on the bulldozed flats at Bundala, enjoying their peculiarly waddling gait as they scurried among the elephant droppings.

**JERDON'S BUSHLARK** (*Mirafra affinis*) – Quite common at Udawalawe NP, with others at Yala. These look a bit like steroid-taking pipits -- though missing a tail and with a stouter bill, of course!

**ORIENTAL SKYLARK** (*Alauda gulgula*) – We saw a few along the track through Udawalawe, but our best looks came at Bundala, where a handful pattered along the edges of the saltworks ponds.

#### *Hirundinidae (Swallows)*

**BANK SWALLOW** (*Riparia riparia*) – A few mingled with the thousands of Barn Swallows swirling over the marshes near the entrance to Bundala -- giving us particularly good views when they settled on the wires.

**BARN SWALLOW** (*Hirundo rustica*) – Easily the most common of the tour's swallows, seen on most days. Birds found in Eurasia are far paler below than are North America's subspecies.

**HILL SWALLOW** (*Hirundo domicola*) – Surprisingly scarce this year, with a few over the grasslands at Horton Plains (and one sitting on the restroom roof there) and a scattering of others over the Glenloch tea plantation buildings. This species was split from the Pacific Swallow.

**SRI LANKA SWALLOW** (*Cecropis hyperythra*) – Especially nice looks at a group of them hunting low over some rice fields between Colombo and Kitulgala, and of four perched on wires beside a house in Makandawa, seen right before the heavens opened. [E]

#### *Stenostiridae (Fairy Flycatchers)*

**GRAY-HEADED CANARY-FLYCATCHER** (*Culicicapa ceylonensis*) – Regular in the highlands, including one hunting over the driveway at the Surrey Bird Sanctuary, and another that returned again and again to the same bare branch a foot off the ground below the track where we waited for the Sri Lanka Whistling-Thrush to make an appearance one evening.

#### *Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice)*

**CINEREOUS TIT** (*Parus cinereus mahrattarum*) – Common in the highlands, including a scolding pair over our heads at the Surrey Bird Sanctuary, and a busy pair with a mixed flock in Horton Plains. This species was recently split from the widespread Great Tit.

#### *Sittidae (Nuthatches)*

**VELVET-FRONTED NUTHATCH** (*Sitta frontalis*) – Surprisingly, we got all the way to the mountains before most of the group laid eyes on this widespread species. Then we laid PLENTY of eyes on them, repeatedly, as they hitched back and forth over our heads at the Surrey Bird Sanctuary, near Pattipola (part of that big mixed flock that included the Kashmir Flycatcher) and at Sigiriya. What a gorgeous little bird!

#### *Pycnonotidae (Bulbuls)*

**BLACK-CAPPED BULBUL** (*Pycnonotus melanicterus*) – Regular in small numbers, primarily in the wet zone, including one sitting in a treetop near the Kitulgala police station early one morning, and one mooching around in a palm tree near the balcony dining room at Martin's Forest Lodge. [E]

**RED-VENTED BULBUL** (*Pycnonotus cafer cafer*) – If we had a dollar for every one we saw, we could nearly have paid for our trips!

**YELLOW-EARED BULBUL** (*Pycnonotus penicillatus*) – Splendid views of many in the highlands of Horton Plains; what a handsome bird! [E]

**WHITE-BROWED BULBUL** (*Pycnonotus luteolus insulae*) – Seen primarily in the drier habitats we visited, with particularly nice studies of a few rummaging through some bushes near our last morning's Black-headed Cuckooshrike.

**YELLOW-BROWED BULBUL** (*Iole indica*) – Common in the wet lowland forests of the southwest, including a big group swirling through the treetops at the Makandawa Forest Preserve and a pair snuggled up and singing in a bush near track down to the canoe ferry.

**SQUARE-TAILED BULBUL (SRI LANKA)** (*Hypsipetes ganeesa humii*) – Restricted to the wet zone, where we saw numerous pairs. That coral-colored bill is certainly eye-catching!

#### *Phylloscopidae (Leaf Warblers)*

**GREEN WARBLER** (*Phylloscopus nitidus*) – Regular throughout, with quite a few seen well and far more heard than seen. We agreed that "green" was a bit of an overstatement; "gray-green" would have been more accurate! One flicking over the road near the Kitulgala police station (not far from our lovely male Tickell's Blue-Flycatcher) showed especially well.

