

Itinerary March 2017

The tour came together as a result of Sue's contacts with Rohan and Starron Tours and our interest in running tours to the area, so the chance of a familiarization trip was too good to pass up. Also great to have Ben & Regina, Jun and Kelvin along, they added a lot to the tour and we had some great sightings and good company.

After our flight from Cairns via Singapore we were met at Colombo airport around 2330, changed money and got SIM cards, as well as meeting up with Rahula, Rohan plus a local guide, who was with us for one day while Upali finished another tour, and our excellent driver Nishantha. We then headed off on a 2 hr. 30 min drive to Singharagama, arriving around 0230 and emerging again around 0600, not ideal but needs must. However **Wilpattu NP** was great, lovely to see **Indian Peafowl** in the wild at long last, **Sri Lanka Junglefowl** were common and we managed a splendid sighting of a **Leopard**, and nice to see lots of **Axis Deer**, a **Sambar**, **Water Buffalo** and **Wild Boar**. **Yellow-billed Babbler** was the first endemic seen, though we heard **Brown-headed Barbet** right at first light, and the very distinctive **Indian Robin** met us right at the park entrance, with **Pale-billed Flowerpecker** as well and **Indian Jungle Crow** early on. **Brown Fish Owl** was a nice find, as was a day roosting **Brown Wood Owl**. Jun got his lifer **Great Thick-knee**, **Jerdon's Bushlark** was another good tick, and I was very taken with how big and how long crested the **Indian Paradise Flycatchers** are, very unlike the others formerly lumped in Asian Paradise-Flycatcher.

That night we met up with Upali Ekanayake one of the premier Sri Lankan bird guides and a very experienced guide and birder, though dealing with group of 4 tour guides was a bit unusual and made his job much harder than normal! His patience and local knowledge proved invaluable and we thank him for his efforts on our behalf, we dipped on just 2 of the endemics in the end (**Legge's Hawk Eagle** and **Sri Lanka Scaly Thrush**), pretty good for a first run through.

Our drive across to **Habarana** was enlivened by the only **Jacobin Cuckoos** of the trip, plus the sole **Montagu's Harrier**, and the first of quite a few **Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill**. *The Other Corner* was a terrific base, comfortable accommodation with good birds in the grounds and a huge tank close by for waterbirds. **Indian Pitta** came late afternoon, we nailed **Red-backed Flameback**, **Blyth's Reed Warbler**, **Green Warbler**, **Tawny-bellied Babbler**, **Loten's Sunbird**, the western form of **Baya Weaver**, **Jerdon's Nightjar** at dusk, and next day we got **Jerdon's Leafbird** and **Orange-headed Thrush** in the grounds.

Sigiriya was a site where it would have been good to have had enough time to see the historical items on and around the great rock inselberg, but we settled for scope views of the very distinctive **Shaheen**

Falcon on the side of the rock, **Red-faced (SL Small) Barbet**, **Tricoloured Munia** and the excellent **Rufous-capped** and skulking **Dark-fronted Babbler** in a thicket.

Driving across to **Kandy** was easy enough, but the **Botanic Gardens** proved daunting with literally thousands of immaculately dressed schoolkids paying a visit. They were remarkably well-behaved and we birded around and amongst them, picking up **Lesser Hill Myna**, **Orange Minivet**, lots of **Red-faced Barbets**, **Sri Lanka Green Pigeon**, **Common Hawk-Cuckoo** exactly where Upali thought they'd be, and a great **Indian Pitta** by the toilets on the way out.

Next morning was the **Ubawattakele** forest catchment reserve, with **Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher**, **Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot**, **Layard's Parakeet**, a perched **Besra**, **Greater Flameback** and **Indian Blue Robin**. We then drove over to **Kitulgala** where we twitched **Chestnut-backed Owlet**, **Orange-billed Babbler** and **Spot-winged Thrush** at a garden Upali had staked out, with a partial view of about 15% of an **Indian Scops Owl** in a hole in a palm trunk as well.

Birding around the riverside lodge next day gave us a perched **Oriental Hobby** which we had to check carefully to make sure it was not a Shaheen, **Grey Wagtail**, before going to a forest area over a suspension bridge which gave more views of **Indian Pitta**, **Sri Lanka Crested Drongo** and eventually a skulking **Green-billed Coucal**; that afternoon saw us go to a nearby Kitulgala tea-estate where a fine **Rufous-bellied Eagle** sailed over, and **Plum-headed Parakeet** showed well, along with confiding **Indian Robins** and a big flock of 60 **Chestnut-headed Bee-eater**, which was a surprise.

Across to Sinharaja next via the famous gem city of Ratnapura, where some of us got some gorgeous pale blue topaz and dark sapphire gems, to reach **Sinharaja** and the *Blue Magpie Lodge*. A late afternoon foray was pretty quiet with no Blue Magpies showing by the park HQ.

Next morning we paid a local guy to take us to see 2 **Sri Lanka Frogmouths**, complete with a tree-snake en route, then went into the upper reaches of the park, with the only **White-faced Starlings** of the tour right by the office. The trail was easy but the forest proved very quiet indeed- **Sri Lanka Junglefowl** showed extremely well, a **Sri Lanka Blue Magpie** showed for most though Phil managed to dip, **Sri Lanka Laughing-thrush** was heard some distance away and remained as a heard only for the duration, another pair of **Sri Lanka Frogmouth** showed well, a male **Malabar Trogon** showed up, **Velvet-fronted Nuthatch** with young was appreciated, **Brown-breasted Flycatcher** proved quite common, the only **Red-faced Malkoha** of the trip showed very nicely, and **Sri Lanka White-eye** made an appearance. The afternoon came good with the trek for **Serendib Scops Owl**, a huge relief

to get that one, as it had been very tricky of late with a BBC team and Duncan Macdonald from Wildsounds dipping utterly.

Birding was quite tough at Sinharaja overall, though a foray next morning got us the staked out **Sri Lanka Spurfowl** at Biyastna's spurfowl lodge with a fine pair showing nicely, and more **Spot-winged Thrush** plus **Sri Lanka Blue Magpie** for everyone, though again the laughing-thrush remained absent. **Indian Pygmy Woodpecker** put in an appearance from the lodge, oddly the only ones we saw, and Ben gripped everyone off with **Slaty-legged Crake** at the wet bit by the lodge on arrival day, though it was a good place for **Yellow-billed Babbler** and **Brown-breasted Flycatcher**.

Mar 24 saw us set off for the 3 and half hour drive to **Uduwalewa NP**, where an afternoon drive was quite rewarding, with our first **Sirkeer Malkoha**, **Grey-bellied Cuckoo**, **Barred Buttonquail**, Phil's final *Vanellus* species in the excellent and decidedly uncommon **Yellow-wattled Lapwing**, **Jungle Prinia**, a lucky find of the only **Marshall's Iora** of the trip, some great wetland species including **Painted Stork**, **Lesser Adjutant**, **Eurasian Spoonbill** and **Glossy Ibis**. We also had a good sighting of **Jungle Cat** on the way back out plus a memorable and wonderful very close encounter with an obliging family group of **Asian Elephants**.

Debaraweva wetlands proved diverting in the early evening, with my 100th species of owl in the form of Jungle Owlet found by one of Upali's contacts, and nice looks at Yellow Bittern, Black Bittern and Watercock in the huge wet area, with a bonus of **White-naped Woodpecker** nearby as well.

Yala NP next day was quite disappointing, it proved very crowded as expected and birding was slight. A distant **Leopard** on a rock was not a patch on our earlier sighting from Wilpattu, but **Streaked Weavers** at a nest colony were nice. Late that afternoon the wetlands between Yala and Kiritala were good with great looks at **Brahminy Starling**, an unexpectedly distinctive almost grosbeak-like species in flight, and a slew of shorebirds where we were entertained by Jun's unusual way of approaching them, a You-tube moment for sure.

Bundala NP from 0600-1100 was very good, a lovely wetland and saltpans area that gave us **Black-necked Stork** (rare in Sri Lanka), **Painted Snipe**, and a good selection of shorebirds including **Broad-billed Sandpiper**, **Red-necked Phalarope** and **Small Pratincole**.

A trip to a garden near Debaraweva was good as we saw a **Crested Hawk Eagle** very interested in the large rat snake that was entering the nest holes of the local **Ring-necked Parakeets**, with irate parrots pulling at its tail. The garden turned up another **Jungle Owlet**, then very good

views of **Red-backed Flameback** and a fine pair of **White-naped Woodpecker** inspecting a nest hole.

Some local birding by the Hibiscus Gardens hotel was entertaining early on, then we drove through sections 4 and 5 of Yala NP en route to **Nuwara Eliya**. Here we sadly picked up a freshly dead **Blue-faced Malkoha**! Mammals were good as we got **Stripe-necked Mongoose**, saw a huge **Asian Elephant** in the road, and then got **Brown Mongoose** at the hotel where we stopped for lunch. **Hill Swallow** on the outskirts of the town was good pick-up, then we checked in before going to Victoria Park from 1630-1800. This was terrific as we got brilliant views of **Pied Thrush**, with 2 males and 3 females, another **Indian Pitta**, **Forest Wagtail**, our first **Yellow-eared Bulbul**, **Dull-blue Flycatcher** and a late find of a wintering but elusive male **Kashmir Flycatcher**.

