



Field Guides Tour Report

SRI LANKA 2018

Oct 26, 2018 to Nov 12, 2018

Megan Edwards Crewe & Uditha Hettige

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



Sri Lanka Wood-Pigeon is one of more than 30 endemics possible on our tour. Photo by participant Sam Perloff.

The lovely, lush island of Sri Lanka is the perfect place to come to grips with some of the avifauna of the Indian subcontinent (and the wider southeastern Asian continent), with the added bonus of more than 30 species endemic to the island itself. During our two weeks, we rambled from the thick, rampantly green rainforests of the southwest to the baking salt pans of the southeast, from the tangled brush of Yala, with its odd outcrops of "elephant rocks" to the cool, misty highlands of Horton Plains, and from the bustling cities of Nuwara Eliya and Kandy to the dry forests around the amazing magma plug of Sigiriya. And, everywhere, we had some marvelous encounters with the local birds, mammals, reptiles, people, culture, and food.

A pair of Red-faced Malkohas bounded through a treetop while Sri Lanka Drongos, Orange-billed Babblers and a host of smaller flock-mates swirled below them. A pair of Sri Lanka Frogmouths snuggled together in a vine tangle, blinking sleepily. A Sloth Bear shuffled along an embankment, snuffling at the ground. Pheasant-tailed Jacanas balanced on lily pads. A Pied Thrush, newly arrived from his Himalayan breeding grounds, peered from his perch in a city park tree as dusk descended. Sri Lanka Hanging-Parrots nibbled fruit at a waist-high feeder. A pair of Green-billed Coucals catcalled from the bushes at Sinharaja, eventually flicking into the open as the sun sank towards the horizon. A pair of Yellow-eared Bulbuls paraded back and forth through a tree at eye level while we searched for whistling-thrushes. Brightly-colored Painted Storks strode through puddles or stretched long necks and legs in flight. A family of Layard's Parakeets sat in a fruiting tree, nibbling sedately. A Yellow Bittern picked its way stealthily through thick reeds. Jewel-bright Indian Pittas shouted from shady perches. Asian Elephants lumbered across whacked-over fields (and one small youngster trotted after us, trunk raised and ears flapping as it trumpeted). Dozens of Malabar Pied-Hornbills festooned a dead tree silhouetted against a rainy sky. Noisy gangs of Ashy-headed Laughingthrushes swarmed through the forest. A Yellow-fronted Barbet busily excavated a nest hole, panting with its efforts. Orange-headed Thrushes scuttled around puddles on a forest track and then bounced off into the thick leaf litter.

We found all but one of Sri Lanka's endemics (darn you Sri Lanka Whistling-Thrush!) and saw most of them very well indeed (Sri Lanka Thrush notwithstanding). We spotted a tour-first TEN species of owls this year, including a calling Brown Boobook and a couple of Indian Scops-Owls right on the grounds of our airport hotel, a sleepy Chestnut-backed Owllet tooting from a treetop in a backyard near the Kitulgala police station, a fed-up Brown Fish-Owl hunched against the rain in a stream-side tree, a wide-eyed Brown Wood Owl that required a bit of a hillwalking scramble to find, and a well-hidden Serendib Scops-Owl peering from the vine tangle where it was roosting. And who will soon forget the massive Spot-bellied Eagle-Owl that flew in and perched right out in the open at the top of a tree near Sigiriya's Lion Rock, staying put even as several groups of bicyclists peddled up and stopped for a look!

Of course, it wasn't just the critters that kept us entertained. Drums boomed and horns wailed as we explored the extravagantly painted buildings at the Temple of the Buddha's Tooth. A myriad curries tickled our noses and taste buds. A tour of a hillside tea plantation taught us the many steps and processes involved in bringing tea leaves from the fields to our cups -- and left us marveling at the low price of tea bags, considering all the efforts. A flower seller bounded down a steep hillside, meeting us at switchback after switchback with his bouquet of flowers before Udi finally relented and let him aboard for some sales. And through it all, a pleasant group of traveling companions increased the fun. Thanks for joining us for the adventure. I hope to see you all again in the field soon!

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*) – Abundant along the coast near Bundala NP, with dozens in and around the Debarawewa tank and hundreds in the lagoons near Bundala NP. This is a common breeding resident in the lowlands of Sri Lanka, with numbers augmented by migrants from further north in the winter.

COTTON PYGMY-GOOSE (*Nettapus coromandelianus*) – Only a few of these small ducks this year, all around the Debarawewa tank. Our first was a male among a flock of whistling-ducks (where his white head made him very easy to pick out), and we later saw another couple of males flying low over the tank in a flurry of black-and-white wings.

GARGANEY (*Spatula querquedula*) – Hundreds lifted out of the grasses around the lagoons at Bundala (after showing as little more than the occasional brown head before that) and flew around in big circles over the marshes before dropping back into cover. This is a common winter visitor to Sri Lanka.

NORTHERN PINTAIL (*Anas acuta*) – A female looked pretty huge when she lifted off with a big group of Garganey near the entrance to Bundala NP. This is a common winter visitor in the north of Sri Lanka (i.e. not on our tour route), but is definitely uncommon in the south.

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

INDIAN PEAFOWL (*Pavo cristatus*) – Very common in the south of the island, with dozens perched up in trees along the road through the Ruhunu NP, on our way to Nuwara Eliya. Their distinctive cry was a regular part of the tour soundtrack in the "dry" zone.

SRI LANKA SPURFOWL (*Galloperdix bicalcarata*) – It took a bit of patience -- and some great luck in the timing of our rather soggy walk -- but we finally spotted a female in the back yard of some tea farmers near Ketalapattella. [E]

SRI LANKA JUNGLEFOWL (*Gallus lafayetii*) – It was surprising that it took us as long as it did to find our first -- we didn't spot one until we reached Sinharaja -- but we made up for lost time after that! Particularly memorable were the confiding birds gobbling rice behind a farmer's house near Ketalapattella, and the rooster right up at the top of a dense tree in Victoria Park, seen while we searched for Pied Thrush. [E]

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

LITTLE GREBE (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*) – Two floated and dove on a tank we passed en route to Yala NP -- good spotting, Claudia! We saw a couple of others on one of the ponds we passed shortly after leaving Tissamaharama. This is Sri Lanka's only grebe.

Ciconiidae (Storks)

ASIAN OPENBILL (*Anastomus oscitans*) – We found a half dozen foraging in rice paddies at one stop on our way to Kitulgala on our first morning, then spotted others around the Debarawewa tank and soaring over Sinharaja. This species is a snail specialist, and their "open" bills help them grip their favored prey more tightly.

WOOLLY-NECKED STORK (*Ciconia episcopus*) – One in some rice paddies between Sinharaja and Embilipitiya caught our eye, and was soon joined by two more. They hunted their way across the paddies, squabbling amongst themselves -- particularly when one caught a decent-sized snake.

LESSER ADJUTANT (*Leptoptilos javanicus*) – One was rummaging in tall grass around one of the lagoons near the entrance to Bundala as we headed back towards the bus after our morning in the park. After letting us admire it from nearly every angle, it moved off to the far side of the open area, giving us the chance to study it in flight as well. This species is globally threatened.

PAINTED STORK (*Mycteria leucocephala*) – Common in wetlands of the south, with dozens sprinkled across the lagoons at Bundala, a few at Yala, and others along the edges of rice paddies near Debarawewa. We spotted a few in flight over some scrubby grasslands near Sinharaja. As we saw on several occasions, this species typically feeds by sweeping its partially-opened bill through the water.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

LITTLE CORMORANT (*Microcarbo niger*) – Common and widespread in lowland wetlands throughout, with some good scope studies of a bird on a rock in the middle of the Kelani River. As its name suggests, this is the smallest of Sri Lanka's cormorants, with the smallest bill.

GREAT CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) – The least common of the tour's cormorants, with a scattering seen in the middle of the tour -- including some at Udawalawe and Bundala. Most were in flight, including one showing the white puffs of breeding plumage on its thighs as it flew over the Debarawewa tank.

INDIAN CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax fuscicollis*) – Regular on the second half of the tour, including a big panting group huddled around the feet of the sleeping Eurasian Spoonbills at the Bundala salt works.

Anhingidae (Anhingas)

ORIENTAL DARTER (*Anhinga melanogaster*) – Common around wetlands in the middle of the tour, including one hauling nesting material to some out-of-sight location near the Debarawewa tank and another roosting among the Spot-billed Pelicans in the one of the big, spreading trees on the tank's shore.

Pelecanidae (Pelicans)

SPOT-BILLED PELICAN (*Pelecanus philippensis*) – Our first were distant specks perched on posts well across the tank behind our Embilipitiya hotel. Fortunately, we got increasingly better views, topped off by scope studies of birds roosting at the top of some large, spreading trees around the Debarawewa tank -- just above thousands and thousands of Indian Flying-Foxes! [N]

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

YELLOW BITTERN (*Ixobrychus sinensis*) – Some superb views of these small bitterns in and around Bundala (including several standing right out in the open right beside the road), with others in the reeds at the Debarawewa tank.