**GREENISH WARBLER** (*Phylloscopus trochiloides*) – One twitched through an eye-level treetop along the road in Horton Plains, seen by some as we started our walk in search of whistling-thrushes. Its call is what quickly separated it from the more expected Green and Large-billed Leaf warblers.

**LARGE-BILLED LEAF WARBLER** (*Phylloscopus magnirostris*) – We heard far more of these than we saw (a rising "Yes it IS" that was common in woodlands throughout), but had fine views of several -- some around the village across the Kelani River from our hotel, some around the police station nearby, and some at the home we visited atop the hill (where the little boy slid down the hill with his toothbrush). The bold eyeline, slightly darker cap and longer bill separate this species from the previous one.

#### *Acrocephalidae (Reed-Warblers and Allies)*

**BOOTED WARBLER** (*Iduna caligata*) – One flicked through a dense bush over the trail near the remote Sigiriya tank we visited on our last morning, flitting in and out of view.

**SYKES'S WARBLER** (*Iduna rama*) – Those in Udi's vehicle at Udawalawe had one pop out of the same bush as the Jungle Prinia they were trying to get a better look at. This is an uncommon winter visitor in Sri Lanka.

**BLYTH'S REED-WARBLER** (*Acrocephalus dumetorum*) – Our best looks came at Victoria Park (where a pair twitching through the tall weeds along the stream had us hoping for our first Kashmir Flycatcher) and in Horton Plains (where one worked through the lowest branches right over that lily pad bedecked pond). We saw others at Udawalawe and Bundala.

**CLAMOROUS REED-WARBLER (BROWN)** (*Acrocephalus stentoreus meridionalis*) – It took a bit of patience, but we all eventually got nice views of one sitting atop some reeds in a clumpy island along the Bundala entrance road. Its loud, abrupt song was much easier to hear than the bird was to see!

Locustellidae (Grassbirds and Allies)

**SRI LANKA BUSH-WARBLER** (*Elaphornis palliseri*) – Our first skulked in the deepest, darkest part of a thicket along the road through Horton Plains. Fortunately, we found another one further along the road; first, it investigated some nearby branches, then it sat preening in the sunshine just up the hill. Wonderful! [E]

Cisticolidae (Cisticolas and Allies)

**ZITTING CISTICOLA** (*Cisticola juncidis*) – Especially common at Bundala, where dozens perched up on reed stems or bounced over the wetland vegetation. We had others in the grasslands of Horton Plains, and around the rice paddies en route to Kitulgala.

**COMMON TAILORBIRD** (*Orthotomus sutorius*) – Very common throughout, including one tiny bird with absolutely no tail at all. The various loud, repetitive songs of this species were a regular part of the tour soundtrack.

**GRAY-BREASTED PRINIA** (*Prinia hodgsonii pectoralis*) – One in a nearly leafless tree in the courtyard at Kalu's Hideaway gave us great extended views from virtually all angles.

**JUNGLE PRINIA** (*Prinia sylvatica valida*) – One, showing its thick bill and red eye nicely, sat on a bare twig right near the road at Udawalawe, one of the first birds we saw after entering the park.

**ASHY PRINIA** (*Prinia socialis brevicauda*) – Certainly the most colorful of the tour's prinias; that pinkish belly is diagnostic. We saw them well at Udawalawe, and those in Udi's van at Yala spotted another.

**PLAIN PRINIA** (*Prinia inornata insularis*) – The most common of the tour's prinias, seen well on multiple days -- particularly in the dry country around Udawalawe.

Sylviidae (Sylviid Warblers)

**HUME'S WHITETHROAT** (*Sylvia althaea*) – Though reasonably common in Bundala, these proved frustratingly uncooperative, showing very well for some and not at all for others. We certainly all heard their gruff growls emanating from the bushes near the cliff-top overlook!

Paradoxornithidae (Parrotbills, Wrenit, and Allies)

**YELLOW-EYED BABBLER** (*Chrysomma sinense nasale*) – A little gang of calling birds flitted through the scruffy trees along the road near the entrance to Udawalawe -- great spotting, Jane! We found others at Bundala.

Zosteropidae (White-eyes, Yuhinas, and Allies)

**SRI LANKA WHITE-EYE** (*Zosterops ceylonensis*) – Our first were an animated pair along the Ketalapathala road, conveniently close to a nearby Oriental White-eye for easy comparison. We had dozens (scores? hundreds?) of others at Horton Plains -- giving us views from absolutely every imaginable angle. [E]

**ORIENTAL WHITE-EYE** (*Zosterops palpebrosus*) – Especially nice studies along the Ketalapathala road, where we found one in close company with the previous species. We also saw them around Kitulgala, in the Kandy Botanical Garden and around Sigiriya.