Our penultimate day saw us transfer to some ancient van and drive up to **Horton Plains NP** on what proved to be a good road. It was a lovely place and we all wished we had had longer there. **Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush** made a brief appearance, **Yellow eared Bulbul** was common, and **Indian Blackbird** showed nicely by the entrance.

A foray in the heat of day to the cesspit of the Grand Hotel in Nuwara Eliya narrowly missed a **Sri Lankan Scaly Thrush**, but we did see **Indian Blue Robin** and best if all, gripped back **Slaty-legged Crane**, I rather wish I'd stayed there rather than the somewhat unproductive walk around Hakgala Botanic garden, a beautiful site but not too many birds. Jun and Ben saw **Sri Lanka Blue Magpie** again, and we got **Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher** and another **Dull-blue Fly**, but that was it.

Our last morning we did an early walk around **Galway Island NP** near the hotel, and got great looks at **Sri Lanka Bush Warbler** which we'd missed the day before at Horton Plains, a very distinctive species and now a monotypic genus, so a nice finale. Heading back to Colombo we visited a tea factory, and got back to Colombo around 1530, taking day rooms at the idiosyncratic *Cockpit Hotel* before heading to the airport at 2100 for flights to Singapore for most, and to Dubai then Accra for me.

Our thanks to Rohan Senanayake for starting the ball rolling, to Sue and Rowan at the Sicklebill Safaris office in Australia, and Rahula and Shyami Dassenaieke from Starron Tours for setting all this up in Sri Lanka. We would also like to thank Upali for his birding skills, local knowledge and patience with an unusual group and Nishantha for his safe driving and enthusiasm. He has all the makings of a great birder! Thanks also to the group for good company and great co-operative bird-finding efforts. It was a fun and very enjoyable trip to a very nice country. We now have the knowledge to fine-tune the tour and hopefully make it viable for Sicklebill Safaris. How about the Andamans and Western Ghats in 2018?

Day 1 Mon Mar 13 Depart Cairns for Singapore on Silkair, then to Colombo on Singapore Airlines, arriving 2330. Overnight Singharagama

Day 2 Tues Mar 14 Wilpattu NP morning and then again afternoon, overcast. Overnight Singharagama

Day 3 Wed Mar 15 Depart for Singharagama and Anurapukha archaeology site, **Basawakhuma tank**, then to **Habarana** and *The Other Centre (TOC)* 1400 on

Day 4 Thurs Mar 16 Habarana TOC grounds till 0700, then **Sigiriya** till 1130, pm Habarana tank area 1530 on. Overnight *TOC*.

Day 5 Fri Mar 17 Habarana to Sigiriya, then to Kandy and **Botanic Gardens** late pm with thousands of schoolkids! *Suisse Hotel* overnight

Day 6 Sat Mar 18 Ubawattakele Sanctuary 1800-1000, then to Kitulgala from 1530-1730, overnight *Kitulgala Rest House*

Day 7 Sun Mar 19 Kitulgala 0615-0700, then to suspension bridge area 0815-1130. **Kitulgala tea estate** 1600-1730. Overnight *Kitulgala Rest House*.

Day 8 Mon Mar 20 Kitulgala Lodge and Dam area 0615-0745, then to Ratnapura city and on to *Blue Magpie Lodge* at Kudawa

Day 9 Tues Mar 21 Sinharaja Forest 0630-1500 at 450 m, then Ketelepattala and a site for Serendib Scops. Overnight *Blue Magpie Lodge*.

Day 10 Wed Mar 22 Ketelepattala Biyastna's Spurfowl garden 0600-1030, pm *Blue Magpie Lodge* area.

Day 11 Thurs Mar 23 Blue Magpie area 0615-0730 then 3.5 hours to **Uduwalewa NP** 1430-1800. Overnight *Hibiscus Resort* in Tissa.

Day 12 Fri Mar 24 D 0500 **Uduwalewa NP** till 1030 W side, then Tissameharama **Debaraweve wetlands**. Overnight *Hibiscus Resort* in Tissa.

Day 13 Sat Mar 25 D0500 **Yala NP** 0600-1100. 1530 on wetlands between Yala and Kirinda. Overnight *Hibiscus Resort* in Tissa.

Day 14 Sun Mar 26 **Bundala NP** 0600-1100. Pm **Debaraweva wetlands** and Flameback garden in Tissa. Overnight *Hibiscus Resort* in Tissa.

Day 15 Mon Mar 27 Hibiscus gardens area 0600-0700, then **Yala NP** sections 4 and 5 on main road. Nuwara Eliya **Victoria Park** gardens 1530-1800. Overnight *Galway Island Resort*

Day 16 Tues Mar 28 D0500 **Horton Plains NP** 0600-1130; Grand Hotel cess pit pm, then Hakgala Botanic Garden 1430-1630. Overnight *Galway Island Resort*

Day 17 Wed Mar 29 0615-0700 **Galway Island NP**, then drive to Colombo arrive 1530, *Cockpit Hotel* till 2100- airport and departures for Singapore for most and Dubai/Accra for Phil.

SPECIES LIST

Endemics in bold [E] * H denotes heard only

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

INDIAN PEAFOWL (*Pavo cristatus*) – Suffers from over-exposure, but the males in full display are still quite breath-taking and remained one of my birds of the trip, especially as I'd only seen feral birds before in WA and New Caledonia. These were almost ridiculously common in Wilpattu, Uduwalewa, Bundala and Yala NPs with up to 50 in a day.

SRI LANKA SPURFOWL (*Galloperdix bicalcarata*) – Heard on a couple of days at Sinharaja, and luckily Upali knew of house where they come into the garden, giving us super views from the back rooms. This can be a tough one to see. [E]

SRI LANKA JUNGLEFOWL (*Gallus lafayettii*) – Plenty of fine encounters with this handsome species starting at Wilpattu where they were very common, and very confiding along the trail at Sinharaja, This is Sri Lanka's national bird. [E]

Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

LESSER WHISTLING DUCK (*Dendrocygna javanica*) – Eight day records, starting with singles at Wilpattu and a maximum of 30 at Bundala National Park (NP).

COTTON PYGMY GOOSE (*Nettapus coromandelianus*) – Just 4 on a small tank at Sigiriya. This tiny species (also sometimes called Cotton Teal) subsists primarily on waterlily flower buds.

GARGANEY (*Anas querquedula*) – 20 at the wetlands at Basawakhuma tank on day 2, then seen at Debaraweva wetlands with up to 12 birds.

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

LITTLE GREBE (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*) – Seen at Wilpattu and Basawakhuma, then singles at TOC.

Ciconiidae (Storks)

PAINTED STORK (*Mycteria leucocephala*) – One at Basawakhuma tank then small numbers at Ubawattakele, Yala and Bundala, max. 20 birds.

ASIAN OPENBILL (*Anastomus oscitans*) – Quite common, with up to 10 Bundala and Yala, and others stalking prey in marshes and rice paddies across the south. The unusual gap in their bill may help them to better grasp their favoured prey -- snails.

WOOLLY-NECKED STORK (ASIAN) (*Ciconia episcopus episcopus*) – One at Wilpattu, 6 at Sigiriya, 1 next day and then one near Kitulgala, an uncommon species, called Asian Woollyneck by HBW-BirdLife who now split it from the African birds.

BLACK-NECKED STORK (*Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*) - Just a single at Bundala, this is now a rare species throughout Asia.

LESSER ADJUTANT (*Leptoptilos javanicus*) – Just a single at Bundala, this is now a rare species throughout Asia.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

LITTLE CORMORANT (*Microcarbo niger*) – The most common of the tour's cormorants, seen in most wet spots with hundreds sprinkled around Bundala and the Debaraweva tanks. The small stubby bill is a good character.

GREAT CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) – Most folks saw these at the nesting colony in Kandy, I just saw one bird in flight earlier that looked enormous and was presumably this strangely scarce species.

INDIAN CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax fuscicollis*) – Reasonably common in wetlands across the country, and very like Little Black Cormorant from home!

Anhingidae (Anhingas)

ORIENTAL DARTER (*Anhinga melanogaster*) – This was surprisingly widespread for a threatened species, we saw 10 at Wilpattu, 10 next day, and a maximum of 15 at Debaraweva.

Pelecanidae (Pelicans)

SPOT-BILLED PELICAN (*Pelecanus philippensis*) – Very small numbers, with 7 day records with singles at Wilpattu, Basawakhuma tank and Habarana, and 5 at Bundala.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

YELLOW BITTERN (*Ixobrychus sinensis*) – Great looks at some half dozen at the Debaraweva tank.

BLACK BITTERN (*Ixobrychus flavicollis*) – Phil saw one at the hotel near Wilpattu at dawn, then we had 4 or 5 at Debaraweva tanks, with one right in the open for ages.

GRAY HERON (*Ardea cinerea*) – Small numbers at most wetlands, max 15 around Tissa.

PURPLE HERON (*Ardea purpurea*) – Slightly commoner than Grey Heron, we saw them first at Wilpattu and Habarana, with 10 at Bundala the most.

GREAT EGRET (*Ardea alba*) – This, the largest of Sri Lanka's egrets, was seen in small numbers at most wetlands.

INTERMEDIATE EGRET (*Mesophoyx intermedia*) – Small numbers at most wetlands, slightly commoner than Great Egret. This nominate race is split as Yellow-billed Egret by HBW-BirdLife.

