



Field Guides Tour Report

Sri Lanka 2014

Oct 31, 2014 to Nov 17, 2014

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

The lovely island of Sri Lanka is off the radar screen for many birders, and that's unfortunate, because it offers a plethora of enticements: dozens of endemics, numerous regional specialties, comfortable (often upscale) lodgings, excellent spicy curries, a fine network of parks which protect a variety of habitats and an interesting local culture. Our two week sojourn around the southern half of the country took us to some great spots -- and brought us face to face with many of the feathered inhabitants of the island. Despite the all-too-frequent rain (darn those unseasonal monsoons), there were many highlights.

A pair of notoriously shy Sri Lanka Spurfowl with a chick scratched along a hillside, periodically serenading us with their loud duets. A trio of Black Bitterns posed in tall grasses alongside a tank full of lily pads. Three Crested Serpent-Eagles shared a thermal with a Black Eagle. A family of Sri Lanka Blue-Magpies dared each other to snatch bits of cheese sandwiches from our picnic shelter. Serendib Scops-Owls peered from leafy roosting spots. Gray-rumped Treeswifts perched like ornaments on a roadside tree, preening vigorously. A pair of Sri Lanka Frogmouths snuggled together on a slender branch. Tricolored Munias bounced around a highland garbage pail. A Kashmir Flycatcher made repeated sorties over a compost heap. A Layard's Parakeet landed atop a palm spike -- moments after Udi told us they seldom seem to perch in view.



The Sri Lanka Blue-Magpie is probably the country's most spectacular endemic -- big, colorful and relatively easy to see. Photo by participant Rick Woodruff.

Two White-rumped Shamas hunted and sang along a path in a city park. Red-faced Malkohas rustled through treetops while armies of Orange-billed Babblers bounded along tree branches. Ashy-headed Laughing-Thrushes investigated low bushes while Sri Lanka Drongos flashed through the forest above them. Orange Minivets flickered like bits of sunlight, Bar-winged Flycatcher-Shrikes made sorties from vertical vines and Sri Lanka Scimitar-Babblers poked along mossy branches looking for goodies. In the background, the repeated tones of at least one of the country's barbets were a constant. A Jungle Cat strolled into the dusk alongside the jeep track we were traveling on. And not one, not two, but THREE Jaguars sprawled on rocks or walls or crotches in trees at Yala NP, attracting admiring throngs of tour vehicles.

Thanks to all of you for helping to make this trip such fun to lead -- despite the sometimes soggy weather. I hope to see you all again, someday, somewhere! -- Megan

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

BIRDS

Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

LESSER WHISTLING-DUCK (*Dendrocygna javanica*) -- Several large flocks winged past at Bundala National Park, and we saw a few pairs floating on the lagoons there; we also saw some resting on mudflats in the tanks around Tissa and in the moat at Sigiriya. The dark underwing of this species is distinctive.

COTTON PYGMY-GOOSE (*Nettapus coromandelianus*) -- A pair flew in and landed in one of the lagoons while we tried to get everyone on a slowly stalking (and mostly motionless) Yellow Bittern at Bundala, distracting everyone momentarily. This species specializes in eating water lily bulbs.

GARGANEY (*Anas querquedula*) -- Two females snoozed on the edge of one of the lagoons near the entrance to Yala National Park, seen as we headed back to our hotel. Fortunately for those looking at their lifer Garganeys, one eventually lifted its head so that we could prove that they were ducks and not clumps of water buffalo poo!

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

SRI LANKA SPURFOWL (*Galloperdix bicalcarata*) – One of our first stops on our way into the Sinharaja Forest Preserve netted us super views of a calling pair of these elusive birds, with a young chick in tow. We heard the raucous duets of other pairs echoing from the forest in the preserve. [E]

SRI LANKA JUNGLEFOWL (*Gallus lafayetii*) – This year, we saw far more females than males, though we did find a few handsome specimens along the main trail at Sinharaja. At least one was rather battered at the back end, like he'd nearly been grabbed by something. [E]

INDIAN PEAFOWL (*Pavo cristatus*) – Once we reached the drier plains of Udawalawe National Park, this species became quite common -- almost ridiculously so at Bundala, where we were seldom out of sight of a half dozen at a time! And no matter how often you've seen the males doing their elaborate fandangos, it's still pretty impressive.

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

LITTLE GREBE (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*) – Tom spotted one diving repeatedly on the reservoir beside our Embilipitiya hotel, and we spied another -- looking rather like a floating powder puff -- on one of the lagoons at Bundala.

Ciconiidae (Storks)

ASIAN OPENBILL (*Anastomus oscitans*) – A roadside bird seen en route to Kitulgala showed well the bizarrely separated bill of this widespread species -- thought to be an adaptation for best dealing with slippery mollusk prey items. We saw a handful of others at Bundala NP and dozens resting in shrubs on some of our transfers.

WOOLLY-NECKED STORK (*Ciconia episcopus*) – Two birds briefly seen in soaring flight by some on the righthand side of the bus as we drove to Sigiriya, and another briefly circling over some rice paddies as we birded around Rangiri late one afternoon. The all dark wing of this species distinguishes it from all of Sri Lanka's other storks.

LESSER ADJUTANT (*Leptoptilos javanicus*) – One foraged at the far end of one of the lagoons first thing in the morning at Bundala, little more than a slightly darker shape in the morning fog.

PAINTED STORK (*Mycteria leucocephala*) – Quite common in the tanks and wetlands of the southeast, with small flocks stalking the shallows at Bundala NP.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

INDIAN CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax fuscicollis*) – A sprinkling throughout, though less common than the next species. Two in a small tree with a pair of Little Cormorants in a rice paddy along the drive to Kitulgala allowed particularly nice comparisons.

LITTLE CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax niger*) – Widespread, including one diving in the fountain in front of our airport hotel, two that sat on a rock in the middle of Kelani River each day and scores at Bundala. As its name suggests, this is the smallest of the tour's cormorants, with a stubby, relatively little bill.

Anhingidae (Anhingas)

ORIENTAL DARTER (*Anhinga melanogaster*) – Common in the southeast, where they regularly shared roost trees with the cormorants.

Pelecanidae (Pelicans)

SPOT-BILLED PELICAN (*Pelecanus philippensis*) – A few distant birds on the lake near our Embilipitiya hotel, with others on the tanks around Tissa.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

YELLOW BITTERN (*Ixobrychus sinensis*) – Two prowled the edges of reed beds in Bundala, moving slowly as they searched for tasty tidbits. Those who went on the pre-breakfast walk to Debarawewa tank near Tissa also saw several others in flight there.

BLACK BITTERN (*Ixobrychus flavicollis*) – A grand total of three seen by the pre-breakfast birders who visited Debarawewa tank, including one that sat up for several minutes in a clump of reeds not far from shore. We saw all three in flight too, in nice comparison with several smaller Yellow Bitterns.

GRAY HERON (*Ardea cinerea*) – A scattering along the edges of ponds and marshes in the southeast, with a few others in the occasional rice paddy elsewhere.

PURPLE HERON (*Ardea purpurea*)

GREAT EGRET (AUSTRALASIAN) (*Ardea alba modesta*) – Common in wetland areas (though in smaller numbers than smaller egrets) with good studies of their long gape lines (which extend well past the eye) on some birds near Bundala village.

INTERMEDIATE EGRET (*Mesophoyx intermedia*)

LITTLE EGRET (*Egretta garzetta*) – Regular in the country's wetlands, where their thin, dark bills -- and bright yellow feet -- quickly separated them from the other egrets.

CATTLE EGRET (ASIAN) (*Bubulcus ibis coromandus*) – Abundant in parts of the country, with scores at a time sprinkled across some rice paddies and dozens clustered around grazing animals.