Timaliidae (Tree-Babblers, Scimitar-Babblers, and Allies)

**TAWNY-BELLIED BABBLER** (*Dumetia hyperythra phillipsi*) – A couple swirled around our vehicles at Bundala, giving us fine views from just about every conceivable angle. We saw another one right beside the bus on our way back from the Sigiriya tank our last morning -- though it was considerably less confiding than our first!

**DARK-FRONTED BABBLER** (*Rhopocichla atriceps*) – One little group bounced through the tea plants along the road up to the Makandawa Forest Reserve, approaching to within mere feet of us as they foraged. We had even better views of another little gang swarming along the roadside at Horton Plains.

**SRI LANKA SCIMITAR-BABBLER** (*Pomatorhinus melanurus*) – Our closest encounter came along the Ketalapathala road, where we had arm's length views of one poking and prodding its way up and down trunks and branches of nearby pine trees. We had others elsewhere in Sinharaja. [E]

Pellorneidae (Ground Babblers and Allies)

**BROWN-CAPPED BABBLER** (*Pellorneum fuscocapillus*) – One cavorted across the muddy open ground right in front of us near the Kitulgala police station one morning, eventually stopping for a rather vigorous preen. We saw another nicely at Lunugamwehera, while waiting (in vain) for the singing White-rumped Shama to appear. [E]

Leiothrichidae (Laughingthrushes and Allies)

**ORANGE-BILLED BABBLER** (*Turdoides rufescens*) – We found a number of truly giant flocks (40+? 50+?) of these noisy endemics in the wet forests of Makandawa and Sinharaja. Sometimes, their boisterous numbers made it hard to pick out the NON Orange-billed Babblers traveling among them! [E]

**YELLOW-BILLED BABBLER** (*Turdoides affinis taprobanus*) – Common and widespread, seen nearly every day of the tour -- including the big group bouncing through the grass under the palm trees surrounding our airport hotel, seen on the first morning of the tour.

**ASHY-HEADED LAUGHINGTHRUSH** (*Garrulax cinereifrons*) – Finally! After just missing this species for days in Sinharaja (hearing their voices growing fainter as they moved off through the forest), we lucked into a noisy group of five swarming through the trees at the entrance to Martin's Forest Lodge on an early morning visit. They didn't stay long, but they gave us great views while they were there! [E]

Muscicapidae (Old World Flycatchers)

**ASIAN BROWN FLYCATCHER** (*Muscicapa dauurica*) – Scattered individuals, including one hunting on the grounds of our airport hotel, another along the Ketalapathala road in Sinharaja, and several around Sigiriya. Though similar in plumage to the next species, this one has dark legs and hunts from higher up in the trees.

**BROWN-BREASTED FLYCATCHER** (*Muscicapa muttui*) – Our first was hunting right along the main road in Makandawa, seen just before the big thunderstorm moved in. The pale legs of this species help to distinguish it from the previous species -- as does its habit of hunting from low perches only 3-6 feet off the ground.

**INDIAN ROBIN** (*Copsychus fulvicatus leucopterus*) – Seen on most of our days in the island's dry zones, including a few flitting around in dead logs below the tree where we searched for our Chestnut-winged Cuckoo, and some bouncing along the roadsides around Sigiriya.

**ORIENTAL MAGPIE-ROBIN** (*Copsychus saularis*) – Regular throughout, often in pairs. The lovely song of this species -- first heard when we found one singing from a TV aerial near our airport hotel -- was a pleasing addition to the tour soundtrack.

**WHITE-RUMPED SHAMA (WHITE-RUMPED)** (*Copsychus malabaricus leggei*) – Our first looks came at Uda Wattakele, where a long-tailed singing male regaled us from a branch right near the path for long minutes. We saw other splendidly along one of our "regular" tracks near Sigiriya;

they bounded back and forth across the road, tails cocked, as dusk fell -- and those flashy white rumps were certainly noticeable then!

**TICKELL'S BLUE-FLYCATCHER** (*Cyornis tickelliae jerdoni*) – Our first was an occasionally singing male hunting from a tree over the path near the Kitulgala police station. We saw another at the Surrey Bird Sanctuary, and more around Sigiriya. What a handsome little bird!