LITTLE EGRET (*Egretta garzetta*) – Widespread, though in relatively small numbers, throughout the tour.

EASTERN CATTLE EGRET (*Bubulcus coromandus*) – Seen on almost every day, and common around Tissameharama, with hundreds following the tractors around the rice fields.

INDIAN POND HERON (*Ardeola grayii*) – Also seen almost every day, max 30 birds.

STRIATED HERON (*Butorides striata javanica*) – Phil glimpsed one near Kandy, then we had one at Bundala.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON (Eurasian) (*Nycticorax nycticorax nycticorax*) – 25 at Uduwalewa, and one at Bundala.

Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)

GLOSSY IBIS (*Plegadis falcinellus*) – Just a single at Bundala NP.

BLACK-HEADED IBIS (*Threskiornis melanocephalus*) – Eight day records of small numbers starting at Wilpattu, max. 10 at Bundala. It is quite rare elsewhere in its range.

EURASIAN SPOONBILL (*Platalea leucorodia*) – Small numbers at the southern wetlands, with 10 at Uduwalewa the most.

Pandionidae (Ospreys)

WESTERN OSPREY (*Pandion haliaetus*) – One at Bundala Mar 26 was the only record.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE (*Elanus caeruleus*) – Just a single at Uduwalewa, strange it was so scarce.

ORIENTAL HONEY BUZZARD (*Pernis ptilorhynchus*) – 5 day records of singles starting at Wilpattu, with 3 at Uduwalewa the most. The puzzling rufous raptor perched up here was one of these, and the very distant bird at Horton Plains was also sadly the same species and not the hoped for Legge's Hawk Eagle. Despite its name, this species doesn't actually eat honey; instead, it feeds on bee larvae.

CRESTED SERPENT EAGLE (Crested group) (*Spilornis cheela spilogaster*) – Seen most days in small numbers, one of the commoner raptors of the trip, often seen in flight, where the broad white band on the trailing edge of the wing is distinctive.

CRESTED (CHANGEABLE) HAWK EAGLE (*Nisaetus cirrhatus ceylanensis*) – One of the more common raptors of the trip, and these are sometimes split as Crested Hawk Eagle from Changeable Hawk Eagle. We saw singles starting at Wilpattu and had up to 5 in a day near Uduwalewa. The plumage is certainly highly variable.

RUFOUS-BELLIED EAGLE (*Lophotriorchis kienerii*) – A fine adult soared over late pm at Kitulgala tea estate.

BLACK EAGLE (*Ictinaetus malaiensis*) – Single birds seen on a number of days, with 2 near Uduwalewa, and always in flight with their very rectangular wings with big "fingered" primary feathers obvious at the tips.

SHIKRA (*Accipiter badius*) – The most widespread of the tour's accipiters, seen perched on several days. Proposed as a split from the rather different African ones too.

BESRA (*Accipiter virgatus*) – The perched accipiter in the forest at Kandy had the broad tail bars and was (as I thought at the time), a Besra.

MONTAGU'S HARRIER (*Circus pygargus*) - A ringtail by the road as we watched the Jacobin Cuckoos near Sinharagama was the only one of the entire trip.

BRAHMINY KITE (*Haliastur indus*) – Regular in small numbers throughout, this is the nominate race.

WHITE-BELLIED SEA EAGLE (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*) – Small numbers at many wetlands, with 3 at Habarana the most.

GREY-HEADED FISH EAGLE (*Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus*) – Also small numbers at many wetlands with 6-day records, starting at Wilpattu.

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

SLATY-LEGGED CRAKE (*Rallina eurizonoides*) - Ben and Regina saw one at the wet patch at Blue Magpie Lodge where it never reappeared. Luckily we had one at the cesspit at the Grand Hotel in Nuwara Eliya, skulking and feeding in the wet area under the bushes. I had not seen this since a vagrant in Hong Kong in 1993, my only previous record.

WHITE-BREASTED WATERHEN (*Amaurornis phoenicurus*) – Small numbers throughout, with plenty in the wetlands of Bundala and Yala NPs.

WATERCOCK (*Gallicrex cinerea*) – At least 2-3 foraged skulking at Debaraweva - including one that foraged in grass so tall that it occasionally disappeared completely. At this time of year, they're all in nonbreeding plumage.

GREY-HEADED SWAMPHEN (*Porphyrio poliocephalus poliocephalus*) – First at Basawakhuma tank and then Habarana and the southern wetlands, especially Debaraweva and Bundala. This species is at last split from the Purple Swampphen.

EURASIAN MOORHEN (*Gallinula chloropus*) – Just one at Habarana and one at Bundala.

COMMON COOT (*Fulica atra*) - 300 at Basawakhuma tank were a surprise and a very high count, then we had one at Habarana and 10 at Bundala.

Burhinidae (Thick-knees)

INDIAN THICK-KNEE (*Burhinus indicus*) – 4 at Uduwalewa and 2 at Yala.

GREAT THICK-KNEE (*Esacus recurvirostris*) – 3 at Wilpattu, then 2 seen at Uduwalewa, Yala, the wetlands near Yala and finally 8 at Bundala. Much easier to find than Beach Thick-knee at home!

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)

BLACK-WINGED STILT (*Himantopus himantopus*) – 5 at Wilpattu and Basawakhuma tank, then widespread in the wetlands of the south with up to 60 at Bundala.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

GREY (Black-bellied) PLOVER (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – 5 winter plumage birds along a bund at the Bundala salt works, and Jun had one during his duck walk the previous day near Yala.

PACIFIC GOLDEN PLOVER (*Pluvialis fulva*) – A few in non-breeding plumage, with 5 at Wilpattu then 15 at Yala and 10 at the grassy fringes of the marsh at Bundala NP.

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

very last *Vanellus* for Phil, another genus now all completed.

RED-WATTLED LAPWING (*Vanellus indicus lankae*) – Large, noisy and plentiful, particularly in the country's southeast; also common among the many rice paddies we passed. This is one of the western forms, proposed as a likely split by HBW-BirdLife from the Black-necked Lapwing of SE Asia.

LESSER SAND PLOVER (*Charadrius mongolus*) – 10 around the watering holes at Uduwalewa and 15 at Bundala. Not sure which taxon is here, maybe Jun can identify it from his photos if any were in summer plumage?

GREATER SAND PLOVER (*Charadrius leschenaultii*) - 2 at Wilpattu, 1 at Uduwalewa, 3 at the wetlands near Yala and 3 at Bundala.

KENTISH PLOVER (Indian) (*Charadrius alexandrinus seebohmi*) – One at Wilpattu, then 50 at the wetlands near Yala and 60 at Bundala salt pans.

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER (*Charadrius dubius jerdoni*) – 2 at the wetlands near Yala, then 1 at Uduwalewa and 2 at Bundala, They have a yellow eye-ring, and pale legs which help to separate them from the other small plovers.

Rostratulidae (Painted-snipe)

GREATER PAINTED SNIPE (*Rostratula benghalensis*) – A pair by a muddy pond at the entrance to Bundala were a good find.

Jacanidae (Jacanas)

PHEASANT-TAILED JACANA (*Hydrophasianus chirurgus*) – Plentiful on the marshes of Bundala, and around the Debaraweve tanks, with many having the long tail plumes and gold napes of their breeding plumage.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

PIN-TAILED SNIPE (*Gallinago stenura*) – 2 at the wetlands near Yala, then 2 at Bundala and one at the Debaraweve tanks.

COMMON SNIPE (*Gallinago gallinago*) - Phil saw one land at a wetland en route to Habarana, the white trailing edge to the wing was obvious and I thought nothing of it, only to find out later that it would have been a lifer for Upali, and we could have easily gone out to flush it!

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT (*Limosa limosa*) – 7 at wetlands near Yala

and 6 at Bundala.

GREEN SANDPIPER (*Tringa ochropus*) – One at Basawakhuma tank and heard at Habarana, then a single at Yala.

COMMON GREENSHANK (*Tringa nebularia*) – Very few, just singles at Wilpattu and Basawakhuma tank, 1 at Uduwalewa and 3 at Bundala. It was surprisingly scarce.

MARSH SANDPIPER (*Tringa stagnatilis*) – Our first poked along the edge of a water hole in Wilpattu, 15 at wetlands near Yala and we saw 6 at Bundala, commoner than Greenshank. The very pale plumage and very slender beak of this species were quite striking.

WOOD SANDPIPER (*Tringa glareola*) – Small numbers starting at Wilpattu, with 12 at the Yala wetlands and 12 at Bundala the most.

COMMON REDSHANK (*Tringa totanus*) – 60 at Bundala, with 12 around Uduwalewa and 3 near Tissa.

RUDDY TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*) – 3 at wetlands near Yala and 6 scattered along the bunds at the Bundala salt works.

BROAD-BILLED SANDPIPER (*Calidris falcinellus*) – 4 foraged along the edge of a saltpan at Bundala, conveniently close to several other species for good comparisons. I had not seen one for several years.

CURLEW SANDPIPER (*Calidris ferruginea*) – 3 at Wilpattu, then 10 at the wetlands near Yala and 20 at Bundala saltpans. Some were coming into breeding plumage.

LITTLE STINT (*Calidris minuta*) – 10 at Wilpattu, then 10 at the wetlands near Yala and 20 at Bundala saltpans.