INDIAN POND-HERON (*Ardeola grayii*) – Very common in wetland areas, with dozens seen hunting in rice paddies across the country. The transformation from brown bird on the ground to white bird in the air is impressive.

STRIATED HERON (*Butorides striata*)

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (EURASIAN) (*Nycticorax nycticorax nycticorax*) – Scattered birds in wetlands areas, including small flocks winging past our airport hotel during the first afternoon's walk and a tree full of adults on nests outside a Buddhist stupa in Tissa. [N]

Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)

BLACK-HEADED IBIS (*Threskiornis melanocephalus*) – Regular in the southeast, including a gang foraging in the wet field behind our Tissa hotel each day we stayed there.

EURASIAN SPOONBILL (*Platalea leucorodia*) – A few in Debarawewa tank near Tissa with others foraging in some of the lagoons at Bundala and in the drying puddles at Yala.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE (*Elanus caeruleus*) – At least two different birds hovered over the savanna at Udawalawe National Park, peering intently earthward. This species was split from North America's White-tailed Kite relatively recently.

ORIENTAL HONEY-BUZZARD (*Pernis ptilorhynchus*) – A female (told by her yellow eye and browner back) sat in a tree across the river from our

Kitulgala hotel, seen while we waited for the rain to stop after lunch one day.

CRESTED SERPENT-EAGLE (CRESTED) (*Spilornis cheela spilogaster*)

CRESTED HAWK-EAGLE (*Nisaetus cirrhatu* *ceylanensis*) – Common throughout, with superb views of one sitting in a tree just uphill from the rough jeep track up to Sinharaja Forest Preserve, and of another shouting from a treetop near the track through Bundala NP. This species was recently split from the Changeable Hawk-Eagle.

MOUNTAIN HAWK-EAGLE (*Nisaetus nipalensis*)

BLACK EAGLE (*Ictinaetus malayensis*) – One soaring with three Crested Serpent-Eagles over a tea plantation on our drive to Embilipitiya gave us great opportunity to compare their flight styles and shapes. Another bird glided over while we ate lunch at Sinharaja on our second visit.

BOOTED EAGLE (*Hieraaetus pennatus*) – One circled over the Grand Ella hotel during our tea break en route to Nuwara Eliya. We saw a second -- briefly -- as it sailed past just above the treetops while we were leaving Bundala after our jeep safari.

PALLID HARRIER (*Circus macrourus*) – A pale male ghosting past at Udawalawe National Park was a bit of a surprise. This wintering species isn't particularly common; in fact, it was the first time we've seen it on a Field Guides tour to Sri Lanka!

CRESTED GOSHAWK (*Accipiter trivirgatus layardi*) – A few got a quick glimpse of one Prabath spotted on the road around Lion Rock, before it dropped away through the forest.

SHIKRA (*Accipiter badius*) – One in a roadside tree early in the tour was conveniently about eye level.

BESRA (*Accipiter virgatus*) – As we headed up the mountains towards Nuwara Eliya, one shot in front of us and landed on a Green Forest Lizard on the roadside, standing on it for long minutes (and allowing us stupendous views from the bus) before carrying it away.

BRAHMINY KITE (*Haliastur indus*) – Common throughout, including a pair of adults that soared regularly over the grounds of our airport hotel, and another soggy pair that hunched (looking miserable) in the rain across the river from our Kitulgala hotel.

WHITE-BELLIED SEA-EAGLE (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*) [N]

GRAY-HEADED FISH-EAGLE (*Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus*) – One flapped low along the edge of a lagoon at Bundala, showing its white tail nicely before swooping up to land atop a convenient shrub, and Dave spotted us another keeping an eye on a marsh near Sigiriya village.

COMMON BUZZARD (HIMALAYAN) (*Buteo buteo burmanicus*) – One circled over the open ground at Horton Plains, looking remarkably like a Red-tailed Hawk, even down to a distinct reddish cast to the tail.

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

SLATY-LEGGED CRAKE (*Rallina eurizonoides*) – Those who did the final pre-breakfast walk at Sinharaja had reach-out-and-touch-him views of a calling bird in the undergrowth along the river near the Blue Magpie.

WHITE-BREASTED WATERHEN (*Amaurornis phoenicurus*)

WATERCOCK (*Gallicrex cinerea*) – Sadly, we got only brief flight views of a distant bird flashing across an open gap in the reeds early one morning before breakfast.

PURPLE SWAMPHEN (GRAY-HEADED) (*Porphyrio porphyrio poliocephalus*) – Especially common near Bundala, where we found a massive flock of 50 or more foraging in the grass along the road on our drive back to the hotel.

EURASIAN MOORHEN (*Gallinula chloropus*) – A few chugged back and forth across some of the smaller lagoons at Bundala.

Burhinidae (Thick-knees)

INDIAN THICK-KNEE (*Burhinus indicus*) – A handful at Bundala, where they were outnumbered by the next species. One huddled against a little pile of rocks near our first Pygmy Cotton-Geese, and we saw a few pairs resting for the day in more open areas.

GREAT THICK-KNEE (*Esacus recurvirostris*) – A dozen or so seen around the circuit at Bundala, including a gaggle of five resting in the shade of some shrubs at the water's edge, just before we headed out into the salt pans.

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)

BLACK-WINGED STILT (*Himantopus himantopus*) – Plenty of these elegant shorebirds, striding around the salt pans and puddles on their improbably long pink legs.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – A handful huddled beside one of the bunds at the Bundala salt works, looking tall compared to the nearly stints and sand-plovers.

PACIFIC GOLDEN-PLOVER (*Pluvialis fulva*) – Best seen near Tissa, where at least ten birds rested on the lumpy mud edging one of the tanks. This species is smaller, smaller billed and tawnier overall than the previous species.

YELLOW-WATTLED LAPWING (*Vanellus malabaricus*) – Scattered pairs pattered on the dried mudflats of Bundala, including a few pairs conveniently close to the next species for comparison.

RED-WATTLED LAPWING (*Vanellus indicus*) – Good studies of a pair that hung out on the grassy tennis courts at our airport hotel, with many others at Bundala.

LESSER SAND-PLOVER (*Charadrius mongolus*) – By far, the more common of the two sand-plovers, with hundreds pattering along the edges of the salt pans at Bundala, and others at Yala.

GREATER SAND-PLOVER (*Charadrius leschenaultii*) – A few of these larger, heavier-billed sand-plovers mingled with the other shorebirds on Bundala's salt pans and mudflats, allowing comparison with the previous species.

KENTISH PLOVER (INDIAN) (*Charadrius alexandrinus seebohmi*)

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER (*Charadrius dubius*)

Jacaniidae (Jacanas)

PHEASANT-TAILED JACANA (*Hydrophasianus chirurgus*) – Dozens and dozens at Bundala, though only one sported the distinctive tail that gives the species its name; the rest were all in their stripey-faced nonbreeding plumage.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

COMMON SANDPIPER (*Actitis hypoleucos*)

GREEN SANDPIPER (*Tringa ochropus*) – One rested in a roadside puddle at Udawalawe, keeping a watchful eye on us as we pulled up beside it. This species is closely related to North America's Solitary Sandpiper, which it strongly resembles in appearance.

COMMON GREENSHANK (*Tringa nebularia*)

MARSH SANDPIPER (*Tringa stagnatilis*) – Good numbers of these pale, slim-billed shorebirds flashed among the mixed flocks at Bundala, with a handful of others in Yala and around the tanks in Tissa.

WOOD SANDPIPER (*Tringa glareola*)

COMMON REDSHANK (*Tringa totanus*) – Seen particularly well along the edge of one of the tanks at Tissa, where a dozen or more snoozed on the mud, with good numbers of others hunting in Bundala. The broad white wedge along the back edge of the wing on flying birds is diagnostic.