**DULL-BLUE FLYCATCHER** (*Eumyias sordidus*) – A pair flitting through trees over the driveway at the Surrey Bird Sanctuary were part of a big mixed flock that kept us busy while Udi tracked down the Brown Wood-Owls. We saw plenty more in the highlands of Horton Plains, where they're common. [E]

**INDIAN BLUE ROBIN** (*Larvivora brunnea*) – Our first was a drab youngster that made repeated close approaches in a quiet backyard, while we wait for the Sri Lanka Spurfowl to make an appearance. We saw a handsome male a bit further along the Ketlapathala road, plus a somber brown female at a rice pite beside a roadside hut in Nuwara Eliya.

**SRI LANKA WHISTLING-THRUSH** (*Myophonus blighi*) – And here's our prime example of persistence paying off! After searching unsuccessfully for them at Horton Plains (darn that new smooth road bringing up all those extra tourist vehicles!), we found one on a bend in the road near Nuwara Eliya -- but only the first few people in line got a look. After a long, fruitless search for them the following morning, we tried ONE MORE SPOT before heading back to the hotel, and were treated to fabulous views (for nearly a minute!) of a male in a sheltered gully. Yahoo! [E]

**KASHMIR FLYCATCHER** (*Ficedula subrubra*) – After striking out on this little migrant at Victoria Park, we spotted one (and heard another) at a random roadside stop near Pattipola, on our drive back from Horton Plains. It sang from a series of low branches, occasionally flashing off after some insect.

**PIED BUSHCHAT** (*Saxicola caprata atratus*) – A few dozen, mostly in scattered pairs, bounced across the tops of the big grass clumps and small shrubs along the road through the grasslands at Horton Plains. The male's white wing patches were particularly noticeable when he flew.

#### Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

**PIED THRUSH** (*Geokichla wardii*) – Two males in Nuwara Eliya's Victoria Park posed reasonably nicely for the scopes. Though it took a bit of shifting around to see all of the various body parts, I think most of us got there in the end!

**SPOT-WINGED THRUSH** (*Geokichla spiloptera*) – Fabulous views of a pair foraging right beside the path in Makandawa Forest Reserve, with plenty of serenades from others towards dusk there and at Sinharaja. [E]

**ORANGE-HEADED THRUSH** (*Geokichla citrina*) – Our first was a skulking bird seen (in bits and pieces) as it lurked in bushes up the hill at the Surrey Bird Sanctuary. Fortunately, we had much better views of others near "Udi's puddle" (constructed with great care and attention!) in Sigiriya. This handsome species is a winter visitor from the continent.

**SRI LANKA THRUSH** (*Zoothera imbricata*) – As usual, this skulker was one of the tougher endemics to get a good look at. We found one collecting invertebrates from the leaf litter under some of the thickest, densest vegetation alongside the track in Sinharaja. This species was only recently split from the mainland's Scaly Thrush. [E]

#### Sturnidae (Starlings)

**SRI LANKA MYNA** (*Gracula ptilogenys*) – Udi and Elena spotted one outside our hotel in Kitulgala, but the rest of us had to wait until we got to Sinharaja, where we found a close pair in a treetop near the house we sheltered in during the rainstorm. Some of us had more distant views of another trio that chased our first White-faced Starling out of a tree on the horizon, visible from Martin's Forest Lodge. [E]

**SOUTHERN HILL MYNA** (*Gracula indica*) – Our first were near the Kitulgala police station on our gray morning visit. We saw others at Sinharaja (mostly in flight), but our best views came at Uda Wattakele Royal Forest Park in Kandy, where dozens gobbled Sapu fruits from a huge tree.

**ROSY STARLING** (*Pastor roseus*) – We spotted a handful of scruffy youngsters, just starting to show some pink feathers, at Yala and Bundala.

**WHITE-FACED STARLING** (*Sturnornis albofrontatus*) – Our first singing bird was chased off a distant snag shortly after we'd scoped it from the deck at Martin's Forest Lodge. Fortunately, we then found a much closer trio in a tree right near the road just up the hill from Martin's -- a view that showed them to be much prettier than the pictures in the books suggested they would be. They chortled and chased each other through the branches until they were finally seen off by another pair of Sri Lanka Mynas. [E]

**BRAHMINY STARLING** (*Sturnia pagodarum*) – Small numbers at Yala, including one seen well near our Sloth Bear spot.

**COMMON MYNA** (*Acridotheres tristis*) – Ubiquitous and daily, often trundling along beside the road, within inches of the traffic hurtling past.