RUFF (*Philomachus pugnax*) - A single fine non-breeding bird at Bundala saltpans.

TEREK SANDPIPER (*Xenus cinerea*) - A single bird at Bundala was a nice addition for the trip.

COMMON SANDPIPER (*Actitis hypoleucos*) – One at Wilpattu, then a few teetered along the edges of wetlands and water holes at Bundala and Yala.

RED-NECKED PHALAROPE (*Phalaropus lobatus*) – Great looks at one at the saltpans at Bundala, not far from our Broad-billed Sandpipers, it

was actually standing out on the land, the first time I've ever seen one not swimming. A couple were also seen swimming earlier.

Turnicidae (Buttonquail)

BARRED BUTTONQUAIL (*Turnix suscitator leggei*) – We spotted a couple of furtive birds along the edge of the track at Uduwalewa.

Glareolidae (Pratincoles and Coursers)

SMALL PRATINCOLE (*Glareola lactea*) – Half a dozen along one of the bunds edging the saltworks at Bundala allowing good scope views. Their name is certainly appropriate!

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

BROWN-HEADED GULL (*Larus brunneicephalus*) – Four at Bundala saltworks were a good find and the only ones of the tour.

LITTLE TERN (*Sternula albifrons*) – One at Wilpattu was unexpected, then small numbers around Uduwalewa, Yala and Bundala.

SAUNDERS'S TERN (*Sternula saundersi*) - 5 at the wetlands near Yala, coming in to summer plumage so we could see the head pattern.

GULL-BILLED TERN (*Gelochelidon nilotica nilotica*) – Singles at Basawakhuma tank and near Tissa, then 15 Bundala. This would be the Asian nominate taxon, split by HBW-BirdLife.

CASPIAN TERN (*Hydroprogne caspia*) – 8 of these big terns at the saltpans at Bundala.

COMMON TERN (*Sterna hirundo*) – 15 at Bundala saltpans, relatively easy to pick out thanks to the dark carpal bars on their folded wings.

GREAT CRESTED TERN (*Thalasseus bergii*) – 20 around Bundala, resting on one of the bunds edging the salt works.

LESSER CRESTED TERN (*Thalasseus bengalensis*) – Just one among the many Great Crested Terns resting along the edge of the saltworks at Bundala, picked out by the bright orange beak and smaller size.

WHISKERED TERN (*Chlidonias hybrida*) – 20, all in winter plumage, over the flats of Bundala, and others at Wilpattu, Basawakhuma tank, Habarana, Uduwalewa, Sigiriya and over roadside rice paddies. This is by far the most common tern we saw in Sri Lanka.

WHITE-WINGED BLACK TERN (*Chlidonias leucopterus*) – 5 at Debaraweva wetlands, 30 at Yala and 50 among the Whiskered Terns over the Bundala marshes, picked out by their whitish rump patches and “headphones” head pattern like a Little Gull. White-winged Tern is nowhere near such an appropriate name as White-winged Black; I do not know why it was adopted!

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

FERAL ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) – Quite common in cities and towns throughout.

SRI LANKA WOOD PIGEON (*Columba torringtoniae*) – We left it late, then had very nice looks at 2 birds in the forest at Horton Plains [E]

SPOTTED DOVE (*Streptopelia chinensis ceylonensis*) – One of the tour's "every day" species -- particularly along roadside wires, and very different to the ones in Australia. HBW-BirdLife split this as Western Spotted Dove (*S. suratensis*), with distinct buff spotting above, red eye colour and different voice to the Eastern birds.

COLLARED DOVE (*Streptopelia decaocto*) - 3 at Bundala entrance area were an unexpected pick-up, I had thought was only in the far north of Sri Lanka but it seems to be spreading, a familiar tale in Britain and North America.

ASIAN EMERALD DOVE (*Chalcophaps indica robinsoni*) – Seen at Wilpattu, Habarana, Kitulgala and at Sinharaja, where it was quite common.

ORANGE-BREASTED GREEN PIGEON (*Treron bicinctus leggei*) – Seen quite often, starting at Wilpattu and Habarana, then at Uduwalewa and Yala. This species is found across much of southeast Asia.

SRI LANKA GREEN PIGEON (*Treron pompadora*) – First seen at Habarana, and only ever in very small numbers, the most 6 in Yala sections 4 and 5. These handsome endemic pigeons were formerly part of the Pompadour Pigeon complex [E]

GREEN IMPERIAL PIGEON (*Ducula aenea*) – Widespread, with up to 10 in day around Sinharaja.

Centropodidae (Coucals)

GREEN-BILLED COUCAL (*Centropus chlororhynchos*) – The first of these scarce endemic coucals came near Kitulgala, skulking in dense undergrowth and proving quite a challenge to get moderate views. Then a more confiding pair near *Blue Magpie Lodge*, which clambered up through trees right near the road and gave pretty good looks. [E]

GREATER COUCAL (*Centropus sinensis*) – Widespread, and seen or heard most days.

SIRKEER MALKOHA (*Taccocoua leschenaultii*) - One at Uduwalewa, great spotting from the driver and reasonable view in indifferent light, then another at Yala, this can be a hard species to find and/or see well. A monotypic genus too. (E)

RED-FACED MALKOHA (*Phaenicophaeus pyrrhocephalus*) – Just one of this striking species seen at Sinharaja, perched out in sunlight and a great view, with the red wattles simply glowing. (E)

BLUE-FACED MALKOHA (*Phaenicophaeus viridirostris*) – A quick look at Wilpattu with Phil only seeing it as it vanished, a BVD basically. Then Ben and Regina saw one near Hibiscus Lodge, which we were unable to relocate. Sadly we also picked up a fresh-killed one on the road through Yala sections 4 and 5, which Upali took as a specimen for this university. This wary species is always a tough one to see well.

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

JACOBIN (PIED) CUCKOO (*Clamator jacobinus*) – Just 2 birds near Singharagama on Mar. 15 were the only ones of the tour.

ASIAN KOEL (*Eudynamis scolopaceus*) – Quite commonly heard in the lowlands and seen at Habarana and Hibiscus Lodge.

BANDED BAY CUCKOO (*Cacomantis sonneratii waiti*) – One at Sigiriya was the only sighting.

GREY-BELLIED CUCKOO (*Cacomantis passerinus*) – Several birds seen in the scrubby brush of Uduwalewa and at Yala, a distinctive migrant from India here.

COMMON HAWK-CUCKOO (*Hierococcyx varius*) – One at Kandy Botanic Gardens, then one at Horton Plains, a long overdue tick for Phil.

Strigidae (Owls)

SERENDIB SCOPS OWL (*Otus thilohoffmanni*) – Yahoo! After nearly

giving this species up for lost, we got lucky - there had been hardly any sightings in the past couple of weeks, but we met one guide who had seen one the day before, and he promised to show us next day. However when the time came he suddenly had another booking, some local politics at work here, but Upali managed to salvage the situation when I stressed how significant this one was for us. It meant a rough slippery uphill hike across streams, boulders and logs, but it was worth it with one great bird roosting in a small palm by a creek. I was surprised by the obvious ear tufts, not shown in the pictures in the field guides, but happily the odd buffy-orange colouration and pale yellow eyes visible in photos left no doubt. This species was only described in 2004, and has shall we say a muddy back-story with finder attribution being distinctly controversial. This was one of my birds of the trip. [E]

INDIAN SCOPS OWL (*Otus bakkamoena*) – Upali knew of one roosting in a tree hole near the Chestnut-backed Owlet site near Kitulgala, and we were able to discern the head in the shadows of the hole, really about 15% of a tick but still worth having! Kelvin then came good here with a site in Tissa where he'd seen 6 birds 2 years ago, and amazingly one was still there, sat under the eaves and allowing great views

BROWN FISH OWL (*Ketupa zeylonensis*) – One in Wilpattu gave pretty good views.

JUNGLE OWLET (*Glaucidium radiatum*) – Upali's local guide had located one for us in Debaraweva, and we duly turned up and saw it sat high in tree, a good moment for me as this was my 100th species of owl. Then another was sat in a tree near the woodpecker house in Debaraweva in broad daylight.

CHESTNUT-BACKED OWLET (*Glaucidium castanotum*) – Upali has a garden near Kitulgala where they have this species in the back yard, and sure enough we got terrific views of it there. [E]

BROWN WOOD OWL (*Strix leptogrammica ochrogenys*) – One on a day roost at Wilpattu in pretty good light too, the guides knew where it was likely to be.

Podargidae (Frogmouths)

SRI LANKA FROGMOUTH (*Batrachostomus moniliger*) – We hired a local guy to show us a fine pair near the Sinharaja Park HQ, then had another pair later that our other guide knew, but belt and braces is the best approach!

Caprimulgidae (Nightjars)

JERDON'S NIGHTJAR (*Caprimulgus atripennis aequabilis*) – 2 seen at Habarana, with one calling on a dead snag right outside our bungalow. Also heard at Tissa from Hibiscus Garden Hotel.

INDIAN NIGHTJAR (*Caprimulgus asiaticus eidos*) – One at Habarana, seen well by Ben and Regina, but just a flyby for Jun and I slightly later on. I messed up with Grey Nightjar (*C. indicus*), now known as Jungle Nightjar, never even asking about it. I had not realized that it is a different species to the birds (*C. jotaka*) we saw at Eaglenest and would have been a tick, an example of the perils of confusing English names!