- CINNAMON BITTERN** (*Ixobrychus cinnamomeus*) – One lurked among the grasses edging a lagoon near the Bundala entrance, initially showing little more than the rusty top of its head. Fortunately, it moved more into the open as we watched, and eventually showed reasonably well. This is the rarest of Sri Lanka's three small bitterns.
- BLACK BITTERN** (*Ixobrychus flavicollis*) – A few flybys at Bundala and the Debarawewa tank, with a perched bird in a tall shrub near the lagoons at Bundala's entrance. Like the Yellow Bittern, this is a fairly rare breeding species in Sri Lanka, but numbers are greatly supplemented in the winter by migrants from further north. It's the largest of Sri Lanka's bitterns.
- GRAY HERON** (*Ardea cinerea*) – Regular in small numbers in wetlands throughout.
- PURPLE HERON** (*Ardea purpurea*) – Particularly common at the Debarawewa tank, where we saw several dozen -- including a very gingery youngster -- during our search for Watercocks.
- GREAT EGRET (AUSTRALASIAN)** (*Ardea alba modesta*) – Small numbers on many days of the tour, in both wetlands and rice paddies across the southern half of the country. The subspecies here has a black bill during the breeding season.
- INTERMEDIATE EGRET** (*Ardea intermedia*) – Less common than the other white egrets, with only a few scattered individuals seen -- except at our rice paddy stop en route to Kitulgala on the first full day, when we saw a dozen or more hunting among the Cattle Egrets. The gape line on this species doesn't extend as far behind the eye as does the gape line of the previous species.
- LITTLE EGRET** (*Egretta garzetta*) – Another regular species, albeit in small numbers. This one looks a lot like a Snowy Egret (right down to the bright yellow feet of the adults), but it has bluish-gray, rather than yellow, lores and two slim, white breeding plumes on the head (like those of a Black-crowned Night-Heron) rather than the intricate spray of feathers of a breeding-plumaged Snowy.
- CATTLE EGRET (EASTERN)** (*Bubulcus ibis coromandus*) – Abundant throughout, with dozens attending the dairy herds in the highlands (like so many white-suited maitre d's) and others riding the backs of the water buffaloes as they swam across the Debarawewa tank.
- INDIAN POND-HERON** (*Ardeola grayii*) – Another regular species, typically (but not always) around wetlands; we even saw some hunting on the lawns of Victoria Park (and the racetrack) in the highlands of Nuwara Eliya.
- STRIATED HERON** (*Butorides striata*) – Singles on a handful of days, including a squawking bird that flew past at dusk on the grounds of our Colombo hotel (looking much like a Green Heron) and one hunting on the lily pads of the Debarawewa tank. We saw others in Yala and Kandy, and Nancy spotted one along the road en route to Sinharaja.
- BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (EURASIAN)** (*Nycticorax nycticorax nycticorax*) – We saw a few trios flying over our Colombo's hotel grounds as dusk approached on our first afternoon's ramble, with others in flight over other wetlands in the south. Our best views, though, may have come along the fringes of the lake right in the middle of Kandy; though the views were relatively quick (as we pattered past in heavy traffic), the birds were typically sitting right in the open only yards from the road.

Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)

- BLACK-HEADED IBIS** (*Threskiornis melanocephalus*) – Plenty in the wet fields and lagoon edges of the south, with nice scope studies of some around the Debarawewa tank. This species was formerly considered to be a subspecies of the Sacred Ibis.
- EURASIAN SPOONBILL** (*Platalea leucorodia*) – A group of a dozen or so snoozed along the edge of a lagoon near the salt works at Bundala NP, occasionally lifting up a head to show us their distinctive bills.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

- BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE** (*Elanus caeruleus*) – One perched atop a dead snag in Udawalawe; unfortunately, it flew away before we could get the scopes set up in the vans for everybody to get a closer look. This was formerly considered to be conspecific with both the White-tailed Kite of the Americas, and the Australian Kite.
- ORIENTAL HONEY-BUZZARD** (*Pernis ptilorhynchus*) – Seen on scattered days throughout the tour, always in flight, with our best views coming along the Sigiriya Shortcut road, where two birds -- one light-morph, one dark -- soared slowly past over the scrub. The small, narrow head (better for reaching into cracks containing honeycomb) and long tail of this species are distinctive. Despite their name, the honey-buzzards don't eat honey; they eat bee larvae.
- CRESTED SERPENT-EAGLE (CRESTED)** (*Spilornis cheela spilogaster*) – Common and widespread, including one munching on a lizard in a spreading tree across the river from the Kitulgala Rest House, a youngster that made regular visits to some bare trees uphill from the Blue Magpie's dining room, and a close but unobtrusive adult that nearly eluded detection while we watched the parakeet flocks outside Kandy.
- CRESTED HAWK-EAGLE** (*Nisaetus cirrhatous ceylanensis*) – An immature bird perched in a dead tree up the hill from the Blue Magpie's dining room allowed nice scope views -- and a bit of confusion for those who didn't immediately catch the difference between HAWK-Eagle and SERPENT-Eagle. We had some fine views of darker adults in some of the big trees at Udawalawe and Yala.
- MOUNTAIN HAWK-EAGLE** (*Nisaetus nipalensis*) – All-too-brief views of one gliding past over the tea plantation while we searched for Plum-headed Parakeets outside Kandy.
- RUFIOUS-BELLIED EAGLE** (*Lophotriorchis kienerii*) – Unfortunately, we never got the quintessential look at this gorgeous raptor. It was spotted twice from our moving bus -- both times in places where there was nowhere to pull off the road and a line of traffic behind us!
- BLACK EAGLE** (*Ictinaetus malaiensis*) – Another raptor seen along the road on multiple days, several times low down over the treetops. The rectangular wing shape (with broad, "fingered" wing tips) and long tail, combined with their habit of hunting in the canopy of trees, help to distinguish this species.
- BOOTED EAGLE** (*Hieraaetus pennatus*) – Nancy spotted our first, gliding away towards the hills as we drove towards Embilipitiya, but we had our best views at the Bundala, where we spotted one circling low over the far end of the salt works while we ate our breakfast. This species is widespread across much of the Old World.
- CRESTED GOSHAWK** (*Accipiter trivirgatus layardi*) – Some of the gang had a poor look at a bird flying away from the road as we drove toward Embilipitiya, and those in Udi's jeep spotted another flying bird at Yala. But our best group looks came near Lion Rock in Sigiriya, where we had a bird perched in a treetop that allowed scope studies for a few brief minutes.
- SHIKRA** (*Accipiter badius*) – Scattered birds throughout, including an adult that Barbara spotted on a palm frond right near the entrance road to our Colombo hotel on our first afternoon, and a youngster on a light pole the following morning, a few flap-flap-gliding (in typical Accipiter fashion) over roadways and forests, and another adult perched near Lion Rock.
- BESRA** (*Accipiter virgatus*) – As usual, this was far less common than the previous species, with only a couple of individuals seen: one perched near the Blue Magpie (scoped from the dining room) and another on our way up to Sinharaja. This species is smaller and darker than the Shikra, with broader (and fewer) bands on the uppertail.

BRAHMINY KITE (*Haliastur indus*) – Common and widespread in the open lowlands, and missing completely in the highlands and rainforest. The family group working along the Sigiriya Shortcut (and others around our Colombo hotel) gave us especially good chances for study.

WHITE-BELLIED SEA-EAGLE (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*) – A few folks happened to be looking in the right direction when one flapped past the dining room at the Kitulgala Rest House, and some got on a flying bird at Udawalawe, but our best views (by far) came at Yala NP, where we found one perched (and trying to dry out) at the top of a dead tree just before we found the Sloth Bears. The very short tail and very long wings of this species make for a distinctive flight profile.

GRAY-HEADED FISH-EAGLE (*Haliaeetus ichthyaeus*) – Nancy, Sam and Ed found a trio near the Sigiriya tank during one afternoon's break, and brought the rest of us right to the spot to see one when we reconvened later. We saw it (or another) from the same place the following day. The bright white leggings on the perched bird were certainly eye-catching -- much more so than the books illustrate!

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots).

SLATY-LEGGED CRAKE (*Rallina eurizonoides*) – After hearing two calling from the dense vegetation just down the hill from where we were standing (on the drive up to Sinharaja, by the shell of the big, new house), we spotted one stepping quickly through the half-light of a farm house backyard near Ketalapatella, while waiting for the spurfowl to make an appearance.

WHITE-BREASTED WATERHEN (*Amaurornis phoenicurus*) – Very common and widespread in wet areas across most of our tour route, though not seen around Sinharaja this year. Unlike the previous species, this one was regularly seen parading around right in the open.

WATERCOCK (*Gallix cinerea*) – In a great example of persistence paying off, some great spotting by Udi netted us first a plain brown head and, little by little, gradually a bit more of one non-breeding plumaged bird among the Water Hyacinth in the Debarawewa tank. We'd certainly spent a fair bit of time scanning various marshes before it was spotted!

GRAY-HEADED SWAMPHEN (*Porphyrio poliocephalus poliocephalus*) – According to the books, this species is "fairly shy". Apparently, the birds in Sri Lanka hadn't got the message, as they were regularly cavorting around in the open, typically in big numbers. This species was split out from the former Purple Swampen complex.

EURASIAN MOORHEN (*Gallinula chloropus*) – Two stepped across the Water Hyacinth plants in the company of a half-dozen Gray-headed Swampens, in a corner of the Debarawewa tank.

Burhinidae (Thick-knees).

INDIAN THICK-KNEE (*Burhinus indicus*) – Only Udi and Sam spotted our first, which flushed off the side of the road in the dark as we headed down to Bundala NP; the rest of us were sound asleep! Fortunately, we got nice views of several others towards the end of our afternoon in Yala NP. And some saw a final bird chasing a small frog across the road on our rainy drive back from Yala.

GREAT THICK-KNEE (*Esacus recurvirostris*) – Far more common than the previous species, with good numbers seen at Bundala, smaller numbers at Yala, and scattered pairs in rice paddies around Debarawewa. The huge beak on this one makes it pretty easy to identify -- even from a considerable distance.

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets).

BLACK-WINGED STILT (*Himantopus himantopus*) – Plenty of these elegant shorebirds strode around on their long pink legs in ponds, tanks, lagoons and salt pans across the southern end of the island.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings).

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – A few of these larger plovers mingled with the far more common Lesser Sand Plovers at Bundala NP. The black "wing pits" of this species are diagnostic in flight, and their clear whistled calls let us know they were coming.

PACIFIC GOLDEN-PLOVER (*Pluvialis fulva*) – Our first was a rather distant bird seen near dusk at Yala NP, which proved rather difficult to see. Fortunately, we soon found the rest of its widely scattered flock mates much closer to the road, giving us much more satisfying views.

YELLOW-WATTLED LAPWING (*Vanellus malabaricus*) – Small numbers at Bundala and Yala, always in pairs. This resident species is smaller -- and far less common -- than the next.

RED-WATTLED LAPWING (*Vanellus indicus*) – Regular around wetlands through much of the tour, including one standing right outside the door of the restaurant of our Embilipitiya hotel, dozens scattered across rice paddies and a pair on a sizable rock in the middle of the Sigiriya tank.

LESSER SAND-PLOVER (*Charadrius mongolus*) – Scores of these winter visitors pattered along the edges of lagoons and salt pans at Yala and Bundala. This species is also known as Mongolian Plover.

KENTISH PLOVER (INDIAN) (*Charadrius alexandrinus seebohmi*) – A few among the more numerous Lesser Sand-Plovers at Bundala and Yala. This breeding resident is told by its slender, delicate shape, its dark legs and bill, and its incomplete breast band.