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT (*Limosa limosa*) – Scores foraged in some of the shallow lagoons and salt pans of Bundala, occasionally showing their snazzy black and white wings and tails as they shifted from place to place.

RUDDY TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*) – A handful poked around the bases of some rotting pilings near the edge of one of the Bundala salt pans, and a couple of others mingled among a big shorebird flock near where we turned around. Even in nonbreeding plumage, this species shows strikingly orange legs.

BROAD-BILLED SANDPIPER (*Calidris falcinellus*) – One, showing well its distinctive split supercilium, poked and prodded among the Curlew Sandpipers along a sandy ridge in the Bundala salt pans.

CURLEW SANDPIPER (*Calidris ferruginea*) – Very common in the Bundala salt pans, where their droopy-tipped bills helped to quickly separate them from the surrounding shorebirds.

TEMMINCK'S STINT (*Calidris temminckii*) – We found one on the rumpled mudflat edging one of the tanks in Tissa, shortly before the afternoon thunderstorm hit. The yellowish legs and uniformly brown back of this species are distinctive.

LITTLE STINT (*Calidris minuta*)

Turnicidae (Buttonquail)

BARRED BUTTONQUAIL (*Turnix suscitator leggei*) – One pair scuttled back and forth through the rough grasses near the track at Udawalawe NP, and a second pair danced briefly in the road there. We saw another popping in and out of view around some bushes at Bundala NP.

Glareolidae (Pratincoles and Coursers)

SMALL PRATINCOLE (*Glareola lactea*) – A few in Udi's vehicle at Bundala NP got lucky and saw two fly past as we started to leave the salt pans.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

LITTLE TERN (*Sternula albifrons*) – A few, looking tiny compared to their companions, in a mixed tern flock at Bundala, and a group of some 50 clustered near the far end of the salt pans there. This is Sri Lanka's smallest tern.

GULL-BILLED TERN (*Gelochelidon nilotica*) – A few scattered individuals at Bundala, looking big and snowy white compared to the other terns. This is a winter visitor to Sri Lanka.

CASPIAN TERN (*Hydroprogne caspia*) – A dozen or so of these big terns (largest in the world) stood among their smaller cousins on some of the mudflats of Bundala.

WHITE-WINGED TERN (*Chlidonias leucopterus*) – Some, showing their distinctive dark "football helmets", rested among the mixed tern flock near the start of our Bundala adventure.

WHISKERED TERN (*Chlidonias hybrida*) – Abundant over rice paddies and wetlands throughout. This winter visitor is probably Sri Lanka's most common tern.

COMMON TERN (*Sterna hirundo*)

GREAT CRESTED TERN (*Thalasseus bergii*) – Far more common than the next species, with scores sprinkled across the salt pans and nearby lagoons at Bundala NP. Their yellow bills and subtly larger size helped to distinguish them from the Lesser Crested Terns.

LESSER CRESTED TERN (*Thalasseus bengalensis*) – A few sprinkled among the Greater Crested Terns at Bundala NP, where their oranger bills helped to identify them.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*)

SRI LANKA WOOD-PIGEON (*Columba torringtoniae*) – Two of these big endemic pigeons flapped and flailed their way steadily upwards through a large tree near where we spotted our Brown Wood-Owls. We heard the deep hooting calls of this species as we searched for the owls. [E]

SPOTTED DOVE (*Streptopelia chinensis*) – Ubiquitous, with fine looks at their distinctively spotty plumage around the Blue Magpie. We saw many in their towering, spread-winged display flights over the tea plantations around Sinharaja.

EMERALD DOVE (COMMON) (*Chalcophaps indica robinsoni*)

ORANGE-BREADED PIGEON (*Treron bicinctus leggei*) – A few in the dry lowlands of the southeast, including a pair resting in a leafless tree near the track while we waited for the first Leopard in Yala to make a reappearance.

SRI LANKA GREEN-PIGEON (*Treron pompadora*) – A tree full of soggy birds en route to Sinharaja, but our best sighting was probably in a Fishtail Palm as we descended from Sinharaja one afternoon, when we spied a male flaunting his maroon wing coverts in the company of two Spotted Doves, our first Crimson-fronted Barbet and a Sri Lanka Hanging-Parrot. [E]

GREEN IMPERIAL-PIGEON (*Ducula aenea*) – Widespread through, with especially nice studies of a flock of ten or so sitting atop trees over the dining room at Kitulgala.

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

PIED CUCKOO (*Clamator jacobinus*) – Two chased each other across an open area at Bundala, eventually landing in some brushy twigs between us and the water's edge, and Karen spotted us another on a telephone wire near Bundala village. This species is also widely known as the Jacobin Cuckoo.

INDIAN CUCKOO (*Cuculus micropterus*) – We heard the clear four-note whistle of this species echoing from the forest near our lunch spot in Sinharaja -- once we were sure we weren't just hearing Udi's phone, that was! [*]

LESSER CUCKOO (*Cuculus poliocephalus*)

BANDED BAY CUCKOO (*Cacomantis sonneratii waiti*) [*]

PLAINTIVE CUCKOO (*Cacomantis merulinus*) – One beside the track at the beginning of our Bundala jeep safari got us off to a good start; some of us spotted another further into the park. This species is an uncommon winter migrant to Sri Lanka.

FORK-TAILED DRONGO-CUCKOO (*Surniculus dicruroides*) – One sang (and sang and sang) from several leafless trees near Sigiriya's Lion Rock

on our pre-breakfast outing there one morning.

ASIAN KOEL (*Eudynamis scolopacea*) – Super looks at a speckled female on the ground behind one of the puddles in Yala NP, with others on the grounds of our airport hotel.

SIRKEER MALKOHA (*Phaenicophaeus leschenaultii*) – Dave was the lucky one who happened to be looking in the right direction when one flipped up out of the bushes along the road near Sigiriya and disappeared.

RED-FACED MALKOHA (*Phaenicophaeus pyrrhocephalus*) – Those who searched for the Serendib Scops-Owl early on the second morning at Sinharaja spied two: one clambering through a nearby tree and another flying across an open clearing. Those who'd already seen the owl found one rummaging through a treetop along the main trail through the park. All were definite improvements on our first sighting of two that stayed as high as possible in some trees over the trail on our first visit to Sinharaja. [E]

GREATER COUCAL (*Centropus sinensis*) – Regular throughout (though more often heard than seen) with great views of a couple in a roadside bush in a construction zone we walked en route to Embilipitiya.

GREEN-BILLED COUCAL (*Centropus chlororhynchus*) – Our first was a skulking bird that foraged in the leaf litter beside a house in the forest along a track near Sinharaja, showing well its distinctively pale, yellow-green bill. We found another along the main track in the park itself, again grubbing through the decaying layer of leaves on the ground. [E]

Strigidae (Owls)

SERENDIB SCOPS-OWL (*Otus thilohoffmanni*) – Wow! How lucky can one group get?! We had close encounters with at least four birds. Our first were pair huddled in a rough stand of small trees (one showing both eyes, the other only one) for those who'd stayed late on our first afternoon at Sinharaja. Fortunately for those who'd headed down early, our local guide ferreted out another bird in a thick tangle (peeping coyly from behind some ferns) the following day. We heard another from the darkening forest as we headed back to the Blue Magpie on the first night of our stay there. [E]

INDIAN SCOPS-OWL (*Otus bakkamoena*) – One wide-eyed bird peered down at us from a dark tree on the grounds of the Gateway Hotel, calling softly, and another pair snoozed over the bus parking lot at our hotel in Embilipitiya. Unlike Sri Lanka's other scops-owls, this one is dark-eyed.

ORIENTAL SCOPS-OWL (*Otus sunia leggei*) – After hearing the soft four-note song of this species from the dark forests around Lion Rock on several evenings -- and one early morning -- we finally connected with one wide-eyed bird near the moat.