Apodidae (Swifts)

INDIAN SWIFTLET (*Aerodramus unicolor*) – Surprisingly scarce, we only saw them at Kitulgala, with about 10 birds, and at Blue Magpie Lodge.

LITTLE SWIFT (INDIAN) (*Apus nipalensis singalensis*) – Widespread in small numbers, and nesting at the Information Centre at Bundala.

ASIAN PALM SWIFT (*Cypsiurus balasiensis*) – Small numbers on many days. The long, pointed tail is distinctive.

Hemiprocnidae (Treeswifts)

CRESTED TREESWIFT (*Hemiprogne coronata*) – Small numbers on most days in the lowlands, starting at Wilpattu.

Trogonidae (Trogons)

MALABAR TROGON (*Harpactes fasciatus fasciatus*) – Just a single fine male of this handsome bird along the track up to Sinharaja.

Bucerotidae (Hornbills)

SRI LANKA GRAY HORNBILL (*Ocyrceros gingalensis*) – The first were by the road near Singharagama on Mar. 15 and we had small numbers on most days in the lowlands, with some very fine looks. A new genus for Phil. [E]

MALABAR PIED HORNBILL (*Anthracoceros coronatus*) – 4 at Wilpattu were the first, then we had others near Sinharaja and Yala sections 3 and 4.

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

ORIENTAL DWARF KINGFISHER (*Ceyx erithacus*) - One at Wilpattu was good bonus, then a very confiding bird by the pond at Ubawattakele, much to Kelvin's delight.

COMMON KINGFISHER (*Alcedo atthis*) – Quite widespread and some wonderful views, the 2 in Uduwalewa were particularly memorable and were duly immortalized by the photographers.

STORK-BILLED KINGFISHER (*Pelargopsis capensis*) – One of these, the largest kingfisher of the tour, was at Habarana and it was seen again around Tissa.

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

PIED KINGFISHER (*Ceryle rudis*) – Regular in the southeast in very small numbers, especially throughout Bundala, where they hovered above the saltpans and marshes.

Meropidae (Bee-eaters)

GREEN BEE-EATER (*Merops orientalis ceylonicus*) – Easily the most common and widespread of the bee-eaters here, seen on most days in the dry, open country of Wilpattu, Habarana, Sigiriya, Uduwalewa, Bundala and Yala with up to 60 in a day around the big wet areas of the south-east. Split by HBW-Birdlife as Asian Green Bee-eater, which seems quite sensible too.

BLUE-TAILED BEE-EATER (*Merops philippinus*) – Small numbers only, starting at Habarana, then from the saltpans at sea level right along the coast at Uduwalewa and Bundala.

CHESTNUT-HEADED BEE-EATER (*Merops leschenaulti*) – 3 at Wilpattu, then an astonishing flock of 60 coming to a roost in a tall bare tree at Kitulgala tea estate; otherwise just singles on 4 days in the south-east.

Coraciidae (Rollers)

INDIAN ROLLER (*Coracias benghalensis indicus*) – Singles at Wilpattu and Sigiriya, then 8 watched from bare, dead snags in Uduwalewa, with 3 next day. This is split from Indochinese Roller (*C. (b.) affinis*) by HBW-BirdLife, and it does seem pretty distinct.

Megalaimidae (Asian Barbets)

CRIMSON-FRONTED BARBET (Sri Lanka Small) (*Psilopogon rubricapillus*) – First at Sigiriya then great looks at Kandy Botanic Gardens and 2 by Hibiscus Gardens Hotel. [E]

COPPERSMITH BARBET (*Psilopogon haemacephalus indicus*) – Seen well around Habarana and Sigiriya and heard far more.

BROWN-HEADED BARBET (*Psilopogon zeylanicus*) – The common barbet of the tour, seen (and heard!) on many days starting at Wilpattu and the hotel at Singharagama where it was calling loudly at dawn.

YELLOW-FRONTED BARBET (*Psilopogon flavifrons*) – First at Sigiriya, then at the wetter forests around Kitulgala and Sinharaja, with others at Ubawattakele, max. 3 in day. [E]

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

BROWN-CAPPED PYGMY WOODPECKER (*Yungipicus nanus gymnophthalmus*) – A couple of these diminutive woodpeckers foraging in a dead tree opposite Blue Magpie Lodge, the only ones we saw; they didn't look much bigger than nuthatches!

YELLOW-CROWNED WOODPECKER (*Dendrocopos mahrattensis*) – Singles in Uduwalewa on two visits. An uncommon bird.

LESSER YELLOWNAPE (*Picus chlorolophus wellsi*) – Heard and seen by most at Kitulgala, then seen well as part of a mixed flock near the entrance to Sinharaja Forest Reserve, and also heard near Blue Magpie Lodge

RED-BACKED FLAMEBACK (Lesser Sri Lanka or Black-rumped Flameback) (*Dinopium (benghalense) psarodes*) – Quite widespread, first seen at Habarana wetland, then at Kitulgala and Sinharaja before one at the coconut palms at Debaraweva. The crimson back is very striking, quite different to Black-rumped Flameback, and it is now split by most. [E]

CRIMSON-BACKED FLAMEBACK (Greater Sri Lanka Flameback) (*Chrysocolaptes stricklandi*) – Less common than the previous species, we saw a fine male at Ubawattakele forest (showing its crimson back, paler face and white throat) and had another near Sinharaja. Another split that is now accepted by most. [E]

WHITE-NAPED WOODPECKER (*Chrysocolaptes festivus*) – A female

in a large tree beside the wetland at Debaraweve was good find on Mar 24, Then two days later we saw a pair at a hole in tall coconut palm there, which allowed repeated scope views.

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

EURASIAN KESTREL (*Falco tinnunculus*) – One female on the way to Uduwalewa was the only sighting.

ORIENTAL HOBBY (*Falco severus*) – A perched bird on the ridge opposite the lodge at Kitulgala was a good find, we had to be careful to make sure it was this and not a Shaheen, which is quite similar.

PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*) – One sat in a cave entrance at Sigiriya, seen on both visits, and giving a fleeting glimpse earlier as it vanished behind trees. The strikingly distinctive subspecies found here-*peregrinator*, dark above and very rusty below, is sometimes proposed as a split, the Shaheen. I would not be at all surprised to see Peregrine broken up into several species, as some of the taxa are very distinctive.

Psittaculidae (Old World Parrots)

ALEXANDRINE PARAKEET (*Psittacula eupatria*) - Just a few from the lowlands, with 4 at Sigiriya, 4 at Kitulgala and a couple near Sinharaja.

ROSE-RINGED PARAKEET (*Psittacula krameri*) – Common and widespread throughout much of the tour, with up to 30 at Wilpattu and very common around Bundala and Yala. The birds mobbing the rat snake at Debaraweve were enthralling to watch, making frantic pecks at the predatory snake's tail as it entered the tree holes.

PLUM-HEADED PARAKEET (*Psittacula cyanocephala*) – The only sighting was 4 birds seen very well at Kitulgala tea estate on Mar 19. Readily told from Blossom-headed (not in Sri Lanka) by the face colour and tail pattern.

LAYARD'S PARAKEET (*Psittacula calthrapae*) – 2 at Ubawattakele forest, then 5 near Kitulgala, and 8 at Sinharaja. A rather distinctive grey-headed parakeet. [E]

SRI LANKA HANGING PARROT (*Loriculus beryllinus*) – Quite common on the wet side of the island with up to 8 in day. We regularly heard their high-pitched calls as they rocketed past, and got some good perched views too at Kitulgala [E]

Pittidae (Pittas)

INDIAN PITTA (*Pitta brachyura*) – The first was at TOC late afternoon, then a great one by the restrooms at Kandy Botanic Gardens and one near Hibiscus Gardens Hotel at Tissa, with another in Victoria Park. One of the easier pittas for a change.

Vangidae (Vangas, Helmetshrikes, and Allies)

SRI LANKA WOODSHRIKE (*Tephrodornis affinis*) – A few around Sigiriya and Kitulgala and again near Tissa. Now split from Common Woodshrike. [E]

BAR-WINGED FLYCATCHER-SHRIKE (*Hemipus picatus leggei*) – We saw one along one of the roads we walked near Sigiriya Lion Rock, and others at Kitulgala and Horton Plains. The wide white stripe on the closed wing of this species is distinctive.

Artamidae (Woodswallows)

ASHY WOODSWALLOW (*Artamus fuscus*) – Just a single near Sigiriya, as in Cambodia it does not seem to be common here.

Aegithinidae (Ioras)

COMMON IORA (*Aegithina tiphia*) – Widespread, seen at Wilpattu, Habarana, Sigiriya and Kitulgala, as well as Tissa. Quite a vocal species, heard more than seen. Ioras are now in their own family too.

MARSHALL'S (WHITE-TAILED) IORA (*Aegithina nigrolutea*) – A pair at Uduwalewa were a lucky find, as we saw them nowhere else. This species was only recently discovered to occur in Sri Lanka.

Campephagidae (Cuckooshrikes)

SMALL MINIVET (*Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*) – A little flock of five - including one bright male - were at Habarana, and it was seen again at Ubawattakele and Kitulgala.

ORANGE MINIVET (*Pericrocotus flammeus*) – Now split from Scarlet minivet of SE Asia, we first saw them at Kandy Botanic Gardens, then at Kitulgala and Sinharaja. The males are not nearly as scarlet as the their sibling species.