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER (*Charadrius dubius*) – Best seen at Bundala, where a few birds foraged in the road almost within arm's reach of our vehicles, giving us nice looks at those distinctive yellow eye rings. We saw others at Yala.

Jacaniidae (Jacanas).

PHEASANT-TAILED JACANA (*Hydrophasianus chirurgus*) – Regular in wetlands along the coast and at the Sigiriya tank. Most were in their drabber, short-tailed nonbreeding plumage, but we found at least one full-on bird at Bundala.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies).

EURASIAN CURLEW (*Numenius arquata*) – A single bird foraged in taller grasses along the back edge of a lagoon near the Bundala salt pans, its very long, down-curved beak making it easy to pick out -- nice spotting, Ed!

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT (*Limosa limosa*) – Wave after wave of these long-billed shorebirds flew past as we birded the lagoons before entering Bundala; sometimes, the flocks stretched from horizon to horizon in low, thin lines. We saw a handful of others in flight over the Debarawewa tank.

RUDDY TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*) – Small numbers rummaged along the edges of some of the salt pans at Bundala and at a few of the lagoons at Yala.

RUFF (*Calidris pugnax*) – Another wintering species seen in small numbers among the shorebird flocks at Bundala. The rucked-up back feathers on this medium-sized shorebird are distinctive.

CURLEW SANDPIPER (*Calidris ferruginea*) – Very common in wet spots in both Bundala and Yala, including scores foraging in the salt pans. A few still showed traces of their handsome breeding plumage.

LITTLE STINT (*Calidris minuta*) – Another very common wintering species, seen pattering along the edges of lagoons, salt pans and puddles at Bundala and Yala.

PIN-TAILED SNIPE (*Gallinago stenura*) – A few lurking along the edges of some of the wet spots at Yala and Bundala. This is the most likely snipe in Sri Lanka.

COMMON SANDPIPER (*Actitis hypoleucos*) – Small numbers waggled along the edges of lagoons and puddles at Udawalawe, Bundala and Yala. This species strongly resembles North America's Spotted Sandpiper -- in its unspotted, nonbreeding plumage.

COMMON GREENSHANK (*Tringa nebularia*) – A few scattered among the shorebirds at Bundala with several others at Yala. This is the Old World replacement for the Greater Yellowlegs, and has the same long, slightly-upturned, two-toned beak. This is a fairly common winter migrant.

MARSH SANDPIPER (*Tringa stagnatilis*) – Another winter visitor seen in small numbers at Bundala and Yala. The pale plumage and very long, slim bill of this species helps with its identification.

WOOD SANDPIPER (*Tringa glareola*) – Like most of the tour's shorebirds, seen at Bundala and Yala, sometimes in small groups. This is the Old World equivalent to the Lesser Yellowlegs of the Americas.

COMMON REDSHANK (*Tringa totanus*) – A handful sprinkled among the other shorebirds at Bundala and Yala, where their bright red legs made them easy to pick out. This is another winter visitor.

Turnicidae (Buttonquail)

BARRED BUTTONQUAIL (*Turnix suscitator leggei*) – Our first were a pair scuttling along the main track through Udawalawe -- the drabber male in the lead and the more colorful female in hot pursuit. Those in Udi's van spotted others at Bundala and we spied still more at Yala. This is one of the few avian species where the sex roles are reversed; males are the primary caregivers for eggs and chicks, while females call and fight for access to males.

Glareolidae (Pratincoles and Coursers)

SMALL PRATINCOLE (*Glareola lactea*) – A handful of these handsome little birds crouched on the dirt causeway through the Bundala salt pans, giving us great scope views.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

LITTLE TERN (*Sternula albifrons*) – Small numbers flashed over the marshes and salt pans at Bundala, dwarfed by the larger species.

GULL-BILLED TERN (*Gelochelidon nilotica*) – Very common at Bundala, with some nice, close flybys and many birds roosting in big flocks on the salt pans. This is a winter visitor to Sri Lanka.

CASPIAN TERN (*Hydroprogne caspia*) – Dozens preened and rested among a mixed flock of terns at Bundala, and a handful of others flew over various lagoons and channels there. This is the world's largest tern.

WHITE-WINGED TERN (*Chlidonias leucopterus*) – Those in Udi's vehicle spotted a few among the mixed tern flocks over the salt pans at Bundala.

WHISKERED TERN (*Chlidonias hybrida*) – Scores way out over the tank behind our Embilipitiya hotel, with dozens of others coursing over the Debarawewa tank. This "marsh tern" is typically found primarily in freshwater wetlands.

COMMON TERN (*Sterna hirundo*) – Those in Udi's van spotted one at Bundala.

GREAT CRESTED TERN (*Thalasseus bergii*) – We found a number of adults trailing begging youngsters over the salt pans at Bundala, including one pair flying in conveniently close proximity to the next species for easy comparisons.

LESSER CRESTED TERN (*Thalasseus bengalensis*) – Less common this year than the previous species, but we did get reasonably good views of one in flight over the Bundala salt pans as we munched our breakfast.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) – Though this species is actually native in Sri Lanka, we didn't see any of the wild birds (which are restricted to offshore islets in the north of the country). We did, however, see plenty of feral birds in lowland cities and towns.

SRI LANKA WOOD-PIGEON (*Columba torringtoniae*) – Our first was a perched bird at Horton Plains -- or, more accurately, part of a bird, seen in the scope through a tiny window through the trees in the foggy forest. Fortunately a card shopping and bathroom stop at the park's visitor's center yielded much more satisfying looks at one trundling around right in the open in the parking lot. [E]

EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE (*Streptopelia decaocto*) – One at Bundala was a surprise; this species is typically found only in the country's north end.

SPOTTED DOVE (*Streptopelia chinensis*) – Abundant in more open areas throughout, often sitting on telephone wires along the roads we traveled.

ASIAN EMERALD DOVE (*Chalcophaps indica robinsoni*) – After frustratingly brief looks at several around Kitulgala, we had spectacular views of at least two (and possibly three) at the spurfowl spot in Sinharaja.

ORANGE-BREASTED PIGEON (*Treron bicinctus leggei*) – A few at Udawalawe, with even better looks at several small flocks perched up at Bundala; males are quite flamboyantly colorful. We found others in a mixed group with the next species in some fruiting trees near the Sinharaja tank.

SRI LANKA GREEN-PIGEON (*Treron pompadora*) – Regular throughout -- by far more common than its Orange-breasted cousin. Some gobbling fruits near the Kitulgala police station, and others in another fruiting tree near our Chestnut-backed Owlet, were particularly showy. [E]

GREEN IMPERIAL-PIGEON (*Ducula aenea*) – Another common and widespread species, with many seen in flight. This is by far the largest of Sri Lanka's pigeons.

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

GREEN-BILLED COUCAL (*Centropus chlororhynchos*) – A late afternoon duet by two showy birds was a nice cap to a great first day at Sinharaja. [E]

GREATER COUCAL (*Centropus sinensis*) – Regular throughout, including two trundling around on the grounds of our Colombo hotel, gleaning tidbits from the lawns, paths and flower beds. The descending, hooting calls of this species were a regular part of the tour soundtrack.

RED-FACED MALKOHA (*Phaenicophaeus pyrrhocephalus*) – Two with a big mixed flock along the main track at Sinharaja showed especially well on our second visit. They bounded through the treetops like bright squirrels, occasionally pausing for several seconds right in the open. That bright red facial skin is certainly eye-catching -- though it's impressive how well the birds can avoid detection when they want to! [E]

BLUE-FACED MALKOHA (*Phaenicophaeus viridirostris*) – A pair lurking in a tree top near the entrance to Bundala NP made us work for a look before eventually moving to more open branches, and was saw another pair briefly along the Buttala-Kataragama road on the morning we drove from Tissa to the mountains.

PIED CUCKOO (*Clamator jacobinus*) – One of these flashy cuckoos shared a nearly leafless tree at Bundala with a couple of Sri Lanka Woodshrikes, showing its spiky crest nicely. This species is generally more common than the Chestnut-winged Cuckoo, and lacks the bold rufous wing patches of

its larger cousin.

ASIAN KOEL (*Eudynamys scolopacea*) – Particularly common on the grounds of our Colombo hotel, where we had fine looks at both males and females. We heard their raucous group calls on many occasions.

BANDED BAY CUCKOO (*Cacomantis sonneratii waiti*) – Heard on several days early in the trip, and finally seen -- by those in Udi's van that day, at least -- at Yala.

GRAY-BELLIED CUCKOO (*Cacomantis passerinus*) – One at Bundala behaved nicely, sitting quietly on the edge of a bush right near the road while we admired it from our vehicles. This is a winter visitor to Sri Lanka.

FORK-TAILED DRONGO-CUCKOO (*Surniculus dicruroides*) – A territorial bird near Lion Rock was ultimately very cooperative, sitting (and singing) from a dead snag with his tail and wings spread wide and quivering. We could clearly see the white barring on its tail through the scope.

COMMON HAWK-CUCKOO (*Hierococcyx varius*) – Some in the group had one in flight at Horton Plains, but we had far better views of another in the tea plantation above Kandy. It sang for long minutes from an open branch in one of the big shade trees above the tea, giving us the chance for multiple leisurely looks in the scope.

INDIAN CUCKOO (*Cuculus micropterus*) – A calling bird completely interrupted breakfast at Sigiriya one morning, but we weren't able to track it down (or call it in) for a look. [*]

Tytonidae (Barn-Owls)

BARN OWL (EASTERN) (*Tyto alba stertens*) – One very obliging bird flew in and landed on a telephone pole right beside the road as we headed back to the hotel after our visit to Yala NP. It stayed put while we all cycled through the bus to the front to get a look, then continued to peer around as we pulled up right beside it. Nice!

Strigidae (Owls)

SERENDIB SCOPS-OWL (*Otus thilohoffmanni*) – Yahoo! A long trek into the Makandawa Forest Reserve -- and a tiptoe dance across some stepping stones over a sizable creek -- brought us fine scope views of a snoozing bird tucked in among some dead leaves in a tangle of vines. This species was only described to science in 2004! [E]

INDIAN SCOPS-OWL (*Otus bakkamoena*) – We heard the song of this small species (sounding rather like drops falling into a pool) for long minutes before we finally found it on the grounds of our Colombo hotel, perched low in a little tree across a narrow ditch from where we stood. We heard another calling from the fruiting tree with all the Indian Flying Foxes, also on the hotel grounds.