SPOT-BELLIED EAGLE-OWL (*Bubo nipalensis blighi*) – We heard the low descending hoots of this big forest species both predawn and after dark around Sigiriya. [*]

JUNGLE OWLET (*Glaucidium radiatum*) – One in a backyard tree in the middle of the bustling town of Tissa was an added bonus after our White-naped Woodpecker search. It was completely unfazed, even by small noisy children.

CHESTNUT-BACKED OWLET (*Glaucidium castanonotum*) – Two for the price of one! As we headed back to the bus at the end of our pre-breakfast walk in Kitulgala, we heard one calling from the forest. Udi tracked it down, and we had great looks, watching as it peered around, its white throat patch flaring as it called. Then we found a second bird right over our heads; eventually, they snuggled up together in a taller tree. [E]

BROWN WOOD-OWL (*Strix leptogrammica ochrogenys*) – Two snoozed on a day roost we visited on our way to Nuwara Eliya, occasionally opening an eye to peer down at us.

Podargidae (Frogmouths)

SRI LANKA FROGMOUTH (*Batrachostomus moniliger*) – A pair huddled together on a day roost, blinking sleepily.

Caprimulgidae (Nightjars and Allies)

JERDON'S NIGHTJAR (*Caprimulgus atripennis aequabilis*) – A handful sang from the darkening scrub forest around Bundala village on evening, and -- a few kilometers later -- one male called from the top of a conveniently dead snag near the roadway, resulting in great scope views for everyone. This species is big and dark, with a bold white chin stripe.

INDIAN NIGHTJAR (*Caprimulgus asiaticus eidos*) – One circled the group in the predawn gloom on the morning we visited Yala (giving us all good flight views) and a second trilled briefly from atop a dead snag shaped rather like an umbrella handle.

Apodidae (Swifts)

BROWN-BACKED NEEDLETAIL (*Hirundapus giganteus*) – A lucky few got on one Udi spotted zooming over the forest around Parawalathenna, in with a big flock of Indian Swiftlets.

INDIAN SWIFTLET (*Aerodramus unicolor*) – One of the few birds flying on that rainy morning at Kitulgala, where we could see them particularly well when they got down against the trees.

ALPINE SWIFT (*Apus melba*) – A handful of high-flying birds over the grasslands of Horton Plains were a bit of a challenge to find against the blue sky. Good thing there were some scattered clouds of there for contrast! These are enormous swifts, with a wingspan approaching two feet.

LITTLE SWIFT (*Apus affinis*) – Best seen at Sinharaja, where a big swarm of them boiled over Lion Rock each day. Their white rump patch is distinctive.

ASIAN PALM-SWIFT (*Cypsiurus balasiensis*)

Hemiprocnidae (Treeswifts)

GRAY-RUMPED TREESWIFT (*Hemiproctus longipennis*) – We saw many soaring around over the fields and hillsides around the Blue Magpie, but our best views came on our drive to Embilipitiya, when we found a bare tree full of preening birds. Unlike true swifts, these can perch normally (rather than having to cling to a surface).

Trogonidae (Trogons)

MALABAR TROGON (*Harpactes fasciatus fasciatus*)

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

COMMON KINGFISHER (*Alcedo atthis*)

BLACK-BACKED DWARF-KINGFISHER (*Ceyx erithaca*) – This was a perfect example of persistence paying off; after multiple fruitless visits to the "best spot" near Lion Rock, Udi finally spotted one gorgeous little bird sitting quietly in the undergrowth before breakfast one morning. Wow!

STORK-BILLED KINGFISHER (*Pelargopsis capensis*) – Those who stayed late at Makandawa Forest Park saw one along the Kelani River while waiting for the canoe ferry, those who got up early for our pre-breakfast walk at Tissa spotted two others at the tank, and one displaying (with much flicking of wings) atop a tree near Lion Rock in Sigiriya entertained the pre-breakfast crowd another morning.

WHITE-THROATED KINGFISHER (*Halcyon smyrnensis*)

PIED KINGFISHER (*Ceryle rudis*) – Quite common at Bundala NP, where they hovered like animated crossword puzzles over the lagoons, or sat -- sometimes four at a time -- on snags poking out of the water.

Meropidae (Bee-eaters)

GREEN BEE-EATER (*Merops orientalis*) – Common in the open habitats of Udawalawe, Bundala and Yala NPs, and around Sigiriya, where we saw many sallying out after insects, often from perches just above the ground. This is the smallest of the tour's bee-eaters.

BLUE-TAILED BEE-EATER (*Merops philippinus*) – Abundant throughout, with lovely studies of a gang perched right beside the road through Udawalawe National Park and hundreds of calling birds hunting over Bundala village one evening.

CHESTNUT-HEADED BEE-EATER (*Merops leschenaulti*) – One on a roadside wire with a little gang of Barn Swallows on our journey up the hill toward Nuwara Eliya.

Coraciidae (Rollers)

INDIAN ROLLER (*Coracias benghalensis*) – Single birds on several days, including one on a wire near our airport hotel the first morning, and another sitting on a dead snag at Udawalawe NP.

Upupidae (Hoopoes)

EURASIAN HOPOE (*Upupa epops*) – Our first flashed across the road in front of us at Udawalawe in a flurry of black and white wings. Fortunately, we had much better looks at another pirouetting on the end of a dead branch in Yala NP, not far from where we finally saw our first Brown-capped Babbler.

Bucerotidae (Hornbills)

SRI LANKA GRAY HORNBILL (*Ocyroceros gingalensis*) – A pair gobbling palm fruits from a little tree right outside the dining room at Kitulgala were a treat, allowing us to compare their diagnostically different bills (males have far more yellow on their beaks). [E]

MALABAR PIED-HORNBILL (*Anthracoceros coronatus*) – Scattered pairs of these big hornbills, including a quartet clambering through the big figs in Udawalawe and two winging their slow way -- flapping a few times then gliding heavily, then flapping again -- across the marsh near Bundala village.

Megalaimidae (Asian Barbets)

BROWN-HEADED BARBET (*Megalaima zeylanica*) – Certainly the most common and widespread of the tour's barbets, seen (or heard) on many days. Our first, on the grounds of our airport hotel, were particularly well studied!

YELLOW-FRONTED BARBET (*Megalaima flavifrons*) – Two nibbled on a big papaya fruit, gradually cleaning out the inside, beside a track we walked en route to Kitulgala, and another paused for several minutes in a fruiting palm tree outside the dining room of our Kitulgala hotel. This species was particularly common around Sinharaja, where we saw dozens. [E]

CRIMSON-FRONTED BARBET (*Megalaima rubricapillus*) – One preened atop a dusty Fishtail Palm beside a similarly-sized Sri Lanka Hanging-Parrot, seen on our descent from Sinharaja one evening.

COPPERSMITH BARBET (*Megalaima haemacephala*) – One sang from (and preened in) a dead tree at Udawalawe, showing us its striped breast and yellow face nicely. We heard many others calling metallically from the scrubby growth all through the park.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

YELLOW-CROWNED WOODPECKER (*Dendrocopos mahrattensis*) – Our first were a trio chasing around in a dead tree in Udawalawe, just below a chiming Crimson-fronted Barbet. We saw others much closer at Bundala, including a female showing her solid yellow crown.

LESSER YELLOWNAPE (*Picus chlorolophus wellsi*)

BLACK-RUMPED FLAMEBACK (*Dinopium benghalense psarodes*) – Superb views of at least four different birds on the grounds of the Gateway Hotel -- including a female foraging at ankle height on one of the coconut palms. This species is also known as the Lesser Goldenback.