#### Chloropseidae (Leafbirds)

**JERDON'S LEAFBIRD** (*Chloropsis jerdoni*) – Less common than the next species, with especially good views of a pair foraging in tree near the village of Makandawa. We saw others at Bundala and around Sigiriya.

**GOLDEN-FRONTED LEAFBIRD** (*Chloropsis aurifrons*) – Our first shared a fruiting bush (right over our heads along the road) with a Yellow-fronted Barbet -- which caused some confusion -- seen on our drive to Kitulgala. We saw plenty more throughout the rest of the tour; this was the more common of the two leafbirds we saw.

#### Dicaeidae (Flowerpeckers)

**THICK-BILLED FLOWERPECKER (INDIAN)** (*Dicaeum agile zeylonicum*) – Our first was a flyby seen only by a few folks in Udi's vehicle at Udawalawe. A few more of the group saw another near Sigiriya on the day that some climbed Lion Rock.

**WHITE-THROATED FLOWERPECKER** (*Dicaeum vincens*) – Great views of a pair feeding in a flowering tree outside the restaurant at our Kitulgala hotel, with others seen nicely in Sinharaja. This is by far the most brightly plumaged of the island's flowerpeckers. [E]

**PALE-BILLED FLOWERPECKER** (*Dicaeum erythrorhynchos ceylonense*) – We had very nice views of some over the parking lot at our airport hotel, which allowed us to see well their distinctively pale, curved beaks. There were plenty of others throughout the tour --though we tended to ignore them a bit after that first encounter!

#### Nectariniidae (Sunbirds and Spiderhunters)

**PURPLE-RUMPED SUNBIRD** (*Leptocoma zeylonica zeylonica*) – Very common throughout most of our tour route, missing only in the highlands. A male in full sunlight is pretty spectacular!

**PURPLE SUNBIRD** (*Cinnyris asiaticus*) – Found in the drier parts of our tour route, including one preening in a bush right beside the track in Bundala. Most were females or young males, but we did see a few properly purple adult males.

**LONG-BILLED SUNBIRD** (*Cinnyris lotenius lotenius*) – First seen right near the tennis court at our airport hotel, with others on scattered days throughout the tour. This well-named species is also known as Loten's Sunbird; it's endemic to southern India and Sri Lanka.

#### Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)

**FOREST WAGTAIL** (*Dendronanthus indicus*) – A few folks saw some bounding over the grounds of our airport hotel the first evening, heading towards the rosy sky to the west, but our first proper look was a pair that waggled their way around an open clearing in the forest at Lunugamwahera NP. Udi got folks who missed that pair on another one working along the edge of the little stream in Victoria Park.

**WESTERN YELLOW WAGTAIL (GRAY-HEADED)** (*Motacilla flava thunbergi*) – Small numbers at Bundala, particularly along the tracks and bunds around the saltworks. Unlike the next species, their entire underparts are yellow.

**GRAY WAGTAIL** (*Motacilla cinerea*) – Regular in the highlands, including one wagging its way across a roof below the dining balcony at Martin's Forest Lodge, and one trotting across the lily pads on a pond at Horton Plains. This is a particularly long-tailed wagtail.

**RICHARD'S PIPIT** (*Anthus richardi*) – One at Bundala seemed to be suffering from some serious feather mite ailment.

**PADDYFIELD PIPIT** (*Anthus rufulus*) – This was the most common of the tour's pipits, seen in good numbers at Udawalawe and Bundala -- and at Horton Plains, where a trio of them cavorted in the road right beside our bus.

**BLYTH'S PIPIT** (*Anthus godlewskii*) – A few of these rarer pipits were seen at both Udawalawe and Bundala, where they were distinguished primarily by their calls.

#### *Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)*

**HOUSE SPARROW** (*Passer domesticus*) – Not especially common, though we did see small groups of them in some of the bigger towns we passed through.

#### *Ploceidae (Weavers and Allies)*

**STREAKED WEAVER** (*Ploceus manyar*) – A burgeoning colony along the edge of the big Debrawewa tank gave us ample opportunity to study them with the scopes -- particularly when we found where they were building their intricate nests. There was lots of to-ing and fro-ing with mouthfuls of grassy bits to weave into their growing nests -- and a nice comparison between the many Streaked Weaver nests and the single Baya Weaver nest.