ORIENTAL SCOPS-OWL (ORIENTAL) (*Otus sunia leggei*) – The last owl of the trip -- and it made us work hard for it! We heard at least three singing from the darkening forest along the bumpy dirt road near Lion Rock on our first evening. A return visit the following night yielded pay dirt when Udi spotted one fly into a tree near the road; it sat for a few brief moments in a fork in the tree, staring straight at us, before winging back off into the darkness.

SPOT-BELLIED EAGLE-OWL (*Bubo nipalensis blighi*) – WOW! This rare owl has a huge territory, so finding one in the same part of the forest is always a treat. And finding one in broad daylight, that sat for a good 20 minutes right in the open while all and sundry (including several groups of passing bicyclists) stopped and gawped at it was just extraordinary. If the Toque Macaques hadn't found it and started jumping up and down on nearby branches to disturb it, who knows how long it might have stayed!

BROWN FISH-OWL (EASTERN) (*Ketupa zeylonensis zeylonensis*) – One of Udi's network of well-paid youngsters brought us to a staked out bird near Debarawewa, making our slither down the slimy trail on that wet morning worthwhile. We found another soggy bird perched on a big dead branch in a tree along one of the tracks at Yala NP. Both looked nearly as fed up with the wet weather as we were!

JUNGLE OWLET (*Glaucidium radiatum*) – One shot in to the top of a mango tree in the middle of Debarawewa as dusk approached on our first afternoon there, and proceeded to sing from his perch, his eye-catching white throat patch pulsing as he did. Talk about disrupting a White-naped Woodpecker viewing!

CHESTNUT-BACKED OWLET (*Glaucidium castanotum*) – We heard one calling for a while behind one of the cabins at a riverside "resort" we visited near the Kitulgala police station, and Udi eventually found it -- looking very sleepy -- high in the trees beyond the building. [E]

BROWN WOOD-OWL (*Strix leptogrammica ochrogenys*) – It took a bit of a hike -- up slimy hill and down slippery dale -- to get to the spot where Udi had located it, but we were rewarded with stupendous views of a wide-eyed bird in a dense thicket. What a beauty!

BROWN BOOBOOK (*Ninox scutulata*) – One called its distinctive two-note "boo book" call from the top of a dead tree along the entrance drive to our Colombo hotel. It left and returned several times -- always to the same perch -- allowing us to study it from virtually all sides.

Podargidae (Frogmouths)

SRI LANKA FROGMOUTH (*Batrachostomus moniliger*) – A pair snuggled together on a branch in some very dense vegetation Sinharaja, found thanks to some good bird-dogging by our park guide. The length of their eyelashes and rictal bristles was pretty impressive!

Caprimulgidae (Nightjars and Allies)

JERDON'S NIGHTJAR (*Caprimulgus atripennis aequabilis*) – One on the wrong side of the elephant fence was little more than a glowing eyeball (and a bit of white on a dark neck) for anybody who didn't brave the electricity to get to the other side. Those who did had stupendous views of this regional endemic (only found in Sri Lanka and the southern India peninsula) from about 5 feet away.

INDIAN NIGHTJAR (*Caprimulgus asiaticus eidos*) – One resting in a field, seen as we returned from our afternoon at Yala, gave us pretty spectacular views, sitting quietly for the whole time that we got seconds and thirds and fourths in the scopes. Eventually, we walked away and left it still sitting there.

Apodidae (Swifts)

INDIAN SWIFTLET (*Aerodramus unicolor*) – The most common of the tour's swifts, seen in flight on many days.

LITTLE SWIFT (*Apus affinis*) – Abundant around Sinharaja -- particularly when the Peregrine Falcon raked past the cliff face of Lion Rock and flushed them all out. Eventually, it caught one, and carried it off to consume somewhere else. Our closest looks came at our hotel there, where a small group nested on the ceiling of the entrance hall, chattering at us whenever we stopped to look.

ASIAN PALM-SWIFT (*Cypsiurus balasiensis*) – Small numbers scattered among the Indian Swiftlets at several locations, including over the grounds of our Colombo hotel and around the Blue Magpie Lodge. The small, slim shape and long, pointed tail of this species are distinctive.

Hemiprocnidae (Treeswifts)

CRESTED TREESWIFT (*Hemiprogne coronata*) – We never did find any perched birds this year, but did get nice looks at a busy flock right down over the overgrown rice paddies visible from the dining room at the Blue Magpie. Some were close enough to see their rusty cheek patches.

Trogonidae (Trogons).

MALABAR TROGON (*Harpactes fasciatus fasciatus*) – After a frustratingly quick glimpse of one flying off through the forest along the trail at the Makandawa Forest Reserve, we had much more satisfying looks at a couple of others several times with a big mixed flock at Sinharaja. This is another regional endemic shared with southern India.

Upupidae (Hoopoes).

EURASIAN HOOPOE (*Upupa epops*) – A few near the entrance to Bundala, including two sitting side by side at the top of a scraggly bush.

Bucerotidae (Hornbills).

SRI LANKA GRAY HORNBILL (*Ocyroceros gingalensis*) – One of the tour's more widespread endemics -- and far more common than Sri Lanka's other hornbill -- with small family groups seen on scattered days throughout the tour. The small group that hung around the gardens of our Kitulgala hotel was especially cooperative. [E]

MALABAR PIED-HORNBILL (*Anthracoceros coronatus*) – After struggling a bit to really see our first (a couple tucked into a leafy tree at Yala), we had them in spades on our drive to Nuwara Eliya -- including nearly 20 in the same dead tree! This regional endemic is found in Sri Lanka and southern India.

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers).

COMMON KINGFISHER (*Alcedo atthis*) – One perched on a small broken stick in the middle of a pond on our Colombo hotel's grounds was cooperative, pirouetting periodically to allow us to see all sides, and we saw another in a shallow pond at the edge of the town of Kitulgala during a late afternoon visit.

BLACK-BACKED DWARF-KINGFISHER (*Ceyx erithaca*) – We heard the quiet, high-pitched calls of this small species from the puddle-strewn forest around Lion Rock. [*]

STORK-BILLED KINGFISHER (*Pelargopsis capensis*) – One along the edge of the Debarawewa tank was an added bonus on the morning we looked for the Watercock -- great spotting, Ed! In addition to giving us some great views, it also serenaded us in response to Udi's whistles. We saw others around the tank at Sigiriya.

WHITE-THROATED KINGFISHER (*Halcyon smyrnensis*) – Very common throughout, sitting on utility wires along the country's roads, sticks and posts and dikes in scores of rice paddies -- even on roofs and balconies of buildings, as at our Colombo hotel!

PIED KINGFISHER (*Ceryle rudis*) – A few over tanks near Tissamaharama, including one hovering like an animated crossword puzzle at Debarawewa one afternoon, and another pair sitting on wire wrapped around utility poles on our drive to Nuwara Eliya.

Meropidae (Bee-eaters).

GREEN BEE-EATER (*Merops orientalis*) – Particularly common in the drier open country of Udawalawe, Bundala, Yala and Sigiriya, often hunting from perches low to the ground -- including a small flock on the impressive elephant fence just down the road from our Sigiriya hotel.

BLUE-TAILED BEE-EATER (*Merops philippinus*) – Easily the most common bee-eater of the tour, seen nearly every day -- and we probably just weren't paying enough attention on the days we missing it!

CHESTNUT-HEADED BEE-EATER (*Merops leschenaulti*) – The rarest of the regularly-occurring bee-eaters in Sri Lanka, recorded only on our visit to Udawalawe, where we found a few hunting from the skeletal branches of a dead tree along the main track.

Coraciidae (Rollers).

INDIAN ROLLER (*Coracias benghalensis*) – One sitting quietly on a utility wire between two "under-construction" buildings near our hotel was a bit of a surprise; they're not particularly common there.

Megalaimidae (Asian Barbets).

CRIMSON-FRONTED BARBET (*Psilopogon rubricapillus*) – One in the trees over the road in Parawalathenna on our first afternoon across the Kelani River at Kitulgala, and a pair near the parking lot at the Sinharaja visitor's center a few days later. This is Sri Lanka's newest endemic, recently split from the Malabar Barbet, which is now one of India's newest endemics. [E]

COPPERSMITH BARBET (*Psilopogon haemacephalus*) – First seen sharing a dead tree at Udawalawe with some Chestnut-headed Bee-eaters, with others along the Buttala-Kataragama Road and a few around Sigiriya. The mostly yellow face helps to quickly separate this small barbet from the similarly-sized previous species.

BROWN-HEADED BARBET (*Psilopogon zeylanicus*) – After struggling to find a single one on our first afternoon's outing in Colombo, we found a dozen or more the following morning; they were happily gorging on ripe fig fruits all over the hotel grounds. We found others all along our tour route. This is the country's largest barbet.

YELLOW-FRONTED BARBET (*Psilopogon flavifrons*) – Quite common around Kitulgala, with especially nice views of one excavating a nest hole in a skinny dead palm tree in Parawalathenna, on our way into the Makandawa Forest Reserve. We watched it spit mouthful after mouthful of sawdust out of the hole. [E]

Picidae (Woodpeckers).

BROWN-CAPPED WOODPECKER (*Dendrocopos nanus gymnophthalmos*) – The last new bird of the trip! We found a pair of them high in one of the bigger trees near the Sigiriya tank on our last morning, right before heading back to the hotel to pack up. This is Sri Lanka's smallest woodpecker, measuring just over 5 inches from beak to tail tip.

YELLOW-CROWNED WOODPECKER (*Dendrocopos mahrattensis*) – A pair flicked through trees along one of the tracks at Bundala, and another did the same at Yala.

LESSER YELLOWNAPE (*Picus chlorolophus wellsi*) – Singles seen at Makandawa Forest Reserve and Sinharaja, with especially good views of one returning repeatedly to the same tree as the next species near where we found our Green-billed Coucals. Its mostly green plumage helps to quickly identify this one.

BLACK-RUMPED FLAMEBACK (RED-BACKED) (*Dinopium benghalense psarodes*) – One on the grounds of our Colombo hotel played hard to get the first afternoon, but was far more cooperative the next morning, perching several times on palm trunks where we could easily see it. The birds found in the central and southern end of the island (which have redder backs and darker faces) may represent a distinct species -- watch this space!