CRIMSON-BACKED FLAMEBACK (*Chrysocolaptes stricklandi*)

WHITE-NAPED WOODPECKER (*Chrysocolaptes festivus*) – We found a handsome pair checking out a palm trunk in the side yard of a house in Tissa -- with the rumbling of an approaching thunderstorm echoing ominously in the distance.

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*) – A pair of local birds -- distinguished by their dark rufous underparts -- flew back and forth around Sigiriya's Lion Rock one morning, and a single bird rested in a small bush partway up the rock another afternoon.

Psittacidae (Parrots)

ALEXANDRINE PARAKEET (*Psittacula eupatria*) – A gang in a spreading treetop across the river from our Kitulgala hotel showed their pink shoulder patches nicely, but we had even better views of a very soggy bird in the Kandy Botanical Gardens on our rainy afternoon visit there.

ROSE-RINGED PARAKEET (*Psittacula krameri*) – Including a trio of females clambering around in a coconut palm on the grounds of the Gateway Hotel.

PLUM-HEADED PARAKEET (*Psittacula cyanocephala*) – Quite common in Udawalawe NP, including a quartet investigating holes (presumably checking out potential nest sites) in a big dead tree. The male's head color is certainly striking.

LAYARD'S PARAKEET (*Psittacula calthropae*) – They DO have legs, after all! After Udi informed us that they're almost always seen only in flight, a female of these shorter tailed parakeets landed atop a nearby tree, allowing us great scope studies. We saw dozens of others (typically in flight, but occasionally perched) around Sinharaja. [E]

SRI LANKA HANGING-PARROT (*Loriculus beryllinus*) – Lots of these tiny, short-tailed parrots rocketed over at Kitulgala and Sinharaja, and we saw a few perched -- including one sharing the top of a Fishtail Palm with a Crimson-fronted Barbet. [E]

Pittidae (Pittas)

INDIAN PITTA (*Pitta brachyura*) – Relatively common throughout, with especially nice views of one singing from a low branch over the tea plants in Parawalathenna, and of two rivals shouting back and forth across the road at each other near the pond at Sigiriya.

Vangidae (Vangas, Helmetshrikes, and Allies)

SRI LANKA WOODSHRIKE (*Tephrodornis affinis*) [E]

BAR-WINGED FLYCATCHER-SHRIKE (*Hemipus picatus leggei*) – Two sallied repeatedly after insects, flashing out again and again from a vine tangle along the little stream near our picnic spot in Sinharaja, and we saw others along one of the roads we walked near Sigiriya's Lion Rock. The wide white stripe on the closed wing of this species is distinctive.

Artamidae (Woodswallows)

ASHY WOODSWALLOW (*Artamus fuscus*) – Our first were a few on wires near a rice field en route to Kitulgala, but our best views (for the second vehicle anyway) came at Bundala NP, where a trio snuggled on a branch, preening each other.

Aegithinidae (Ioras)

COMMON IORA (*Aegithina tiphia*) – Common and widespread, with especially good views of our first, in a backyard (part of a big mixed flock) in Parawalathenna.

WHITE-TAILED IORA (*Aegithina nigrolutea*) – A pair at Udawalawe were cooperative, dancing through a bush right beside the vehicle. This species (which is also known as Marshall's Iora) was only recently discovered to occur in Sri Lanka.

Campephagidae (Cuckooshrikes)

SMALL MINIVET (*Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*) – A little gang of five -- including one bright male -- swirled through trees over the jeep track down from Sinharaja.

ORANGE MINIVET (*Pericrocotus flammeus*)

LARGE CUCKOOSHRIKE (*Coracina macei layardi*) – Brief views for most of one that bounced through the trees beside the road around Lion Rock before flying across the track and disappearing for good. This uncommon species is significantly larger than the next.

BLACK-HEADED CUCKOOSHRIKE (*Lalage melanoptera sykesi*) – Super views of a striped female among a group of Scarlet Minivets on the road down from Sinharaja, briefly joined by a male before the whole mob swept off up the road.

Laniidae (Shrikes)

BROWN SHRIKE (*Lanius cristatus*) – Common, noisy and widespread, with good views of several birds hunting from dead snags, tree branches and fence posts across the country.

Oriolidae (Old World Orioles)

BLACK-HOODED ORIOLE (*Oriolus xanthornus ceylonensis*)

Dicruridae (Drongos)

ASHY DRONGO (*Dicrurus leucophaeus*) – One crept up through a big spreading tree in Yala NP, visible for a few of those on the "right" side of the vehicles, and briefly interrupting the Brown-capped Babbler search.

WHITE-BELLIED DRONGO (WHITE-VENTED) (*Dicrurus caerulescens insularis*)

WHITE-BELLIED DRONGO (WHITE-VENTED) (*Dicrurus caerulescens leucopygialis*)

GREATER RACKET-TAILED DRONGO (*Dicrurus paradiseus ceylonicus*) – A raucous pair called and sang and chattered as they flashed back and forth through trees near the moat around Lion Rock. This species, which has distinctively long, racket-shaped tail feathers, was recently split from the next.

SRI LANKA DRONGO (*Dicrurus lophorinus*) – Reasonably common among the mixed flocks at Sinharaja. This forest species is considerably larger than the more widespread White-bellied Drongo. [E]

Rhipiduridae (Fantails)

WHITE-BROWED FANTAIL (*Rhipidura aureola*) – One with a flock of Small Minivets above the jeep track down from Sinharaja flirted its tail repeatedly as it flashed through the trees.

Monarchidae (Monarch Flycatchers)

BLACK-NAPED MONARCH (*Hypothymis azurea ceylonensis*) – It took some patience, but everybody finally got good looks at a pair swinging through the vines and branches around the clearing where we had lunch in Sigiriya -- one of the benefits of our long post-prandial wait there.

ASIAN PARADISE-FLYCATCHER (*Terpsiphone paradisi*) – Small numbers seen on several days, including a pair of short-tailed birds hunting along the edges of a shallow pond at Yala NP, and a black-and-white male flitting in the shadows of the forest near Lion Rock.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

SRI LANKA BLUE-MAGPIE (*Urocissa ornata*) – Wow! What's not to love about a huge maroon and blue magpie with shockingly bright red legs and bill and a penchant for cheese sandwiches?! We had wonderfully close encounters with a family group of 8 (including two color banded individuals that must have been part of a study) at the picnic shelter in Sinharaja, and saw others in mixed groups around the park. [E]

HOUSE CROW (*Corvus splendens*)

LARGE-BILLED CROW (*Corvus macrorhynchos*) – Quite common on grounds of our airport hotel (where we got fine looks at some perched in palm trees and on phone wires) with others seen most days of the tour.

Alaudidae (Larks)

JERDON'S BUSHLARK (*Mirafra affinis*) – Quite common at Udawalawe, with especially nice studies of a panting bird having a vigorous dust bath in the middle of the road.

ASHY-CROWNED SPARROW-LARK (*Eremopterix griseus*) – A little group bounced around an area of open dirt near one of the lakes at Bundala NP, and others did the same in Yala the following day.

ORIENTAL SKYLARK (*Alauda gulgula*) – Two crept along the track out to the salt pans at Bundala, giving us a good chance to study them.

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

BANK SWALLOW (*Riparia riparia*)

BARN SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*) – Ubiquitous, seen in big numbers on many days of the tour -- including clouds of them over the marshes and mudflats and plains near Yala.

HILL SWALLOW (*Hirundo domicola*) – A handful zoomed back and forth near the parking lot at the Horton Plains visitor's center, their dark blue backs flashing in the sunlight. The dingy chest of this relatively short-tailed species is distinctive among the swallows on this tour.