[N]

**BAYA WEAVER** (*Ploceus philippinus*) – A handsome male and a couple of drabber females paused for a few minutes atop a scruffy bush at Bundala. This species is less tied to water than the Streaked Weaver is.

#### *Estrildidae (Waxbills and Allies)*

**INDIAN SILVERBILL** (*Euodice malabarica*) – Multiple noisy gangs roamed the scrub at Udawalawe, often perching like ornaments in the tall grasses, allowing good study.

**WHITE-RUMPED MUNIA** (*Lonchura striata*) – Our best views came at the beginning and end of the tour, including one perched on a wire over our airport hotel, and several pairs nibbling seeds from huge grass spikes along the roadsides.

**BLACK-THROATED MUNIA** (*Lonchura kelaarti kelaarti*) – The least common of the tour's munias, seen only in the wet zone. Those in Udi's van on one of our drives up to Sinharaja spotted a group feeding along the road (while the rest of us were enjoying our perched Rufous-bellied Eagle), and we saw a group of four bound overhead while we watched our cooperative Kashmir Flycatcher.

**SCALY-BREASTED MUNIA** (*Lonchura punctulata*) – A pair gathered nesting material on the grounds of our airport hotel, others foraged in the weedy edge of a rice paddy en route to Kitulgala, and we saw plenty of others around Sigiriya. [N]

**TRICOLORED MUNIA** (*Lonchura malacca*) – Quite common in the southeast lowlands -- and around the visitor's center at Horton Plains, where a flock of some 70 fed on grass seeds. Several around the Debrawewa tanks were gathering nesting material. [N]

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## MAMMALS

**INDIAN ROUNDLEAF BAT** (*Hipposideros lankadiva*) – We saw a few of these big insectivorous bats winnowing back and forth over the forest around Martin's Forest Lodge one evening.

**SCHNEIDER'S LEAF-NOSED BAT** (*Hipposideros speoris*) – Bigger numbers of these smaller insectivorous bats twisted and turned over the clearing at Martin's Forest Lodge one evening.

**INDIAN FLYING-FOX** (*Pteropus giganteus*) – Very, very common in the lowlands, with big colonies in many places -- including the thousands hanging like fruit (big, noisy fruit!) in the Rain Trees along the edge of the Debrawewa tanks, and another noisy gang in the trees near our Kandy hotel. Watching streams of them heading out at dusk was pretty impressive!

**LESSER SHORT-NOSED FRUIT BAT** (*Cynopterus brachyotis*) – We spotted a handful among the palm trees on the grounds of our airport hotel while waiting for it to get dark enough to look for owls.

**LESSER WOOLLY HORSESHOE BAT** (*Rhinolophus beddomei*) – This was one of the bats we saw in the skies over Martin's Forest Lodge on our evening visit there.

**INDIAN PIPISTRELLE** (*Pipistrellus coromandra*) – Quite common in the skies over the Debrawewa tanks, with others around Sigiriya. This species is an insect eater.

**KELAART'S PIPISTRELLE** (*Pipistrellus ceylonicus*) – Some were among the bats winnowing over the palm grove around our airport hotel the first evening of the tour.

**TOQUE MACAQUE** (*Macaca sinica*) – Seen throughout the tour, including a huge group of them swarming along the road (and snuggling together in big, sleepy groups beside it) at Uda Wattakele. [E]

**TUFTED GRAY LANGUR** (*Semnopithecus priam*) – Common in the dry lowlands of the southeast, with others around Sigiriya -- including a few right on the grounds of our hotel.

**PURPLE-FACED LEAF MONKEY** (*Trachypithecus vetulus*) – We spotted several big groups around Sinharaja including some right by the park office, and another troop eating fruit near our first Rufous-bellied Eagle; these were all members of the subspecies "vetulus". We spotted the highland subspecies "monticola" -- looking very fuzzy and thick-furred -- at Horton Plains, and the dry country subspecies "philbricki" (paler than the previous two subspecies) in the forest around Lion Rock. [E]

**INDIAN HARE** (*Lepus nigricollis*) – Good views of this distinctive hare (also known as Black-naped Hare for its distinctive neck patch) in Bundala and Yala. We also had a very speedy individual rocket through the group at the Kandy Botanical Garden.