CRIMSON-BACKED FLAMEBACK (*Chrysocolaptes stricklandi*) – Seen more regularly this year than most years, including one briefly on the outskirts of Kitulgala, another with a big mixed flock each day at Sinharaja and a loudly calling trio winging past several times at Horton Plains while we searched for Sri Lanka Whistling-Thrush. The pale face and yellow bill help to quickly separate this species from the slightly smaller Black-rumped Flameback.

WHITE-NAPED WOODPECKER (*Chrysocolaptes festivus*) – An afternoon outing in the town of Debarawewa netted us extended looks at a handsome pair checking out holes in some palm trunks near a house -- just before we found the Jungle Owllet.

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras).

EURASIAN KESTREL (*Falco tinnunculus*) – One soared high overhead while we munched our breakfast at Bundala.

PEREGRINE FALCON (SHAHEEN) (*Falco peregrinus peregrinator*) – We saw one around Sigiriya's Lion Rock each day. The second time, a sudden eruption of Little Swifts off the rock face drew our attention. The Peregrine made several rocketing passes through the flock and snagged one, which it carried off to devour elsewhere. The warm rusty tones of the underparts on this subspecies are distinctive.

Psittaculidae (Old World Parrots).

ALEXANDRINE PARAKEET (*Psittacula eupatria*) – Quite common around the Kitulgala Guest House, with scope views of several perched in the treetops across the Kelani River from the dining room; those rosy shoulder patches are diagnostic. This is Sri Lanka's largest parakeet.

ROSE-RINGED PARAKEET (*Psittacula krameri*) – Regular in more open areas throughout the tour, including some loud birds on the grounds of our Colombo hotel and dozens feasting in trees dotted through the tea plantation above Kandy.

PLUM-HEADED PARAKEET (*Psittacula cyanocephala*) – When we left the highlands without seeing one, we figured we'd missed it, but Udi had an ace up his sleeve; a short drive out of Kandy brought us to a massive tea plantation with lots of flowering shade trees. And nibbling on those blossoms were a host of parrots, including at least one pair of these handsome birds. The male's head is sure obvious, even in flight!

LAYARD'S PARAKEET (*Psittacula calthrapae*) – We found some very cooperative birds this year, thanks to some well-located fruiting trees! Those munching berries in the tree just outside our Kitulgala hotel showed especially well, and we got nice scope views of others just up the hill from the Blue Magpie Lodge. [E]

SRI LANKA HANGING-PARROT (*Loriculus beryllinus*) – As usual, we saw far more of these in flight than we did perched, but we did get some nice views of a pair munching fruit in a hanging tray right outside our Kitulgala hotel's dining room. [E]

Pittidae (Pittas).

INDIAN PITTA (*Pitta brachyura*) – Abundant throughout, with many glorious views -- including one sitting on an overhead wire in the dusk as we returned from our walk in Parawalathenna and some spectacularly showy birds along the roads around Sigiriya's Lion Rock.

Vangidae (Vangas, Helmetshrikes, and Allies).

SRI LANKA WOODSHRIKE (*Tephrodornis affinis*) – Two hunted from a tree near the track through Bundala, flashing in and out of view. We saw others at Yala and Sigiriya. [E]

BAR-WINGED FLYCATCHER-SHRIKE (*Hemipus picatus leggei*) – Fairly regular in the first week of the trip, with small numbers (mostly pairs, but a few family groups) seen around Kitulgala and the Makandawa Forest Reserve, with others at Sinharaja.

Artamidae (Woodswallows).

ASHY WOODSWALLOW (*Artamus fuscus*) – A trio along some high tension wires en route to Kitulgala occasionally flashed out after some insect then returned to their perch. We saw others on our drive to Embilipitiya.

Aegithinidae (Ioras).

COMMON IORA (*Aegithina tiphia*) – Scattered birds in lowland forests, including a female on the outskirts of Kitulgala and a pair at the Blue Magpie shortly after we arrived. Those around Sigiriya were particularly confiding, allowing nice scope studies.

WHITE-TAILED IORA (*Aegithina nigrolutea*) – Plentiful this year at Udawalawe, with a handful of others at Bundala. This species was only recently discovered in the country.

Campephagidae (Cuckooshrikes).

SMALL MINIVET (*Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*) – Small numbers on scattered days throughout, including some just down the road from the house where we saw our female Sri Lanka Spurfowl and several small swirling flocks at Horton Plains.

ORANGE MINIVET (*Pericrocotus flammeus*) – Common throughout much of the tour's first week with others in some of the bigger forest around Sigiriya's Lion Rock. This species was recently split from the far more widespread Scarlet Minivet; it's restricted to western peninsular India and Sri Lanka.

LARGE CUCKOOSHRIKE (INDIAN) (*Coracina macei layardi*) – The first of our back-to-back cuckooshrikes, seen along the busy road around Lion Rock. After leading us on a merry chase up and down the road, it eventually perched in a dead tree right over our heads.

BLACK-HEADED CUCKOOSHRIKE (*Lalage melanoptera sykesi*) – Some great spotting by Prabat netted us scope views of Sri Lanka's smaller cuckooshrike only minutes after we'd seen its larger cousin.

Laniidae (Shrikes).

BROWN SHRIKE (*Lanius cristatus*) – Abundant throughout, seen on all but a few days of the tour.

Oriolidae (Old World Orioles).

INDIAN GOLDEN ORIOLE (*Oriolus kundoo*) – A couple of youngsters shared a tree with our first perched Rosy Starlings, just outside the entrance to Bundala NP. This is a rare winter migrant to the lowlands and foothills of Sri Lanka.

BLACK-HOODED ORIOLE (*Oriolus xanthornus ceylonensis*) – Regular in the island's lowland forests, including the treed areas around our Colombo hotel.

Dicruridae (Drongos).

WHITE-BELLIED DRONGO (WHITE-VENTED) (*Dicrurus caerulescens insularis*) – This is the dry country subspecies, seen primarily around Sigiriya, with a few others at Bundala.

WHITE-BELLIED DRONGO (WHITE-VENTED) (*Dicrurus caerulescens leucopygialis*) – Very common on the first half the tour, sprinkled on roadside wires and hunting from treetops from Colombo to Tissamaharama.

GREATER RACKET-TAILED DRONGO (*Dicrurus paradiseus hypoballus*) – Pat was the lucky one who happened to be looking in the right direction when one of these flew past as we walked around the Debarawewa tank. Those distinctive long tail plumes make this one tough to mix up with anything else!

SRI LANKA DRONGO (*Dicrurus lophorinus*) – Another of Sri Lanka's newer endemics, split some years ago from the Greater Racket-tailed Drongo. We had especially nice views of several noisy birds hunting with a mixed flock in the lush forest at Makandawa, with others -- also in a mixed flock -

- at Sinharaja. [E]

Rhipiduridae (Fantails).

WHITE-BROWED FANTAIL (*Rhipidura aureola*) – Regular in Kitulgala, including one dancing on the rocks along the edge of the Kelani River and others in the scrub at Yala and Bundala. This bird's habit of constantly fanning and flicking its tail helps to quickly identify it.

Monarchidae (Monarch Flycatchers).

BLACK-NAPED MONARCH (*Hypothymis azurea ceylonensis*) – Especially nice views of one building a nest right over the main trail at Sinharaja. [N]

INDIAN PARADISE-FLYCATCHER (*Terpsiphone paradisi*) – Regular in the lowlands, including a few furtive birds on the grounds of our airport hotel, a snazzy white morph male at Kitulgala (and another at Sigiriya), and more common rufous morph birds at Yala and Sigiriya.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies).

SRI LANKA BLUE-MAGPIE (*Urocissa ornata*) – Daily in Sinharaja, but they proved surprisingly elusive this year. We never saw them for long enough to really get good scope looks at them. They certainly had the "wow factor" none-the-less though! [E]

HOUSE CROW (*Corvus splendens*) – Seen most days, missed only in the densest rainforests. This species is slightly smaller -- and smaller-billed -- than the next.

LARGE-BILLED CROW (*Corvus macrorhynchos*) – Like the previous species, missed only on our days in the thickest lowland forests.

Alaudidae (Larks).

JERDON'S BUSHLARK (*Mirafra affinis*) – Our best studies probably came at Udawalawe, where several wandered nearly within arms reach around our vehicles. We saw others at Yala, Bundala and along several dry country roadways. The big bill on this one helps to separate it from the similar Oriental Skylark.

ORIENTAL SKYLARK (*Alauda gulgula*) – Regular at Udawalawe and in the the dry coastal regions around Yala and Bundala. This species is relatively longer-tailed than the previous one, and has a subtly different shape.

Hirundinidae (Swallows).

BANK SWALLOW (*Riparia riparia*) – A few, looking tiny, were sprinkled among the Barn Swallows on wires near the entrance to Bundala. This species is known as "Sand Martin" in the Old World.

BARN SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*) – Common and widespread throughout, including hundreds lining the utility wires near the entrance to Bundala. This is another winter visitor to the island.

HILL SWALLOW (*Hirundo domicola*) – Scattered birds in the highlands of Horton Plains, including a few zooming over the endemic bamboo near our first Pied Bushchats and others sharing a television aerial perch with some Barn Swallows at the visitor's center.

SRI LANKA SWALLOW (*Cecropis hyperythra*) – Regular and widespread, though in smaller numbers than the ubiquitous Barn Swallows. The ones cruising back and forth over fields near Parawalathenna gave us especially nice views. [E]

Stenostiridae (Fairy Flycatchers).

GRAY-HEADED CANARY-FLYCATCHER (*Culicicapa ceylonensis*) – One hunting at Victoria Park on our first visit briefly interrupted our search for an also-calling Kashmir Flycatcher. This attractive little species is widespread across southeast Asia.

Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice).

CINEREOUS TIT (*Parus cinereus mahrattarum*) – Seen several times in the highlands, with especially nice views of a pair bouncing along a mesh fence around a little farm plot at Pattipola, on our way down the hill from Horton Plains. We saw others in Victoria Park, and at Horton Plains itself.

Sittidae (Nuthatches).

VELVET-FRONTED NUTHATCH (*Sitta frontalis*) – One with a big mixed flock at Sinharaja played hard to get for some. Fortunately for all concerned, another bird in the highlands above Kandy proved very cooperative, mooching around in an open treetop above the vast tea plantation for long minutes.

Pycnonotidae (Bulbuls).