LARGE CUCKOOSHRIKE (*Coracina macei layardi*) – Just 2 near the tank at Basawakhuma. This uncommon species is significantly larger than the next and is split by HBW-Birdlife as Indian Cuckooshrike.

BLACK-HEADED CUCKOOSHRIKE (*Lalage melanoptera sykesi*) – Nice views from Habarana then at Kitulgala and Sinharaja, quite a striking and fairly small cuckooshrike, I can see why it is now a *Lalage* and not a *Coracina*.

Laniidae (Shrikes)

BROWN SHRIKE (*Lanius cristatus*) – Common, noisy and widespread, with good views of birds hunting from dead snags, tree branches and fence posts across the country. One at 2000 m at Horton Plains was quite a high altitude for it.

Oriolidae (Old World Orioles)

BLACK-HOODED ORIOLE (*Oriolus xanthornus ceylonensis*) – Widespread and actually seen on most days of the tour, starting at Wilpattu.

Dicruridae (Drongos)

BLACK DRONGO (*Dicrurus macrocercus*) – Just two singles from the Habarana area were all that we saw.

WHITE-BELLIED DRONGO (WHITE-VENTED) (*Dicrurus caerulescens leucopygialis*) – Small numbers from Kitulgala and then Sinharaja, this has just a whitish vent, whereas the drier country *insularis* has a white belly. This explains why I was puzzled by the name, and I don't think we saw *insularis*.

SRI LANKA DRONGO (*Dicrurus lophorinus*) – 2 in the forest at Kitulgala, and then seen at Sinharaja with a total of 5 day records, usually two birds. This forest species is considerably larger than the more widespread White-bellied Drongo. [E]

Rhipiduridae (Fantails)

WHITE-BROWED FANTAIL (*Rhipidura aureola*) – First at Habarana, then from Kitulgala and with a nest at Tissa.

Monarchidae (Monarch Flycatchers)

BLACK-NAPED MONARCH (*Hypothymis azurea ceylonensis*) – Some

saw this in Wilpattu and at Kitulgala, and there was a nest at Sinharaja, where the incubating bird was the only one I saw.

INDIAN PARADISE-FLYCATCHER (*Terpsiphone paradisi ceylonensis*) – I was well-impressed by this split from Asian Paradise Flycatcher, it's much larger and has a huge crest, a really different bird (which I'd only heard last year in Assam). We saw small numbers on several days, starting with 7 at Wilpattu, some of which had really long crests and which are I think mainly the resident race. A black-and-white male flitting in the shadows of the forest there must be the migrant nominate form from India which has this morph, not found in the local birds. We saw the species on some 12 days, usually as two birds, from Habarana, Sigiriya, Tissa and Nuwara Eliya as well as Wilpattu.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

SRI LANKA BLUE-MAGPIE (*Urocissa ornata*) – This really gave us problems, as all the tame ones around Sinharaja had vanished, maybe nesting? I missed the first there, but caught up with it at the spurfowl lodge, though I'd like longer and closer views. Jun, Ben and Regina scored it at the Hakgala Botanic Gardens too, one of the few notable sighting that afternoon. What's not to love about a huge maroon and blue magpie with shockingly bright red legs and bill? **[E]**

HOUSE CROW (*Corvus splendens*) - Seen on most days though not at Wilpattu, and very common at Tissa where I counted about 100 one afternoon.

INDIAN JUNGLE (LARGE-BILLED) CROW (*Corvus (macrorhynchos) culminatus*) - Widespread and seen most days of the tour, usually just one or 2 birds. Now split by the IOC from the Large-billed Crow complex as Indian Jungle Crow, they sure don't sound like the Japanese birds.

Alaudidae (Larks)

JERDON'S BUSHLARK (*Mirafra affinis*) – Six at Wilpattu, a couple at Habarana, then daily with up to 15 at Uduwalewa, Bundala and Yala.

ASHY-CROWNED SPARROW-LARK (*Eremopterix griseus*) – These were common at Uduwalewa with counts of 80 on the first visit and 70 next day, and 2 near one of the lakes at Yala NP. My final *Eremopterix* too, another genus completed.

ORIENTAL SKYLARK (*Alauda gulgula*) – Two in display flight along the track at the saltpans at Bundala.

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

SAND MARTIN (*Riparia riparia*) – Just 4 seen on wires at Bundala, it is quite scarce in Sri Lanka.

BARN SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*) – Ubiquitous, seen in fair numbers on many days of the tour, with the most over the marshes and mudflats and plains near Yala.

HILL SWALLOW (*Hirundo domicola*) – Two on wires as we came into Nuwara Eliya, then 4 zoomed back and forth near the parking lot at the Horton Plains visitor's centre, their dark blue backs flashing in the sunlight. They had a nest there too. The dingy chest of this relatively short-tailed and scarce species was distinctive.

SRI LANKA SWALLOW (*Cecropis hyperythra*) – Another uncommon species, first seen at Habarana, then 3 at Kitulgala and a couple near Yala. The dark rusty chest of this species is diagnostic. [E]

Stenostiridae (Fairy-flycatchers)

GREY-HEADED CANARY-FLYCATCHER (*Culicicapa ceylonensis*) – Our only sightings came from Horton Plains and then a bird at Hakgala Botanic Gardens, unexpectedly scarce.

Paridae (Chickadees and Tits)

CINEREOUS TIT (*Parus cinereus mahrattarum*) – A couple foraging through the moss and epiphytes of the trees by the lake where we had breakfast at Horton Plains, then 4 at Hakgala Botanic Gardens. This species was recently split from the Great Tit.

Sittidae (Nuthatches)

VELVET-FRONTED NUTHATCH (*Sitta frontalis*) – A couple of sightings, with 7 birds including a juvenile at Sinharaja, and 4 with a mixed flock at Horton Plains.

Pycnonotidae (Bulbuls)

BLACK-CAPPED BULBUL (*Pycnonotus melanicterus*) – Regular in the wet forests of the country's southwest, first seen at Sigiriya then singles from Kitulgala and Sinharaja, with some 6 day records. [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*) – One at Victoria Park, then 10 next day up at Horton Plains, very localized and a striking species. [E]

WHITE-BROWED BULBUL (*Pycnonotus luteolus insulae*) – We had 7 day records, starting at Wilpattu and then singles thereafter from Habarana, Kitulgala and Tissa.

YELLOW-BROWED BULBUL (*Iole indica*) – Seen on 5 days in the southwest, starting at Kandy Botanic Gardens then from Kitulgala and Sinharaja where we had counts of 6 and 8 in day.

SQUARE-TAILED BULBUL (Sri Lanka group) (*Hypsipetes ganeesa humii*) – Six day records from the higher wet forests, the first from Ubawattakele, then small numbers thereafter with maxima of 15 at Sinharaja.

Phylloscopidae (Leaf-Warblers)

GREEN WARBLER (*Phylloscopus nitidus*) – Just singles, my first came at Habarana, then from Kitulgala and finally Hakgala. They are entirely pale yellowish below.

LARGE-BILLED LEAF-WARBLER (*Phylloscopus magnirostris*) - One at Sinharaja with a good photo by Kelvin, and one at Hakgala.

Acrocephalidae (Reed-Warblers and Allies)

BLYTH'S REED-WARBLER (*Acrocephalus dumetorum*) - A long overdue tick for Phil, it proved to be quite widespread, with the first at Habarana.

INDIAN REED WARBLER (Clamorous or Brown Reed Warbler) (*Acrocephalus stentoreus meridionalis*) - Just 2 seen at Uduwalewa, proposed as a split from Clamorous.

Locustellidae (Grassbirds and Allies)

SRI LANKA BUSH-WARBLER (*Elaphrornis palliseri*) – No sign of it at Horton Plains where we got side-tracked by Blyth's Reed Warblers skulking in bushes, and I was afraid we would dip. Happily the last morning before breakfast we made a short walk out to Galway Is NP by the hotel, and found 3 of these big rather odd warblers with the obvious supercilium and skulking habits, getting very good looks in the end. It's now a monotypic genus too, not surprising, as it does not look much like a *Bradypterus*. This was the final tick of the trip. [E]

Cisticolidae (Cisticolas and Allies)

ZITTING CISTICOLA (*Cisticola juncidis cursitans*) – 2 at Basawakhuma tank, then heard at Uduwalewa and finally one from Horton Plains. This group is long overdue for splitting; we saw presumably the dry country race here, except for what is presumably *omalurus* in the mountains at Horton Plains. I wonder if they differ in call?

COMMON TAILORBIRD (*Orthotomus sutorius*) – 7 day records, seen at Habarana then Sinharaja and finally around Nuwara Eliya, just ones and twos.

GRAY-BREASTED PRINIA (*Prinia hodgsonii pectoralis*) – Just 2 records from Habarana, with good views in the grasses along the bund.

JUNGLE PRINIA (*Prinia sylvatica valida*) – Two day records in Uduwalewa, where several sat up atop the scrubby vegetation, and one from Yala.

ASHY PRINIA (*Prinia socialis brevicauda*) – I only saw this at Uduwalewa but it was heard at Habarana where some saw it, and also heard at Bundala.

PLAIN PRINIA (*Prinia inornata insularis*) – 4 at Habarana, then also from Uduwalewa, Yala and Bundala, but only very small numbers.