**INDIAN PALM SQUIRREL** (*Funambulus palmarum*) – The common squirrel of the trip, seen nearly every day. To North American eyes, this looks more like a chipmunk than a squirrel!

**LAYARD'S PALM SQUIRREL** (*Funambulus layardi*) – We had close looks at one of these little higher-elevation squirrels near the Sinharaja park office. Though similar in size to the more widespread Indian Palm Squirrel, this endemic species is darker, with an orangish central dorsal stripe. [E]

**DUSKY PALM SQUIRREL** (*Funambulus sublineatus*) – A few of these dark gray squirrels (they're striped, but their pelage is so dusky as to render those stripes nearly invisible) were well-studied at Horton Plains.

**SRI LANKAN (=GRIZZLED) GIANT SQUIRREL** (*Ratufa macroura*) – Nearly big enough to rival a monkey in size, these squirrels nonetheless managed to avoid detection by some of the group until the very last day. Fortunately, we all got there in the end! [E]

**LITTLE INDIAN FIELD MOUSE** (*Mus booduga*) – One of these tiny mice -- by far the smallest of the rodents on Sri Lanka -- also from scampered across the road in front of the bus as we headed back from Bundala village one evening.

**INDIAN GERBIL** (*Tatera indica*) – One ran across the road in front of the bus as we drove back from our late afternoon outing to Bundala village.

**COMMON JACKAL** (*Canis aureus*) – A couple trotted across a hot open area at Yala, stopping now and then to have a good sniff at the ground.

**SLOTH BEAR** (*Ursus ursinus*) – Wow, wow, wow! It took some patience -- and some excellent jockeying by our drivers (under Udi's tutelage) among the massive scrum of vehicles -- but we were all rewarded by a close encounter with this tough-to-see species. There are probably only 30 in all of Yala's 378 square miles!

**INDIAN GRAY MONGOOSE** (*Herpestes edwardsi*) – Fine views of one nosing its way through the forest along a track near Lion Rock.

**COMMON MONGOOSE** (*Herpestes smithi*) – This species, better known as the Ruddy Mongoose, was regular across the country. The one curled up on a big boulder on the track up to Sinharaja gave us great chance for study -- particularly as it proceeded to just look at us rather than run away!

**INDIAN BROWN MONGOOSE** (*Herpestes fuscus*) – One romped between two Sri Lanka Junglefowl roosters at Horton Plains.

**LEOPARD** (*Panthera pardus*) – One snoozing in the crotch of a huge tree at Yala was a highlight of our morning there. It lay on a big branch with its paws and long, twitching tail hanging over the sides, occasionally lifting its lovely head up for a yawn and a good scan around. We had long minutes before the scrum of other vehicles arrived -- at which point, the Leopard climbed down out of its tree and wandered off into the brush.

**INDIAN ELEPHANT** (*Elephas maximus*) – We debated whether to count the old-timer mooching handouts from tourists along the road near the Udawalawe dam. Fortunately, we caught up with a trio of truly wild individuals -- a female with a calf, and a big bull -- in Yala.

**WILD BOAR** (*Sus scrofa*) – Quite common at Yala, where we saw some grubbing in muddy patches and others snoozing under low bushes. Those tusks look pretty lethal!

**MUNTJAC (BARKING DEER)** (*Muntiacus muntjak*) – A couple in Uda Wattakele, including one that stood for long minutes in the open on a little ridge near the pond.

**SPOTTED DEER** (*Axis axis*) – Very common in Yala and Bundala, where we saw big grazing herds. This species has been widely introduced for hunting elsewhere in the world.

**SAMBAR** (*Cervus unicolor*) – A scattered few in the grasslands of Horton Plains -- including a huge buck resting near the road. We heard a few barking (probably at a Leopard) while we were walking along the road there looking for whistling-thrushes.

**ASIAN WATER BUFFALO** (*Bubalus bubalis*) – Big muddy groups lazed in the shallow puddles of Udawalawe and Yala. These are feral descendants of domesticated animals. According to every resource I've been able to check, there were never any Wild Water Buffalo (*Bubalus arnee*) on Sri Lanka.

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## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

The following is a list of the reptiles and amphibians we identified on the tour:

Asian House Toad *Duttaphrynus melanostictus* - We found one of these along the driveway of our airport hotel, just after dusk on our first evening.

Cricket Frog *Fejervarya limnocharis* - We spotted one of these -- a tiny youngster -- sitting on a dead leaf near the field with all the Lesser Cuckoos in Makandawa Forest Reserve.