BLACK-CAPPED BULBUL (*Pycnonotus melanicterus*) – Regular on the first half of the tour, including a pair working in some low bushes along the track near Ketalapattala and a few around the Blue Magpie. This handsome endemic was split from mainland Asia's Black-crested Bulbul. [E]

RED-VENTED BULBUL (*Pycnonotus cafer cafer*) – This was the only species that we saw every day of the tour -- and we often saw them in sizable numbers! According to Sam, this is eBird's most commonly reported species for Sri Lanka.

YELLOW-EARED BULBUL (*Pycnonotus penicillatus*) – Our first were a pair at Victoria Park on our first visit there, with others seen at Horton Plains. But our best view probably came at a roadside spot south of Nuwara Eliya, where a pair paraded through eye-level branches right in front of us while we searched for Sri Lanka Whistling-Thrush. [E]

WHITE-BROWED BULBUL (*Pycnonotus luteolus insulae*) – A few at Bundala, including some near our unexpected Indian Golden Orioles, but our best looks probably came around Sigiriya, where they proved to be quite common. This is a pretty nondescript bird.

YELLOW-BROWED BULBUL (*Iole indica*) – Common throughout, typically in mixed flocks. "Yellow-browed" is a bit of a misnomer, considering that the whole face and entire underside of the bird is the same golden-yellow color!

SQUARE-TAILED BULBUL (SRI LANKA) (*Hypsipetes ganeesa humii*) – Very common in the wetter lowland forests we birded during our first week. That coral-red bill and legs contrast nicely with its charcoal-gray plumage. This is another potential split, so keep an eye on future revisions from the AOU.

Phylloscopidae (Leaf Warblers).

GREEN WARBLER (*Phylloscopus nitidus*) – Small numbers on scattered days throughout the tour, with good views of one in good comparison with the next species near the moat around Lion Rock.

LARGE-BILLED LEAF WARBLER (*Phylloscopus magnirostris*) – Another reasonably common species, though we heard far more than we saw; their rising three-note call was a regular part of the tour soundtrack. One that climbed around in a tree right over our heads on a pre-breakfast outing in Kitulgala gave us some great chances for extended study.

Acrocephalidae (Reed Warblers and Allies).

BLYTH'S REED WARBLER (*Acrocephalus dumetorum*) – Those in Udi's vehicle at Udawalawe saw one along the main track, but it had disappeared into the brush by the time the second vehicle maneuvered into position. Fortunately, we spotted others in the marsh grasses at Bundala, including one by the giant mud puddle along the entrance road.

CLAMOROUS REED WARBLER (BROWN) (*Acrocephalus stentoreus meridionalis*) – A couple of these noisy warblers sang from the reed beds along the edges of marshy puddles at Bundala, and with some patience, we were finally rewarded with great views of one after it hitched itself up to the top of a reed stem near the road-blocking puddle.

Locustellidae (Grassbirds and Allies)

SRI LANKA BUSH WARBLER (*Elaphornis palliseri*) – Those just might have been the best group views ever for this species! Normally, they twitch back and forth through the deepest, darkest parts of the vegetation and it takes an age to get everyone a look, so to watch one have an extended preen RIGHT IN THE OPEN was a treat, to say the least! [E]

Cisticolidae (Cisticolas and Allies)

ZITTING CISTICOLA (*Cisticola juncidis*) – Our first were "zitting" (relentlessly) along the roadsides at Udawalawe. We found others in the tall grasses around the Debarawewa tank and in the tussocky highland grasslands of Horton Plains.

COMMON TAILORBIRD (*Orthotomus sutorius*) – Recorded on many days of the tour, but far more frequently heard than seen. Our best looks probably came at the Surrey Bird Sanctuary, where we found one inquisitive bird as we walked the road back to the parking lot after seeing our Brown Wood Owl.

GRAY-BREASTED PRINIA (*Prinia hodgsonii pectoralis*) – Two foraged low along the road through Udawalawe, showing their diagnostic gray chests nicely. This is the smallest of Sri Lanka's prinias.

JUNGLE PRINIA (*Prinia sylvatica valida*) – A few in Udawalawe for those in Udi's jeep (they'd always flown by the time my group showed up), with several more cooperative birds at Bundala -- including one that sang for long seconds just before we entered the park. The heavy bill on this one is distinctive.

ASHY PRINIA (*Prinia socialis brevicauda*) – One flitting along the edge of a canal at the back of the grounds of our Colombo hotel played hard-to-get. Fortunately, we found another much more cooperative bird at the edge of the Debarawewa tank, which came within a few yards of us, giving us great views.

PLAIN PRINIA (*Prinia inornata insularis*) – Very common, particularly in the southern dry zone, with super studies of several close pairs around the Debarawewa tank. Despite its name, this species has a quite distinctive pale supercilium.

Paradoxornithidae (Parrotbills, Wrenit, and Allies)

YELLOW-EYED BABBLER (*Chrysomma sinense nasale*) – A pair mooched through low bushes along the main track at Udawalawe, and others swarmed through the scrub at Bundala. But our best views probably came around the Debarawewa tank, where we found a bird carrying food to an out-of-sight nest.

Zosteropidae (White-eyes, Yuhinas, and Allies)

SRI LANKA WHITE-EYE (*Zosterops ceylonensis*) – We found a handful in and around Sinharaja -- including one with a couple of Oriental White-eyes along the track near Ketalapatalla -- but our best views probably came at Horton Plains, where we found multiple little groups swirling through the roadside trees. This species is larger and darker than the next. [E]

ORIENTAL WHITE-EYE (*Zosterops palpebrosus*) – Regular in small numbers throughout much of the tour, including a busy group boiling through the trees along the road near Ketalapattala, seen during our soggy walk when we took a break from waiting for the Sri Lanka Spurfowl.

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

TAWNY-BELLIED BABBLER (*Dumetia hyperythra phillipsi*) – A sizable flock swarmed through the bushes near our bus as we returned from our Bundala jeep trip, and another few twitched through bushes along the edge of the Debarawewa tank, just before the food-carrying Yellow-eyed Babbler made its appearance.

DARK-FRONTED BABBLER (*Rhopocichla atriceps*) – Superb views of a busy flock along the track up to Sinharaja for the folks in my vehicle the first day, and great views of another busy group along the road at Sigiriya. These little babblers can be amazingly confiding, often coming within feet of us as they searched for tasty tidbits.

SRI LANKA SCIMITAR-BABBLER (*Pomatorhinus melanurus*) – We had some wonderful encounters with these social babblers on several occasions, including a gang working along the edge of the open field near our Serendib Scops-Owl and another little group swarming through the trees near the pond at Uda Wattakele -- checking for the insects flushed by the big Wild Boar herd. [E]

Pellorneidae (Ground Babblers and Allies)

BROWN-CAPPED BABBLER (*Pellorneum fuscocapillus*) – Two working low along the track near the Kitulgala police station gave us some fine views on our first morning visit there, singing a duet as they moved through the vegetation. Those who stayed late at Sinharaja on the second afternoon saw a couple of roosting birds perched low on a big fern frond (blinking in the light of Udi's flashlight) as we descended from the park. [E]

Leiothrichidae (Laughingthrushes and Allies)

ORANGE-BILLED BABBLER (*Turdoides rufescens*) – Very common in the wet zone. A busy gang working along the road through Parawalathenna was marvelously cooperative, as was another group near the Kitulgala police station. Several times at Sinharaja, we saw them in mixed flocks with Ashy-headed Laughing-Thrushes. [E]

YELLOW-BILLED BABBLER (*Turdoides affinis taprobanus*) – Very common throughout, with especially nice views of a big family group bouncing around the parking lots and lawns of our Colombo hotel.

ASHY-HEADED LAUGHINGTHRUSH (*Garrulax cinereifrons*) – Especially great encounters with several big groups along the main path at Sinharaja (together with a bunch of Orange-billed Babblers) with others near Kitulgala. We saw a fair few brown-eyed youngsters among the flocks. [E]

Muscicapidae (Old World Flycatchers)

ASIAN BROWN FLYCATCHER (*Muscicapa dauurica*) – Some of the group spotted one on the grounds of our Colombo hotel on our first afternoon together, but our best views probably came near the back entrance to Lion Rock, when we found one hunting along the ancient moat. This is a winter visitor to Sri Lanka.

- BROWN-BREASTED FLYCATCHER** (*Muscicapa muttui*) – Regular in the wetter rainforest areas, with especially nice views of one working low along the entrance drive near our Chestnut-backed Owllet spot.
- INDIAN ROBIN** (*Copsychus fulvicatus leucopterus*) – One on a corrugated metal fence along the road between Sinharaja and Embilipitiya gave us an excellent first look, and we saw others elsewhere in the "dry" zone -- including a few that kept us entertained while we waited for the Sloth Bear to make its reappearance.
- ORIENTAL MAGPIE-ROBIN** (*Copsychus saularis*) – Common throughout, in just about every habitat type (and every elevation) -- including some hunting on the grounds of our Colombo hotel, two bouncing around in the grass at Nuwara Eliya and a few in the dry forest around Sigiriya.
- WHITE-RUMPED SHAMA (WHITE-RUMPED)** (*Copsychus malabaricus leggei*) – One rather shy bird near the restrooms at Uda Wattakele, with another seen very well near the start of the road around Sigiriya's Lion Rock. Its beautiful song and handsome plumage combine to make this a species highly-prized by the caged bird trade.
- TICKELL'S BLUE FLYCATCHER (TICKELL'S)** (*Cyornis tickelliae jerdoni*) – Seen nicely around Kitulgala and Parawalathenna (including a singing male right near our first Brown-capped Babblers just past the police station), with others at Uda Wattakele and Sigiriya.
- DULL-BLUE FLYCATCHER** (*Eumyias sordidus*) – Our first was a birding hunting the rainy roadside in Horton Plains NP, but our best views came later that afternoon, when we found another perched near a stone wall on a hillside in a Nuwara Eliya suburb. This species has a surprisingly musical song, which we heard at Horton Plains. [E]
- INDIAN BLUE ROBIN** (*Larvivora brunnea*) – Heard far more frequently than seen in the highlands, but we finally caught up with a young male at the Surrey Bird Sanctuary. He circled around us, singing for a while from the dense bushes, but then conveniently perched on an open horizontal branch for a bit. We caught up with a handsome adult male dancing through a viny tangle at Uda Wattakele -- which almost made it worth facing the omnipresent leeches!
- KASHMIR FLYCATCHER** (*Ficedula subrubra*) – KASH hunting in Victoria Park eventually showed well, though it made us work a bit to start with! This species breeds in the Himalayas, dropping down to a mere 6000 feet when it winters in Sri Lanka.
- PIED BUSHCHAT** (*Saxicola caprata atratus*) – Regular in the highland of Horton Plains, where they perched like sentinels on the larger grassy tussocks. We spotted another pair hunting from the headstones in the cemetery just across the road from our Nuwara Eliya hotel.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies).