SRI LANKA SWALLOW (*Cecropis hyperythra*) – Two sitting side by side on a wire over a rice paddy en route to Kitulgala were the tour's first

endemics, and we got even better looks at another pair standing beside a slimy puddle in Yala. The dark rusty chest of this species is diagnostic. [E]

Stenostiridae (Fairy Flycatchers)

GRAY-HEADED CANARY-FLYCATCHER (*Culicicapa ceylonensis*) – Our first was a bird hunting in the lovely cool forest at the Surrey Bird Sanctuary, not far from where we found our Brown Wood-Owl. We saw others on our afternoon walk through the forest (near the landfill) in Nuwara Eliya.

Paridae (Chickadees and Tits)

CINEREOUS TIT (*Parus cinereus mahrattarum*) – A couple rummaged through the moss and epiphytes festooning the trees over the lake where we had breakfast at Horton Plains. This species was recently split from the Great Tit.

Sittidae (Nuthatches)

VELVET-FRONTED NUTHATCH (*Sitta frontalis*) – Quite common this year, including three in the same tree one day at Sinharaja, and others with a mixed flock in Kitulgala.

Pycnonotidae (Bulbuls)

BLACK-CAPPED BULBUL (*Pycnonotus melanicterus*) – Regular in the wet forests of the country's southwest, including a pair that flashed back and forth across the track near the Kitulgala police station our first morning there, foraging in the scrubby bushes. [E]

RED-VENTED BULBUL (*Pycnonotus cafer cafer*) – One of our "every day" species, with noisy gangs of them around most of our hotels.

YELLOW-EARED BULBUL (*Pycnonotus penicillatus*) – Especially nice looks at one gobbling berries from a bush near the parking lot at the Horton Plains visitor's center, with others more distantly along the road there. [E]

WHITE-BROWED BULBUL (*Pycnonotus luteolus insulae*) – One sat and sang softly -- occasionally taking a break to preen a body part or two -- on a branch right beside a track we walked en route to Kitulgala. We were so close we could even see its faint yellow moustache stripe.

YELLOW-BROWED BULBUL (*Iole indica*) – Seen most days in the southwest, with especially nice views of a pair of adults feeding a fledged youngster behind one of the houses in Parawalathenna.

SQUARE-TAILED BULBUL (SRI LANKA) (*Hypsipetes ganeesa humii*) – Seen particularly well in the little village of Parawalathenna, where we found one vigorously readjusting its feathers following a bath.

Phylloscopidae (Leaf-Warblers)

GREEN WARBLER (*Phylloscopus nitidus*) – Regular in small numbers throughout, with particularly nice views of a singing bird beside the pond where we ate breakfast in Horton Plains. In some field guides, this species is called "Bright-green Warbler".

LARGE-BILLED LEAF-WARBLER (*Phylloscopus magnirostris*)

Acrocephalidae (Reed-Warblers and Allies)

BLYTH'S REED-WARBLER (*Acrocephalus dumetorum*)

CLAMOROUS REED-WARBLER (BROWN) (*Acrocephalus stentoreus meridionalis*)

Locustellidae (Grassbirds and Allies)

SRI LANKA BUSH-WARBLER (*Elaphornis palliseri*) – One twitched back and forth through a bush beside a pond on Horton Plains, giving us the chance to do our morning calisthenics while trying to see it. Eventually, it worked its way to the edge before flitting across the road. [E]

Cisticolidae (Cisticolas and Allies)

ZITTING CISTICOLA (*Cisticola juncidis*)

COMMON TAILORBIRD (*Orthotomus sutorius*)

GRAY-BREASTED PRINIA (*Prinia hodgsonii pectoralis*) – It took some effort -- and a bit of patience -- but we all finally got on one singing bird flitting through a garden near the entrance Lunugamwehera National Park.

JUNGLE PRINIA (*Prinia sylvatica valida*) – Best seen in Udawalawe, where several sat up, showing their distinctively large bills, atop the scrubby vegetation.

ASHY PRINIA (*Prinia socialis brevicauda*)

PLAIN PRINIA (*Prinia inornata insularis*)

Paradoxornithidae (Parrotbills, Wrentit, and Allies)

YELLOW-EYED BABBLER (*Chrysomma sinense nasale*) – A pair chortling away in the bushes beside the intersection in Sigiriya popped out for a look around just about the time the captive elephant made its first appearance.

Zosteropidae (Yuhinas, White-eyes, and Allies)

SRI LANKA WHITE-EYE (*Zosterops ceylonensis*) – Dozens and dozens and DOZENS at Horton Plains, where they swarmed through trees all along the main road. This species is larger and darker (more green than yellow) than the next. [E]

ORIENTAL WHITE-EYE (*Zosterops palpebrosus*) – Lots of these smaller, yellower white-eyes flowed through the trees around Kitulgala and Sinharaja, often part of bigger mixed flocks.

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

TAWNY-BELLIED BABBLER (*Dumetia hyperythra phillipsi*) – A busy pair ferried mouthfuls of nesting material into a dense bush near the track through Bundala NP, and others twitched through the undergrowth along the edge of the road near the village of Sigiriya our first afternoon there. [N]

DARK-FRONTED BABBLER (*Rhopocichla atriceps*) – Quite common in the wetter forests, with fine studies of a busy group rummaging through a waist-high stand of ferns near our picnic shelter at Sinharaja.

SRI LANKA SCIMITAR-BABBLER (*Pomatorhinus melanurus*) – Our best views came at Horton Plains NP, where a pair poked and prodded along mossy branches right beside the road, in the company of a gang of Sri Lanka White-eyes. We saw others nicely in the forests of Sinharaja NP, and others on our soggy afternoon in Makandawa Forest Park. [E]

Pellorneidae (Ground Babblers and Allies)

BROWN-CAPPED BABBLER (*Pellorneum fuscocapillus*) – After struggling a bit with this species in Sinharaja (where we heard several, but failed to actually SEE one), we had a fine encounter with one bird along a side track in Yala. After calling from the scrubby growth for long minutes, he

eventually worked his way into a trackside bush for a rummage and a look around. We all agreed that the real bird is far paler -- and more richly colored -- than the illustrations show. [E]

Leiothrichidae (Laughingthrushes and Allies)

ORANGE-BILLED BABBLER (*Turdoides rufescens*) – Our first encounter was with a little gang of six or seven swarming through the vegetation around the houses in Parawalathenna. We had others with mixed flocks in Sinharaja. [E]

YELLOW-BILLED BABBLER (*Turdoides affinis taprobana*) – Seen particularly well on the grounds of our airport hotel, where several big groups of them bounced deliberately across the grassy lawns or threw themselves with abandon into the many puddles.

ASHY-HEADED LAUGHINGTHRUSH (*Garrulax cinereifrons*) – A half dozen or so of these big babblers traveled with a mixed flock on the drive up to Sinharaja one morning, investigating tree trunks and leaf clusters with endearing concentration. [E]

Muscicapidae (Old World Flycatchers)

ASIAN BROWN FLYCATCHER (*Muscicapa latirostris*) – One along the track through Parawalathenna showed well as it flitted from branch to branch.

BROWN-BREASTED FLYCATCHER (*Muscicapa muttui*) – Seemingly more common and widespread than the previous species, with scattered individuals seen on many days.

INDIAN ROBIN (*Copsychus fulvicatus leucopterus*) – Common in the dry lowlands, with dozens seen in Udawalawe, Bundala, Yala and Sigiriya.

ORIENTAL MAGPIE-ROBIN (*Copsychus saularis*) – Widespread throughout the country, with very nice looks at a jaunty pair with two youngsters mooching around the buildings at Victoria Park in Nuwara Eliya.

WHITE-RUMPED SHAMA (WHITE-RUMPED) (*Copsychus malabaricus leggei*) – Our best views came at Udawattakele park in Kandy, where a pair hunted and sang right near the restrooms. We had others in Yala NP and around Sigiriya.