Mugger Crocodile *Crocodylus palustris* - We saw a number of these big crocs lounging on banks throughout the tour. Then there was the evening near Bundala, where we saw all those floating eyeballs reflecting the spotlight beam -- yikes!

Asian Water Monitor *Varanus salvator* - This one was reasonably common around wet spots in the lowlands.

Bengal (Land) Monitor *Varanus bengalensis* - Very common in the drier country around Bundala and Yala.

Common Green Forest Lizard *Calotes calotes* - This was the speedy green lizard with the red head, seen well on multiple occasions -- including a big male on a concrete pole along the road on our way to Kitulgala.

Oriental Garden Lizard *Calotes versicolor* - This is the smaller brown cousin of the Common Green Forest Lizard; we saw this one well on multiple occasions too.

Black-lipped Lizard *Calotes nigrilabris* - This was the handsome endemic lizard we spotted (and scoped) in a tree near the road at Horton Plains.

Crestless Whistling Lizard (or Spineless Forest Lizard) *Calotes liocephalus* - We spotted one along the track through the village of Makandawa; this species is endemic to Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka Kangaroo Lizard *Otocryptis wiegmanni* - These little speedsters were common along the paths of the Makandawa Forest Park.

Black-spotted Kangaroo Lizard *Otocryptis nigristigma* - A handsome little male of this endemic species did a head-bobbing, back-humping display in the half-light of early morning along a track in Sigiriya.

Molligoda's Day Gecko *Cnemaspis molligodai* - We found one of these scampering around on the trunk of a tree near the visitor's center parking lot at Sinharaja one afternoon.

Rocky Day Gecko *Cnemaspis scalpensis* - One of these dark, little Sri Lankan endemics clung to the side of a big boulder just down the road from the entrance to Sinharaja, seen as we climbed the last part of the hill on foot one afternoon.

Brooke's House Gecko *Hemidactylus brookii* - These were the barred or spotted geckos that shared walls and ceilings with the next species; they proved particularly common at Kitulgala.

Asian (or Common) House Gecko *Hemidactylus frenatus* - These are the familiar creamy-pale geckos that were zipping around the walls and ceilings of nearly every place we stayed on the tour.

Hawksbill Sea Turtle *Eretmochelys imbricata* - One of these floated just offshore while we birded the coast at Bundala.

Green Sea Turtle *Chelonia mydas* - We saw one of these not far from our Hawksbill Sea Turtle while checking the sea from the clifftop at Bundala.

Sri Lankan Green Pit Viper *Trimeresurus trigonocephalus* - We spotted a small specimen of this handsome, endemic snake curled up in a tree along the road up to Sinharaja; it was still in the same spot every time we went by for three days!

Green Vine Snake *Ahetulla nasutus* - These were the very slender snakes we found in multiple spots in Sinharaja -- not to be confused with a similar-looking snake with the same common name found in Central and South America!

Hump-nosed Viper *Hypnale hypnale* - This was the small snake (which looked rather like a tiny Copperhead) we found along the road in Uda Wattakele Royal Forest Park. According to the literature, they don't get much bigger than 23 inches in length -- and are responsible for most of the snake bites recorded in Sri Lanka!

Checked Keelback *Xenochrophis piscator* - This was the handsome checked snake we saw lurking under the lotus leaves on the little pond near the Sinharaja visitor's center.

Sri Lankan Keelback *Xenochrophis asperrimus* - This species (as its name suggests) is endemic to the island. It is handsomely patterned, though far less checked than the previous species. We saw it in the same pond near the Sinharaja visitor's center.

Olive Keelback Snake *Atretium schistosum* - And this was the plain greenish snake we saw in the water along the back edge of the same pond as the previous two species. It's hard to believe there can be a frog left in that pond!

Common Kukri Snake *Oligodon arnensis* - This was one of the snakes Udi caught on the road on our drive back from Bundala village one evening; the name "Kukri" is a reference to the sharp kukri knives of the Nepalese -- and the teeth of the snake!

Common Cat (-eyed) Snake *Boiga trigonata* - This was the other, beautifully patterned, little snake Udi caught on our way back from Bundala village.

Bronzeback Dendrelaphis *Dendrelaphis tristis* - One along the road near Bundala village, before darkness fell.

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**Totals for the tour: 261 bird taxa and 29 mammal taxa**