- PIED THRUSH** (*Geokichla wardii*) – After giving us the slip on our first visit to Nuwara Eliya's Victoria Park, this winter visitor performed wonderfully on our second try. It flew over our heads as we neared the far end of the park, and proceeded to perch right in the open on a sheltered branch, giving us all multiple chances to view it in scope.
- SPOT-WINGED THRUSH** (*Geokichla spiloptera*) – One bounced around in the well-swept front "yard" of one of the cabins at a "resort" near the Kitulgala police station, not far from where we found our Chestnut-backed Owllet, and we had great looks at several others in Sinharaja. [E]
- ORANGE-HEADED THRUSH** (*Geokichla citrina*) – Early morning outings around Sigiriya netted us a couple of these handsome winter visitors scuttling around some of the puddles in the dirt road around Lion Rock and then scurrying off into the leaf litter under the nearby trees.
- SRI LANKA THRUSH** (*Zoothera imbricata*) – Arg! We were oh-so-close to one (or possibly two) on several days at Sinharaja, but just never got the looks we were hoping for. They were mostly just dark silhouettes against a dusky, post-sunset sky -- though Nancy about had her hair parted by one that flew by right past her head. [E]
- INDIAN BLACKBIRD (SRI LANKA)** (*Turdus simillimus kinnisii*) – We heard one at Horton Plains, but it never climbed up high enough (it was lurking in thick vegetation) for us to see it. [*]

Sturnidae (Starlings).

- SRI LANKA MYNA** (*Gracula ptilogenys*) – Small numbers around Sinharaja, including some perched up over the main track, and others sharing a tree with some White-faced Starlings. Joe and Pat spotted others around the Blue Magpie on a day when they stayed back. [E]
- SOUTHERN HILL MYNA** (*Gracula indica*) – A few perched up on the grounds of our airport hotel were a nice surprise. We had others at Sinharaja and in the tea plantation outside of Kandy. This species is a regional endemic, found only in southwestern India and Sri Lanka.
- ROSY STARLING** (*Pastor roseus*) – Flocks winged past as we birded Udawalawe, all headed in the same direction (presumably a roost site, since the sun was sinking). We had some nice views of perched birds in Bundala. Unfortunately, the winter-dulled plumage of these birds isn't as pink as some were hoping it would be!
- WHITE-FACED STARLING** (*Sturnornis albofrontatus*) – A trio of birds in a treetop at Sinharaja (including one preening on a dead snag) allowed nice scope views. This endemic is locally uncommon to rare. [E]
- BRAHMINY STARLING** (*Sturnia pagodarum*) – Two on a telephone wire along the road to Yala NP stayed put as we pulled up right beside them. It took some gymnastics from those on the right (rather than the left) side of the bus, but I think we all got good looks in the end! The length of the crest feathers of one of them was pretty impressive.
- COMMON MYNA** (*Acridotheres tristis*) – Ubiquitous, though we did manage to (somehow) miss it one day.

Chloropseidae (Leafbirds).

- JERDON'S LEAFBIRD** (*Chloropsis jerdoni*) – A blue-chinned female showed very nicely near the Kitulgala police station on our first visit there, and some spotted a male with the next species in a fruiting tree near where we found our Chestnut-backed Owllet. We had good looks at others near the Sigiriya tank.
- GOLDEN-FRONTED LEAFBIRD** (*Chloropsis aurifrons*) – More common than the previous species (though still an uncommon breeding resident in Sri Lanka), with several dozen seen in the area around the Kitulgala police station -- including some loudly singing males in a very open fruiting tree near the Chestnut-backed Owllet. Females lack the colorful throat of the previous species.

Dicaeidae (Flowerpeckers).

- THICK-BILLED FLOWERPECKER (INDIAN)** (*Dicaeum agile zeylonicum*) – Super views of one flitting from branch to branch in a dead tree right near the start of the road around Lion Rock.
- WHITE-THROATED FLOWERPECKER** (*Dicaeum vincens*) – Best seen on the road to Ketalapatella, just outside Sinharaja NP, when we found one perched atop a spike at the top of a palm tree just outside the house where we found our Sri Lankan Spurfowl. [E]
- PALE-BILLED FLOWERPECKER** (*Dicaeum erythrorhynchos ceylonense*) – The most common of the tour's flowerpeckers, seen especially well on the grounds of our Colombo hotel (where we found one near the little pond), with others at Kitulgala, Bundala and Sigiriya.

Nectariniidae (Sunbirds and Spiderhunters).

- PURPLE-RUMPED SUNBIRD** (*Leptocoma zeylonica zeylonica*) – By far the most common sunbird of the trip, seen every day but one -- including several feeding avidly in the flowers planted along the edge of the drive below the dining room at the Blue Magpie.
- PURPLE SUNBIRD** (*Cinnyris asiaticus*) – Regular in the dry lowlands, including several dark males perched up on bushes near the lagoons at Bundala and others at Udawalawe, Yala and Sigiriya.
- LONG-BILLED SUNBIRD** (*Cinnyris lotenius lotenius*) – Seen on scattered days, including a few in good comparison with the smaller (and shorter-billed) Purple-rumped Sunbirds at our airport hotel and in the flowers below the Blue Magpie's dining room.

Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)

- FOREST WAGTAIL** (*Dendronanthus indicus*) – Seen principally as bounding dots flying over early and late at our Colombo hotel or disappearing up into the trees at Victoria Park, but a few folks got a quick at one or more at the latter location. Some spotted another wagging along the edge of the road at Uda Wattakele, or along the dirt track at Sigiriya. This species is shorter-tailed than the next, and (as its name suggests) is typically found in more forested habitats.
- WESTERN YELLOW WAGTAIL (THUNBERGI)** (*Motacilla flava thunbergi*) – Quite common in the open areas of Bundala and Yala, generally fairly close to bodies of water. This is another winter visitor to Sri Lanka.
- GRAY WAGTAIL** (*Motacilla cinerea*) – Probably the most widespread of the tour's wagtails, with some spotted investigating the rocks in the middle of the Kelani River and others striding around the grassy lawns at Victoria Park or the parking lot at the tea plantation where we had our tour.
- RICHARD'S PIPIT** (*Anthus richardi*) – A couple, looking slightly bigger and more upright, trotted across the dry edges of a marshy puddle at Bundala, conveniently close to some Paddyfield Pipits for comparison.
- PADDYFIELD PIPIT** (*Anthus rufulus*) – By far the more common of the tour's pipits, principally at Bundala and Yala, where they paraded around the wet areas, with others in the grasslands of Horton Plains.

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

- HOUSE SPARROW** (*Passer domesticus*) – Nancy spotted a female in Kitulgala, but the rest of the group had to wait until we found a busy colony near the restrooms at Bundala. They were more common on the second half of the trip.

Ploceidae (Weavers and Allies)

- STREAKED WEAVER** (*Ploceus manyar*) – A handful seen only by the lucky few among the far more numerous Baya Weavers around the edge of the Debarawewa tank.
- BAYA WEAVER** (*Ploceus philippinus*) – Very common along the fringes of the Debarawewa tank, with others around the Sigiriya tank. We saw a few trees absolutely cram-packed with their distinctive nests (which are onion-shaped with long, dangling entrance tunnels).

Estrildidae (Waxbills and Allies)

- WHITE-RUMPED MUNIA** (*Lonchura striata*) – Regular in the first week of the tour, including a few foraging in some clumps of tall grass right beside the trail in Parawalathenna. We saw a few others around the Sinharaja tank.
- BLACK-THROATED MUNIA** (*Lonchura kelaarti kelaarti*) – Arg! This one didn't play fair; one sat right out in the open at a roadside stop near Kitulgala -- but only while most of the group was distracted by a multitude of birds in a big mixed flock nearby. Once the flock moved off, the munia dropped out of sight, never to be seen again. Pat and Joe found one near the Blue Magpie on the day they stayed back.
- SCALY-BREASTED MUNIA** (*Lonchura punctulata*) – Busy flocks seen on multiple days scattered across the tour. This species was widely known as Nutmeg Manikin before its name change.
- TRICOLORED MUNIA** (*Lonchura malacca*) – Common in the dry lowlands, and in the grasslands around the Horton Plains visitor's center -- talk about extremes!

MAMMALS

- INDIAN FLYING-FOX** (*Pteropus giganteus*) – Thousands and thousands and THOUSANDS hung like giant, animated fruits in trees around the Debarawewa tank, stretching, preening, clambering around the branches, squabbling with their neighbors and generally making a racket while we birded on the nearby road. Later in the evening, we saw them kettling over the trees, then flying out for the night's feeding in thrillingly huge rivers of animals. We saw smaller numbers in the skies over our Colombo hotel and around Sigiriya. They're about as big as night-herons in flight!
- INDIAN PIPISTRELLE** (*Pipistrellus coromandra*) – This very small bat was seen winnowing past overhead on scattered evenings, in particularly good numbers over the grounds of our airport hotel and around Sigiriya.
- LEAST PIPISTRELLE** (*Pipistrellus tenuis*) – This even smaller bat was seen over the moat around Lion Rock while we waited for it to get dark enough to try for Oriental Scops-Owl.
- TOQUE MACAQUE** (*Macaca sinica*) – Common throughout, including some quite acrobatic individuals using roadside wires as "sidewalks". [E]
- TUFTED GRAY LANGUR** (*Semnopithecus priam*) – Good numbers of this dry zone species at Bundala (often sitting like sentinels in the treetops), with a few others scattered around Sigiriya. [E]
- PURPLE-FACED LEAF MONKEY** (*Trachypithecus vetulus*) – We saw three different subspecies: "vetulus" in the wet zone forests of Sinharaja, "philbricki" in the dry zone forests around Sigiriya, and "monticola" in the highlands of Horton Plains. The latter is sometimes called "Bear Monkey" because of the long, shaggy fur that helps to protect it from the cold. Spreading urbanization is beginning to squeeze populations of this endemic monkey, and their numbers are declining across the island. [E]
- INDIAN HARE** (*Lepus nigricollis*) – Seen in small numbers at Udawalawe and Yala, often feeding surprisingly close to the road and passing vehicles. The dark patch on the neck of this species gives rise to its alternate common name: Black-naped Hare.
- INDIAN PALM SQUIRREL** (*Funambulus palmarum*) – Almost ridiculously common across the island, regularly seen scurrying up trunks and along branches -- and occasionally ferreting around on the ground.
- DUSKY PALM SQUIRREL** (*Funambulus sublineatus*) – Surprisingly scarce this year, with only one seen, gobbling the rice thrown out behind a house to attract Sri Lanka Spurfowl. The dark pelage of this species quickly separates it from the more common Indian Palm Squirrel.
- SRI LANKAN (=GRIZZLED) GIANT SQUIRREL** (*Ratufa macroura*) – Singles seen on scattered days, with particularly good views of one foraging in a tree above the elephant tower near Lion Rock. This species comes in a variety of color morphs. [E]
- ASIATIC LONG-TAILED CLIMBING MOUSE** (*Vandeleuria oleracea*) – One of these acrobatic little mice scrambled up the trunk of a small tree, scuttled along ever-smaller branches to their tips, then leaped across to another tree and disappeared into the darkness -- distracting us briefly but completely from our search for Sri Lanka Whistling-Thrush just outside Nuwara Eliya one evening.