TICKELL'S BLUE-FLYCATCHER (*Cyornis tickelliae jerdoni*) – Recorded on half the days of the tour, often as a tinkling song echoing from the surrounding forest, with especially nice views of one singing near our Chestnut-backed Owlets.

DULL-BLUE FLYCATCHER (*Eumyias sordidus*) – Fine views of a male singing from atop a little tree along the road through Horton Plains, with the cheery four note song of others echoing from the surrounding hillsides. [E]

INDIAN BLUE ROBIN (*Larvivora brunnea*) – Most common at higher elevations, with super looks at a male near our breakfast spot in Horton Plains.

SRI LANKA WHISTLING-THRUSH (*Myophonus blighi*) – After struggling with this elusive species at Horton Plains (where we heard but couldn't see one calling down the hill from the road), we had fabulous luck with a singing male that crept to the edge of the bushes, then bounced briefly through piled trash at "The Bend" in a road near Nuwara Eliya. [E]

KASHMIR FLYCATCHER (*Ficedula subrubra*) – One made several flycatching sallies from the top of a compost heap in Victoria Park, not far from where a Brown-breasted Flycatcher was doing the same. This is a winter visitor to Sri Lanka.

PIED BUSHCHAT (*Saxicola caprata atratus*) – Quite common on Horton Plains, where they sallied from grass stems, dirt clods, signs and mileage posts. We even had one beating an insect to death on the road in front of our vans.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

SPOT-WINGED THRUSH (*Geokichla spiloptera*) – One on the ground about a dozen feet from us in a tea farm near Kitulgala was certainly obliging - and allowed us to quickly see how appropriate its name is. [E]

ORANGE-HEADED THRUSH (*Geokichla citrina*) – A couple of these gorgeous little thrushes bounced through the underbrush along one of the dirt tracks near Sigiriya early one morning.

SCALY THRUSH (SRI LANKA) (*Zoothera dauma imbricata*) – Those who went back into the Sinharaja forest for the late afternoon on our first day there heard one calling from the dark undergrowth. [E*]

INDIAN BLACKBIRD (*Turdus simillimus kinnisii*) – A couple bounced around in the grass near the entrance gate to Horton Plains, seen while we waited for the rangers to arrive.

Sturnidae (Starlings)

SOUTHERN HILL MYNA (*Gracula indica*) – Two pairs preened and chattered atop a tree near the Kitulgala police station, allowing us time to study those distinctive wattles in the scopes.

SRI LANKA MYNA (*Gracula ptilogenys*) – One perched high over the trail at Sinharaja had us practically standing on our heads to see it in the scope. With patience, I think everyone finally got a look at its bill and its wattles. [E]

COMMON MYNA (*Acridotheres tristis*) – Ubiquitous. If we got a dollar for every one we saw, we could probably have paid for our trips!

WHITE-FACED STARLING (*Sturnia albobfrontata*) – One with a big mixed flock in the forest below the entrance to Sinharaja poked and prodded its way along a thick branch, looking a bit like a very drab, oversized nuthatch. We saw another couple of birds skulking through some trees near the main trail in the park itself. [E]

BRAHMINY STARLING (*Temenuchus pagodarum*) – A couple scurried around a dusty flat at Yala, not far from a pair of Yellow-wattled Lapwings. Sometimes, this species overwinters in Sri Lanka by the hundreds; other times (like this year) it's pretty scarce.

ROSY STARLING (*Pastor roseus*) – Several small fly by flocks in Udawalawe, all in pale nonbreeding plumage. Numbers of this species vary dramatically from year to year; sometimes we see hundreds, sometimes (like this year), nearly none!

Chloropseidae (Leafbirds)

JERDON'S LEAFBIRD (*Chloropsis jerdoni*) – Most common in the dry forests around Sigiriya, with a few others in the scruffy dry scrub at Udawalawe NP.

GOLDEN-FRONTED LEAFBIRD (*Chloropsis aurifrons*) – A pair swarmed across a palm flower, flickering in and out of view along a track we walked en route to Kitulgala, but our best view came at Martin's place near Sinharaja, where a couple of noisy birds had a standoff on a leafless tree visible from the deck.

Dicaeidae (Flowerpeckers)

THICK-BILLED FLOWERPECKER (*Dicaeum agile zeylonicum*) – One preening atop a leafless tree near the earthen dam in Rangiri gave us great opportunity for scope study; that straight, thick, dark beak and red eye were really obvious -- and noticeably different than the pale, curved beak and dark eye of the Pale-billed Flowerpecker.

WHITE-THROATED FLOWERPECKER (*Dicaeum vincens*) [E]

PALE-BILLED FLOWERPECKER (*Dicaeum erythrorhynchos ceylonense*) – Easily the most common flowerpecker of the tour, seen well on many days.

Nectariniidae (Sunbirds and Spiderhunters)

PURPLE-RUMPED SUNBIRD (*Leptocoma zeylonica zeylonica*) – Common and widespread, including noisy little groups of them on the grounds of our airport hotel, and many others around Sinharaja and Kitulgala.

PURPLE SUNBIRD (*Cinnyris asiaticus*) – Probably best seen near Bundala village, where one shiny purple male sat, chipping, atop a nearby tree; we had a little group of females and nonbreeding males in some shrubs beside the track in Bundala NP too.

LONG-BILLED SUNBIRD (*Cinnyris lotenius lotenius*) – An adult with two youngsters in the fence around the tennis courts at our airport hotel were among the first birds we saw on the tour. We had others in Bundala, Yala and Kandy.

Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)

GRAY WAGTAIL (*Motacilla cinerea*) – A few flying birds early in the tour, and more satisfying views of one wagging its way across the lily pads at Victoria Park. This is a particularly long-tailed wagtail.

RICHARD'S PIPIT (*Anthus richardi*) – Our very first pipit in Udawalawe NP was this species -- the least common of the pipits on this tour.

ORIENTAL PIPIT (*Anthus rufulus*) – The most widespread of the tour's pipits, with especially nice studies of two in the grasslands of Horton Plains, and others at Bundala and Yala.

BLYTH'S PIPIT (*Anthus godlewskii*) – One having a vigorous bath in a puddle beside the track in Udawalawe NP allowed good study.

FOREST WAGTAIL (*Dendronanthus indicus*) – Atypically (and frustratingly) uncooperative this trip, with only a lucky few getting brief views of one in a small tree at Lunugamwehera NP. The rest had to be satisfied with fly by views of dozens over the open fields at Udawalawe as dusk approached.

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) – Regular on the second half of the tour, particularly around the towns.

Ploceidae (Weavers and Allies)

BAYA WEAVER (*Ploceus philippinus*) – A small colony of nesting birds in Yala gave us great chance for study, as they wove new bits of straw into their growing nests. The nests themselves were in various stages -- some complete spheres with full entrance tunnels and others just half-woven balls. [N]

Estrildidae (Waxbills and Allies)

WHITE-RUMPED MUNIA (*Lonchura striata*) – One nest building in a little tree along the Kelani River went back and forth ferrying strands of long dead grass to its chosen site -- right beside an enormous tangled bit of plastic bag. That white rump patch is certainly obvious in flight! We had others nibbling grass seeds along the roads in several places. [N]

BLACK-THROATED MUNIA (*Lonchura kelaarti kelaarti*) – A lucky few got on a quintet Udi spotted as they vacated the Horton Plains visitor's center parking lot. In Sri Lanka, this species is restricted to the higher hills.

NUTMEG MANNIKIN (*Lonchura punctulata*) – A busy flock stripped seeds from tall grasses edging a marsh en route to Kitulgala, and a half dozen shared a dead tree with a big flock of Gray-rumped Treeswifts en route to Embilipitiya. [N]

TRICOLORED MUNIA (*Lonchura malacca*) – Our best views came at Horton Plains, where a small gang of them bounced through the grassy field around the garbage pail near the parking lot. We had others along the the edges of the reed beds on the tanks around Tissa. [N]

MAMMALS

INDIAN FLYING-FOX (*Pteropus giganteus*) – Very common all across Sri Lanka, including hundreds and hundreds hanging like giant brown fruits in spreading trees along various tanks and lakes, and slow-flapping rivers of them rising from the trees in the Kandy botanical garden.