Paradoxornithidae (Parrotbills, Wrentit, and Allies)

YELLOW-EYED BABBLER (*Chrysomma sinense nasale*) – Three day records, from Uduwalewa and then Yala, the 2 at Udu showing nicely.

Zosteropidae (Yuhinas, White-eyes, and Allies)

SRI LANKA WHITE-EYE (*Zosterops ceylonensis*) – The first were 2 at Sinharaja NP, then 10 at Horton Plains and 10 at Hakgala. This species is larger and darker (more green than yellow) than the next. [E]

ORIENTAL WHITE-EYE (*Zosterops palpebrosus*) – A few of these smaller, yellower white-eyes at Habarana and Sinharaja, often part of mixed flocks. Did not seem unduly common.

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

TAWNY-BELLIED BABBLER (*Dumetia hyperythra phillipsi*) – Only one sighting, with 2 obliging birds on the bund at Habarana.

DARK-FRONTED BABBLER (*Rhopocichla atriceps*) – Skulking, but seen well at Sigiriya and Sinharaja, then up at Horton Plains and Galway Island NP.

SRI LANKA SCIMITAR-BABBLER (*Pomatorhinus melanurus*) - 2 seen nicely in the forests of Sinharaja NP, then a single at Horton Plains, one at Hakgala and finally one at the tea estate en route to Colombo. [E]

Pellorneidae (Ground Babblers and Allies)

BROWN-CAPPED BABBLER (*Pellorneum fuscicapillus*) – A cool bird, with 2 skulking along the forest floor at Sigiriya and again at Kitulgala, the only ones we saw. [E]

Leiothrichidae (Laughingthrushes and Allies)

ORANGE-BILLED BABBLER (*Turdoides rufescens*) – Our first encounter was at a lunch stop at Kitulgala, and we had them daily here and Sinharaja with up to 10 birds in quite noisy groups in the wet forest zone. Obliging and sympatric with the next at Blue Magpie Lodge. [E]

YELLOW-BILLED BABBLER (*Turdoides affinis taprobana*) – This was the first endemic we saw, at the hotel in Sinharagama. It was quite common and widespread, with up to 30 in a day around Tissa, in small flocks of 5-7 birds. They are called the Seven Sisters in Sri Lanka, as that is the usual family flock size.

* **ASHY-HEADED LAUGHINGTHRUSH** (*Garrulax cinereifrons*) (H)– Unfortunately only heard at some distance in Sinharaja, where we failed to connect with any decent mixed flocks at all. [E]

Muscicapidae (Old World Flycatchers)

ASIAN BROWN FLYCATCHER (*Muscicapa latirostris*) – Very few, with one along the track at Wilpattu, one at Ubawattakele and one from Sinharaja, the next species was far more widespread.

BROWN-BREASTED FLYCATCHER (*Muscicapa muttui*) – Far more common and widespread than the previous species, with scattered individuals seen on 6 days starting at Wilpattu and then up to 4 in a day at Sinharaja. One at Victoria Park was the last, and I was surprised at how distinctive this species was, with the flesh-pink legs and feet and yellowish lower mandible.

INDIAN ROBIN (*Copsychus fulicatus leucopterus*) – Widespread in the dry lowlands, with great looks at Wilpattu, Habarana, Sigiriya,

Uduwalewa, Kitulgala and Bundala. It used to be in a monotypic genus *Saxicoloides*, and it does not look or act much like the other *Copsychus*. It was one of my favourites on the tour, the dark chestnut undertail and dark plumage being very attractive. They showed especially well at the Kitulgala tea estate.

ORIENTAL MAGPIE-ROBIN (*Copsychus saularis*) – Widespread throughout the country and seen on most days,

WHITE-RUMPED SHAMA (White-rumped group) (*Copsychus malabaricus leggei*) – Seen at Wilpattu and Habarana, and one near Tissa, skulking as always but seen quite well.

TICKELL'S BLUE-FLYCATCHER (*Cyornis tickelliae jerdoni*) – Recorded on the first half of the tour, starting at Wilpattu then Habarana and Kitulgala, often as a tinkling song echoing from the surrounding forest.

DULL-BLUE FLYCATCHER (*Eumyias sordidus*) – Uncommon and limited range, but fine views of a male at Victoria Park, then a total of 6 Horton Plains, with the cheery four-note song echoing from the surrounding hillsides, and finally a single at Hakgala. Called Dusky-blue Flycatcher locally but that name is preoccupied by an African species. **[E]**

INDIAN BLUE ROBIN (*Larvivora brunnea*) – Just 3 records, with super looks at a male in Ubawattakele and another at the cesspit in Nuwara Eliya, and a female at Sinharaja.

SRI LANKA WHISTLING-THRUSH (*Myophonus blighi*) – Hard work, our early morning at Horton Plains paid off though, with brief views of 2 of this shy species in thick scrub by a pond not far from the entrance. **[E]**

KASHMIR FLYCATCHER (*Ficedula subrubra*) – After quite a long wait a wintering male showed well along the wood edge in Victoria Park, not far from where a Brown-breasted Flycatcher. This is a winter visitor to Sri Lanka and quite a hard bird to get.

PIED BUSHCHAT (*Saxicola caprata atratus*) – First seen near Nuwara Eliya, then a few at Horton Plains.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

PIED THRUSH (*Geokichla wardii*)- I saw one of these wonderful back and white thrushes appear in the centre of the track at Victoria Park, and we got cracking views of it there, with another male and some 3 females coming later to feed in a dense small tree near the restrooms. One of the birds of the trip, just an amazing striking bird and a tricky species to get overall. The Himalayan breeding range is quite narrow, and most seem to winter in Sri Lanka, it is overall still very poorly known.

SPOT-WINGED THRUSH (*Geokichla spiloptera*) – Singing and 2 seen well at the site for Chestnut-backed Owlet, then 2 at Sinharaja and a pair with 2 juvs. at the spurfowl lodge site. Nice to see them so well, *Geokichla* (formerly *Zoothera*) are always hard to get. **[E]**

ORANGE-HEADED THRUSH (*Geokichla citrina*) – A couple of these striking thrushes were feeding in a fruiting tree in the grounds of TOC one morning, a good addition to the trip.

INDIAN BLACKBIRD (*Turdus simillimus kinnisii*) – A couple foraging in the grassy areas near the entrance gate to Horton Plains, quite like yellow-billed Eurasian Blackbirds.

Sturnidae (Starlings)

SOUTHERN HILL MYNA (*Gracula indica*) – Two at Kitulgala on two dates, and 2 near Blue Magpie Lodge, clearly quite a scarce species.

SRI LANKA MYNA (*Gracula ptilogenys*) – Four day records starting at Kandy Botanic Gardens, with 2 each sighting, apart from 4 near Kitulgala one day; 2 near Blue Magpie Lodge was the last sighting. **(E)**

COMMON MYNA (*Acridotheres tristis melanosternus*) – Ubiquitous and seen every day of the trip. This race is much darker than the usual birds and can appear almost black in some lights, and is endemic to Sri Lanka.

WHITE-FACED STARLING (*Sturnia albofrontata*) – Very uncommon, we saw it by the entrance to Sinharaja NP, with one bird perched up and another nearby later, the only ones we saw! This was a new and monotypic genus. **[E]**

BRAHMINY STARLING (*Temenuchus pagodarum*) – This was a great find at the shorebird sandflats near Yala, where we saw about 55 flying over in the late afternoon in small flocks. They look remarkably

grosbeak-like in flight, very distinctive. We got some perched up as well, a species I'd long wanted to see. Sometimes this species overwinters in Sri Lanka by the hundreds; other times (like this year) it's pretty scarce. This was a new and monotypic genus.

ROSY STARLING (*Pastor roseus*) – We saw 10 in Uduwalewa, with 3 next day, some coming into breeding plumage. Numbers of this species also vary dramatically from year to year.

Chloropseidae (Leafbirds)

JERDON'S LEAFBIRD (*Chloropsis jerdoni*) – I actually only saw the two birds at Habarana in the grounds of the TOC, but it was seen by others on some 3 other days.

GOLDEN-FRONTED LEAFBIRD (*Chloropsis aurifrons*) – Slightly more widespread than its congener, with singles seen on 5 days, the first a male at Sigiriya.

Dicaeidae (Flowerpeckers)

THICK-BILLED FLOWERPECKER (*Dicaeum agile zeylonicum*) – Just one at Sigiriya, the straight, thick, dark beak and red eye were really obvious, and noticeably different from the pale curved beak and dark eye of the Pale-billed Flowerpecker.

WHITE-THROATED (LEGGE'S) FLOWERPECKER (*Dicaeum vincens*) - A couple near Kitulgala Lodge and one at Sinharaja, a very low-density species it would seem. [E]

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

Nectariniidae (Sunbirds and Spiderhunters)

PURPLE-RUMPED SUNBIRD (*Leptocoma zeylonica zeylonica*) – Common and widespread, starting at Singharagama hotel and Wilpattu, with many others around Sinharaja and Kitulgala.

PURPLE SUNBIRD (*Cinnyris asiaticus*) – One shiny purple male at Habarana and some nice ones in Bundala and Uduwalewa.

LOTEN'S (Long-billed) SUNBIRD (*Cinnyris lotenius lotenius*) – The first was a male at Habarana, then we had one or two daily up to Kitulgala and a couple at Tissa.

Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)

FOREST WAGTAIL (*Dendronanthus indicus*) – Just 2 birds at Victoria Park, the only ones of the tour, but pretty good looks overall.

YELLOW WAGTAIL (Grey-headed) (*Motacilla flava thunbergi*)- Seen around Uduwalewa and the wetlands at Bundala and Yala, with up to 20 birds. No other races seen, and sadly the White Wagtails seen recently by Upali near Tissa had gone.

GREY WAGTAIL (*Motacilla cinerea*) – Very few, it was seen at Kitulgala and I saw it at Blue Magpie, then up to 5 on the last couple of days around Nuwara Eliya.

PADDYFIELD (Oriental) PIPIT (*Anthus rufulus*) – The only pipit we saw and fairly widespread in small numbers.

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) – A female near Wilpattu, 2 at Kandy, then more regular around the towns on the latter part of the tour.

Ploceidae (Weavers and Allies)

BAYA WEAVER (*Ploceus philippinus philippinus*) – A small colony of nesting birds at Habarana 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. These western birds look rather different to the eastern ones and could well be a split.

STREAKED WEAVER (*Ploceus manyar flaviceps*)- A good find in Yala where 5 birds were weaving green grass-stem nests in a sedgebed.

Estrildidae (Waxbills and Allies)

INDIAN SILVERBILL (*Euodice malabarica*)- 3 at Uduwalewa and 2 there next day, surprisingly few.

WHITE-RUMPED MUNIA (*Lonchura striata*) – Up to 10 at Wilpattu and en route to Habarana, with a few around Kitulgala and Tissa.

NUTMEG MANNIKIN (*Lonchura punctulata*) – Six day records from scattered lowland sites.

TRICOLORED MUNIA (*Lonchura malacca*) – One at Sigiriya, then 6 at Yala and 6 at Hakgala. Sadly not the one I wanted, Black-throated Munia.

MAMMALS

Leporidae (Rabbits & hares)

BLACK-NAPED (INDIAN) HARE (*Lepus nigricollis*) – Great looks at 5 of them in Wilpattu, and one at the shorebird sandflats near Yala. The black nape patch is very conspicuous.

Muridae (true mice & rats)

LESSER BANDICOOT-RAT (*Bandicota bengalensis*) - One beside a stream in Victoria Park, coming in and out of some rocks there, wary but seen several times. The tail seemed to be paler on the outer half, and it does not seem large or dark enough for Greater Bandicoot-rat.

Felidae (Cats)

JUNGLE CAT (*Felis chaus*) – One crossed the road in front of us and ambled down a side-track late afternoon in Uduwalewa, a real treat.

LEOPARD (*Panthera pardus*) – A splendid animal loafing by a pond at Wilpattu late one afternoon, it was quite unconcerned and we had it to ourselves for 20 minutes, eventually leaving it in peace. Our second was one in bad light atop a rock in Yala NP, when we were part of a queue of vehicles being cycled past it, not a terribly aesthetic experience and not a patch on our Wilpattu sighting.

Herpestidae (Mongoose)

INDIAN GRAY MONGOOSE (*Herpestes edwardsi*) - Just 2 by the road near Wilpattu.

RUDDY (COMMON) MONGOOSE (*Herpestes smithi*) – 6 at Wilpattu, and seen very close at Blue Magpie Lodge, then Uduwalewa and Yala. This species is richly coloured rufous underneath.

INDIAN BROWN MONGOOSE (*Herpestes fuscus*) - Two at the hotel where we did lunch in the hills en route to Nuwara Eliya, right by the dining area.

STRIPE-NECKED MONGOOSE (*Herpestes viticollis*) - The 2 very large mongoose we saw as we came through Yala section 4 and 5 were this species, none of us saw the dark neck stripe but Nisantha's

photograph showed it clearly. We were puzzled by how big they were, and this is why! A good tick as this one is elusive.

Canidae (dogs)

GOLDEN JACKAL (*Canis aureus*) – Two fine animals seen in Uduwalewa, and also seen at Yala.

Pteropodidae (Fruit-bats)

INDIAN FLYING-FOX (*Pteropus giganteus*) – A thousand + rising from and hanging in the trees in the Kandy botanical garden, and a few around Tissa.

Cercopithecidae (old world monkeys)

TOQUE MACAQUE (*Macaca sinica*) - The guys with the great hairstyle which I tried to get Jun to adopt, they were quite widespread in the lowlands starting from Wilpattu, with about 150 of them in large noisy troupes chasing around at Ubawattakele. [E]

TUFTED GRAY (Hanuman) LANGUR (*Semnopithecus priam thersites*) – About 15 at Wilpattu and 10 at Sigiriya, then some big troupes in and around Bundala with others at Yala. This species is restricted to the drier lowlands.

PURPLE-FACED LEAF MONKEY (Langur) (*Trachypithecus vetulus vetulus*) Some good views up at Sinharaja, where Ben and Regina saw one fall during a failed leap, then 3 of the larger woollier subspecies *monticola* (known as the Bear Monkey) up at Horton Plains, with 2 at Hakgala. [E]

Sciuridae (Squirrels)

INDIAN PALM SQUIRREL (*Funambulus palmarum*) – Ubiquitous, seen every day in hotel grounds, gardens, city parks and rainforests.

LAYARD'S PALM SQUIRREL (*Funambulus layardi*) Just one seen at Sinharaja, by the entrance gate. [E]

DUSKY PALM SQUIRREL (*Funambulus sublineatus*) – Singles in a forest below Horton Plains and at Galway Island NP.

SRI LANKAN (Grizzled) GIANT SQUIRREL (*Ratufa macroura*) – Good looks at these huge tree squirrels on several occasions at Wilpattu, Sigiriya and then very nicely near Blue Magpie Lodge one morning. [E]

Suidae (pigs)

WILD BOAR (*Sus scrofa*) – 6 at Wilpattu, 5 at Kitulgala and 15 in Uduwalewa, always good to see them.

Cervidae (Deer)

MUNTJAC (BARKING DEER) (*Muntiacus muntjak*) – 6 in Wilpattu, and a couple at Ubawattakele. The coughing bark was heard several times.

SPOTTED DEER (*Axis axis*) – Particularly common in Wilpattu (70), Uduwalewa (30) and a few at Yala. Some males sported sizeable racks of antlers.

SAMBAR (*Cervus unicolor*) – Our first was one that dashed across the track in Wilpattu as we were leaving. Sue missed it but happily we saw 6 at Yala and 10 more at Horton Plains.

Bovidae (Cattle)

ASIAN WATER BUFFALO (*Bubalus bubalis*) - 6 at Wilpattu, then quite common at Uduwalewa and Yala with up to 150 at the former site. It was nice to see the wild progenitor of the familiar domestic ones.

Elephantidae (Elephants)

INDIAN ELEPHANT (*Elephas maximus*) –Seen at Uduwalewa, where we had a wonderful encounter with a family group and couple of playful youngsters pushing and shoving each other in the late afternoon. We were very close at one point as we drove by and I could have touched the matriarch, I was surprised at how close they let us get. This is in sharp contrast to India where they often seem positively dangerous (I was quite worried about encountering any whilst on foot at Eaglenest). One male was resident in a patch of bank between two electric fences at the park approach, living on handouts from tourists it seems. Our maximum count here was 26, and we saw singles in Yala and had a great one on the road as we came through Yala sections 4 and 5. Fantastic animals, how anyone can kill them is beyond me, our definition of intelligence/sentience is so skewed to our own norms it's unreal, and seriously needs adjusting.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

The trip total was some **248** species, with **32** of the 34 endemics (one heard only).

Reptiles

Green Vine Snake (*Ahaetulla nasuta*) – Most folks saw this at Sinharaja but I was away looking for Sri Lankan Scaly Thrush.

Stripe-throated Bronzeback Tree-snake (*Dendrelaphis* sp.)- One at head height across the track as we went into see the frogmouths, I almost walked into it, and another next day.

Sri Lankan Rat Snake (*Ptyas mucosa maximus*) – 4 day records of some quite big ones, the one checking the parakeet nests at Debaraweva was especially memorable

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

Common Skink (*Eutropis carinata lankae*) - Seen at Sinharaja.

Green Garden (Forest) Lizard (*Calotes calotes*) – Four day records of this striking green species, starting at Kitulgala. then at Sinharaja.

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*) – Seen at Kitulgala and Sinharaja.

Hump-nosed Lizard (*Lyriocephalus scutatus*) – One at Sinharaja, perhaps unexpectedly fulfilling a promise by Kelvin to show it to us!

Water Monitor (*Varanus salvator salvator*) - One at Wilpattu.

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

Indian Star Tortoise (*Geochelone elegans*) - 2 seen nicely at Wilpattu.

Black Turtle [Hard-shelled Terrapin] (*Melanochelys trijuga*) – One in a pond at Ubawattakele, and one at Sinharaja.

Soft-shelled Terrapin (*Lissemys punctata*) – One at Wilpattu.

Mugger Crocodile [Marsh Crocodile] (*Crocodylus palustris*) – 5 day records, with 4 at Wilpattu, then a series around Tissa and Uduwalewa, where people seem to swim in waters where they live! There was one in the pond of Hibiscus Garden Hotel, kept out by a flimsy fence, I sure wouldn't do this with Salties in Australia!

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