- COMMON JACKAL** (*Canis aureus*) – A group of 4 - 5 trotted repeatedly back and forth – across the dirt road near Lion Rock -- or stood in the middle, gazing down towards us -- on each of the evenings we birded there.
- SLOTH BEAR** (*Ursus ursinus*) – Wow! Not one, not two, but THREE of these uncommon mammals (a couple of smaller animals disrupted and driven away by a larger adult male) snuffled their way around a dirt bund at Yala, ignoring the rain as they vacuumed termites out of the ground. Thanks to Sam for sharing all the interesting facts he knew about the species!
- INDIAN GRAY MONGOOSE** (*Herpestes edwardsi*) – One trotted along the edge of the Buttala-Kataragama road, busily following scents before spotting us and melting off into the vegetation.
- COMMON MONGOOSE** (*Herpestes smithi*) – Our best views came at the Blue Magpie Lodge, where we saw one in a standoff with a huge Water Monitor before breakfast one morning. Most saw another in Parawalathenna, across the river from Kitulgala on our afternoon's ramble through the village.
- INDIAN BROWN MONGOOSE** (*Herpestes fuscus*) – One sprinted across the "Sigiriya Shortcut", seen briefly before it dove into the thicker vegetation. This one is also known as Short-tailed Mongoose.
- STRIPE-NECKED MONGOOSE** (*Herpestes vitticollis*) – Sam and I stumbled upon a trio of these -- probably a family group -- when we walked back to get our packs during our afternoon's hunt for Sri Lanka Thrush at Sinharaja; they didn't seem particularly perturbed by our presence, continuing towards us until they found an easy way up the bank. This is Sri Lanka's largest mongoose.
- INDIAN ELEPHANT** (*Elephas maximus*) – Quite common at Udawalawe -- including a very cute small youngster that "charged" our jeeps with ears waving and little trunk held high, trumpeting all the while. We saw others at Yala, plus some along the Buttala-Kataragama road.
- WILD BOAR** (*Sus scrofa*) – Our first was a lone animal trotting across the marshes at Bundala, then four more on a more distant sandbank. But the big numbers were at Yala, where a herd of many dozen -- including lots of piglets -- gathered in an open area. Another big group scampered past us as we birded around the lake at Uda Wattakele, and we saw more along the Buttala-Kataragama road.
- YELLOW-STRIPED MOUSE DEER** (*Moschiola kathygre*) – We spotted one of these small deer, which was recently (along with the Sri Lankan Spotted Mouse Deer) split from the Indian Spotted Mouse Deer, rummaging for tasty morsels with the Sri Lanka Junglefowl in the backyard of a farm house near Ketalapatella.
- MUNTJAC (BARKING DEER)** (*Muntiacus muntjak*) – One slipped through the forest up the hill from where we stood at Uda Wattakele, managing to stay mostly out of sight. These small deer -- also known as Barking Deer and Southern Red Muntjac -- are widespread across southeastern Asia, from India to the Indonesian archipelago and Borneo.
- SPOTTED DEER** (*Axis axis*) – Almost ridiculously common at Yala NP, with smaller numbers at Udawalawe and Bundala and a few along the road on our drive to Nuwara Eliya.
- SAMBAR** (*Cervus unicolor*) – Good numbers of these big deer at Horton Plains, with a handful of others resting in a field at Yala. A few of the latter towered over nearby Spotted Deer when they stood up to graze!
- ASIAN WATER BUFFALO** (*Bubalus bubalis*) – Many of the animals we saw were domesticated or feral (including those near the entrance to Bundala), but the herds at Udawalawe and Yala were probably truly wild.

Herps

- COMMON HOUSE GECKO** (*Hemidactylus frenatus*) – Common throughout, sometimes in pretty impressive numbers -- like on the dining room ceiling at the Kitulgala Guesthouse.
- FOREST DAY GECKO** (*Cnemaspis silvula*) – This was the tiny gecko we found on the wall of the entrance gate at Sinharaja; they're so small that spiders are a deadly threat to them! This one is endemic to Sri Lanka.
- SRI LANKAN GREEN PIT VIPER** (*Trimeresurus trigonocephalus*) – One coiled up along a big fern frond near the Sinharaja park entrance was still there the next day -- presumably slowly digesting some big meal. We saw a much smaller individual on our way down the hill from the park after dark one evening.
- RUSSELL'S VIPER** (*Daboia russelii*) – One, looking thick-bodied and menacing, slithered in the grass along the edge of the road around the Sigiriya Lion Rock complex. This is Sri Lanka's deadliest snake, causing 30-40% of all snake bites and the biggest number of life-threatening bites in the country -- and accounting for tens of thousands of bites per year throughout southeast Asia.
- SRI LANKAN KEELBACK** (*Balanophis ceylonensis*) – This was the tiny snake Udi caught near the entrance to Sinharaja. Though it's venomous, it's so small that its bite isn't typically a problem -- it's too small to get its mouth around anything much bigger than a cricket! It's also widely known as "Blossom-headed Krait" and "Sri Lankan Blossom Krait".
- ZARA'S HUMP-NOSED PIT VIPER** (*Hypnale zara*) – One along the road between Kitulgala and Sinharaja, spotted by the ever-vigilant Udi! This endemic species is named for the small protuberance on the tip of its snout.
- ASIAN GREEN VINE SNAKE** (*Ahetulla nasutus*) – These whip-thin snakes were very common in and around Sinharaja. We got nice up-close-and-personal looks at one that Udi caught near the half-finished house partway up the hill towards the park.
- ORIENTAL RATSNAKE** (*Ptyas mucosa*) – We spotted a truly huge specimen along the road on our drive from the Blue Magpie to Embilipitiya. It crossed the road and shot off into a gas station parking lot, drawing the attention of folks there too. This is Sri Lanka's second-longest snake.
- DRUMMOND-HAY'S EARTH SNAKE** (*Rhinophis drummondhayi*) – We found one of these small snakes at Sinharaja -- which was unexpected, since they spend most of their lives underground! It's endemic to the island.
- MUGGER CROCODILE** (*Crocodylus palustris*) – Some big ones along the coast, including one that might have been sneaking up on some cows standing on the Yala park road after dark -- until we came along and spooked it back into the water, anyway!
- ASIAN HOUSE TOAD** (*Duttaphrynus melanostictus*) – This was the small toad that Nancy caught in her hotel room's bathroom at Tissamaharama.
- INDIAN GREEN FROG** (*Euphlyctis hexadactylus*) – This was the frog we spotted down in the well on the grounds of our airport hotel. It's hard to imagine how it got in there (given that the walls were at least 3 feet high), but it certainly seemed happy enough.
- COMMON SHRUB FROG** (*Pseudophilautus popularis*) – We heard plenty of these little frogs singing loudly on the grounds of our airport hotel while searching for owls on our first evening together. [*]
- GREEN SEA TURTLE** (*Chelonia mydas*) – One of these foraged in the sea just offshore at Bundala, visible from our cliff-top perch.
- OLIVE RIDLEY TURTLE** (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) – We spotted one of these in the surf just below the cliffs at Bundala NP, not far from the previous species.
- INDIAN BLACK TURTLE** (*Melanochelys trijuga*) – A few of these freshwater turtles seen basking around puddles at Bundala, and in the tanks at Tissa and Sigiriya.

COMMON GREEN FOREST LIZARD (*Calotes calotes*) – Fairly common in the lowlands, including one photogenic animal near the boat launch spot below the Kitulgala Guesthouse and another scrambling up the supports for a shelter near our Serendib Scops-Owl. Males of this lime green species have a brick-red head.

ORIENTAL GARDEN LIZARD (*Calotes versicolor*) – Scattered individuals, often along the road. This brownish species is more commonly seen in open country (as opposed to the previous species, which is typically found in wooded areas).

SRI LANKA KANGAROO LIZARD (*Otocryptis wiegmanni*) – Our first was a tiny leaf-hopper found along the edge of the yard below our Chestnut-backed Owllet. We had another, slightly larger one at the base of a bush near the headquarters of the Makandawa Forest Preserve. The very long back legs of this species give it its common name.

RHINOCEROS HORNED LIZARD (*Ceratophora stoddartii*) – One clung to the trunk of a roadside tree at Horton Plains NP, allowing us to get some nice, close views. It was incredibly well-camouflaged; how Udi spotted it from a moving vehicle was beyond belief for most of us!

WATER MONITOR (*Varanus salvator*) – We had a smallish one at the edge of the parking lot at the Sinharaja NP headquarters, but our best looks probably came outside the Blue Magpie lodge, where we watched one in a face-off with a wary Common Mongoose. This is the world's second-heaviest lizard; only the Kimodo Dragon is heavier.

BENGAL (LAND) MONITOR (*Varanus bengalensis*) – Seen on scattered days, including a few at Yala and Bundala. This species is less patterned than the previous.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 249 bird taxa and 24 mammal taxa