INDIAN PIPISTRELLE (*Pipistrellus coromandra*) – A few of these small bats zipped back and forth through the darkening skies by Sigiriya's Lion Rock while we waited for the Oriental Scops-Owl to make an appearance.

LEAST PIPISTRELLE (*Pipistrellus tenuis*) – These were the very small bats flying over the moat at Sigiriya, seen as we waited for the Oriental Scops-Owls to make an appearance.

TOQUE MACAQUE (*Macaca sinica*) [E]

TUFTED GRAY LANGUR (*Semnopithecus priam*) – Many big troops in and around Bundala (including one mob lounging, spread-eagled, in a recently plowed field near the village) with others at Yala. This species is restricted to the drier lowlands.

PURPLE-FACED LEAF MONKEY (*Trachypithecus vetulus*) [E]

INDIAN HARE (*Lepus nigricollis*) – A few scattered through the tour, including a tiny youngster beside the road on our way up to Horton Plains and an adult demonstrating its fleetness as it raced away from our jeeps at Bundala.

INDIAN PALM SQUIRREL (*Funambulus palmarum*) – Ubiquitous, seen every day in hotel grounds, gardens, city parks, rainforests -- you name it!

LAYARD'S PALM SQUIRREL (*Funambulus layardi*) [E]

DUSKY PALM SQUIRREL (*Funambulus sublineatus*)

SRI LANKAN (=GRIZZLED) GIANT SQUIRREL (*Ratufa macroura*) – Good looks at these huge tree squirrels on several occasions -- including two chasing around in trees near the tea plantation where we saw our close Sri Lanka Gray Hornbill. These squirrels are so big that we briefly mistook a few for monkeys! [E]

INDIAN GIANT FLYING SQUIRREL (*Petaurista philippensis*) – We spotted two of these by their eye shine as they gamboled through trees near the moat at Sigiriya early one morning.

BLACK RAT (*Rattus rattus*) – One nosed around the bottom of a cement wall in Victoria Park, eventually working its way to the edge of the stream for a drink. The subspecies [name here] is endemic to Sri Lanka.

COMMON JACKAL (*Canis aureus*) – Two skittish animals gnawed on a Wild Boar carcass beside one of the tracks in Yala, until a newly arriving vehicle scared them away.

INDIAN GRAY MONGOOSE (*Herpestes edwardsi*)

COMMON MONGOOSE (*Herpestes smithi*) – Very common in Yala, with a good dozen or so seen trotting down the tracks or rummaging in the bushes. This species, also known as the Ruddy Mongoose, is richly colored underneath.

JUNGLE CAT (*Felis chaus*) – One hunting along the roadside just before dusk in Udawalawe was a real treat, particularly when it didn't seem bothered that we'd stopped fairly close to it. What a beautiful animal!

LEOPARD (*Panthera pardus*)

INDIAN ELEPHANT (*Elephas maximus*)

WILD BOAR (*Sus scrofa*) – Several big herds enjoyed a few of the muddy puddles at Yala, and another big family group -- with lots of piglets in tow - trotted down the road and surrounded our vehicle. It's obvious that some of the drivers feed them, as they crowded around our driver's window, gazing up at us all.

MOUSE DEER SP. (*Tragulus meminna*) – One of these tiny deer, known in Sri Lanka as White-striped Mouse Deer, hustled across the road in front of our bus as we left Bundala village one evening. Not much bigger than a rabbit, they're a favorite prey item of Leopards -- just about a mouthful!

MUNTJAC (BARKING DEER) (*Muntiacus muntjak*) – Two of these small deer rustled away through the underbrush at Udawattakele Park in Kandy, stopping occasionally to peer back at us.

SPOTTED DEER (*Axis axis*) – Particularly common in Udawalawe and Yala, where we saw several large herds, with others at Bundala. Some of the males sported sizeable racks of antlers.

SAMBAR (*Cervus unicolor*) – Our first was a huge male snoozing with an Asian Water Buffalo herd in one of the ponds at Yala. We had others, including an inquisitive female in a scrub patch and a roadside male (being fed by a guide who should have known better) near the Horton Plains visitor's center.

ASIAN WATER BUFFALO (*Bubalus bubalis*)

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Day Gecko (*Cnemaspis* sp.) - A tiny one hung on a trunk in Sinharaja. There are 21 known *Cnemaspis* species, and I'm not sure which one we saw.

Common House Gecko (*Hemidactylus frenatus*) - Common on the walls of our hotels throughout the tour.

Green Forest Lizard (*Calotes calotes*) - Another regular species, with particularly nice looks at a red-headed male near the canoe ferry dock.

Painted-lip Lizard (*Calotes ceylonensis*) - One near Sigiriya showed the wide white stripe along its mouth that gives it its common name.

Common Garden Lizard (*Calotes versicolor*) - These were the pale brown lizards we saw on many days of the tour.

Brown-patched Kangaroo Lizard [Sri Lankan Kangaroo Lizard] (*Otocryptis wiegmanni*) - Especially nice looks at a few on our first soggy walk into Makandawa Forest Park; fairly small and (appropriately) quite long-legged.

Rhinoceros Lizard [aka Rhino-horn Lizard] (*Ceratophora stoddartii*) - We found one, showing its distinctively pointy nose, on a tree trunk near the landfill in Nuwara Eliya.

Water Monitor (*Varanus salvator salvator*) - One near the pond on the grounds of our airport hotel.

Land Monitor [aka Bengal monitor] (*Varanus bengalensis*) - Most common in the dry areas, including several on the tracks in Udawalawe.

Black Turtle [aka Hardshelled Terrapin] (*Melanochelys trijuga*) - One in a puddle at Udawalawe NP, with others in the moat at Sigiriya.

Mugger Crocodile [aka Marsh Crocodile] (*Crocodylus palustris*) - We spotted a sizable one floating in Debarawewa tank.

Green Vine Snake (*Ahaetulla nasuta*)

Sri Lankan Rat Snake (*Ptyas mucosa maximus*) - A huge one along the fence line at Lunugamwehera NP; eventually, it crossed the road -- with a little prodding from Udi!

Spectacled Cobra [aka Indian Cobra] (*Naja naja*) - One slithered past our vehicle in Udawalawe NP, giving us a great look at the distinctive spectacles on its flared hood.

Checkered Keelback [aka Asiatic Water Snake] (*Xenochrophis piscator*) - We saw two, including one that caught a fish -- and spent long minutes beside the pond trying to swallow it.

Sri Lankan Green Pit Viper (*Trimeresurus trigonocephalus*) - One coiled in a tree near the entrance kiosk at Sinharaja Forest Preserve was fascinating and a bit creepy at one and the same time.

Streaked Kukri Snake [aka Russell's Kukri Snake] (*Oligodon taeniolatus*)

Common House Toad (*Dittaphrynus melanostictus*) - One on the grounds of our airport hotel.

Kelaart's Toad [Kelaart's Dwarf Toad] (*Adenomus kelaartii*)

Sri Lankan Paddy Field Frog ((*Fejervarya greenii*))

Sri Lanka Wart Frog [aka Corrugated Water Frog] (*Lankanectes corrugatus*) - This was the frog we found near the entrance to the Sinharaja Forest Preserve.

Acavus superbus - This was the huge land snail with the brown body.

Acavus phoenix - And this was the equally large land snail with the black body.

Totals for the tour: 244 bird taxa and 25 mammal taxa