

# Sri Lanka - Endemic Birds

Naturetrek Tour Report

15 - 24 August 2015



Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush



Red-faced Malkoha



Serendib Scops Owl



Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill

Report compiled by Saman Kumara  
Images courtesy of Anthony Breeze



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Tour participants: Saman Kumara (leader) together with six Naturetrek clients

## Highlights

All thirty-three endemic species of birds were seen during the tour. The group enjoyed a village tour amidst heavy rain, and instead of running for shelter, they enjoyed the warm Sri Lankan rain which was fun and a memory to take home. The elusive Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush kept the group running in circles, but eventually showed itself in full view, which was a delight.

### Day 1

**Saturday 15th August**

The ten day 'endemic' birdwatching tour started with a flight from the UK to Sri Lanka.

### Day 2

**Sunday 16th August**

The flight arrived at Colombo Airport at 12.55pm, and an hour later we had left the airport. We headed towards Kithulgala and en route stopped at a field where we saw Black-headed Ibis, Asian Open-bill, Red-wattled Lapwing, White-bellied Drongo and Indian Pond Heron. As we entered the town of Kithulgala we saw Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot, Sri Lanka Swallow and Sri Lanka Green Pigeon.

We reached Kithulgala at 5.30pm and were greeted with a hot cup of tea. We then did some birding around the hotel and along the road till it became dark. We returned to the hotel and met at 7pm for the checklist and a briefing about the next day, after which we had dinner before retiring for the night.

### Day 3

**Monday 17th August**

We started the day with tea at 5.45am, and then set out at 6am for pre-breakfast birding near Kithulgala Police station. We spotted Chestnut-backed Owlet, Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike, Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill and Orange-billed Babbler before returning to the hotel for breakfast.

After breakfast we set out to the Kithulgala Makandawa forest to start the rest of the day's birding. Our journey to the forest started with a boat trip in a narrow dug-out canoe which took us across the Kelaniya River. Once on shore, we hiked through a small village to the forest entrance. After the previous night's rain, the sun had come out and the humidity was very high. We spotted Legge's Flowerpecker in the forest before returning to the hotel. Although the number of birds seen was not high, we were greeted by a Brown-capped Babbler which visited us in the hotel restaurant and instantly cheered us all. The rains came down heavily and we had to wait till 4pm before going out again, this time to another part of Kithulgala which is accessed by a suspension bridge. We had only spotted Layard's Parakeet before the rain started again so we returned to the vehicle.

We headed back to the hotel at 5.30pm and met up for the checklist at 7pm. After dinner, we retired to our rooms to prepare for another early start.

## Day 4

## Tuesday 18th August

We started our day at 5.45am with tea, and then headed out for another pre-breakfast birding session. Today we saw Yellow-fronted Barbet and Black-capped Bulbul.

After breakfast, we set off at 9.45am for Nuwara Eliya. En route we encountered Changeable Hawk Eagle, Crested Serpent Eagle and Shikra. We enjoyed the changing scenery as we headed up the winding roads to the hill country. We reached the hotel at 1.30pm and had lunch.

Our next birding session was at Bomuruella where we spotted Yellow-eared Bulbul, Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon, Dull-blue Flycatcher, Sri Lanka White-eye, and Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher. Our next location was Seethaeliya where we heard Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush call, but since it was another gloomy evening we couldn't spot the well camouflaged bird.

We headed back to the hotel at 6.15pm and met up for the checklist for 7pm. After dinner, we retired to our rooms as we would be leaving for Horton Plains at 5am.

## Day 5

## Wednesday 19th August

After tea at 4.45am, we left for Horton Plains. By 6am we reached the entrance and proceeded to an area outside the National Park to look for the elusive Whistling Thrush. Although it eluded us again, we did spot Sri Lanka Junglefowl, Sri Lanka Scimitar Babbler and Sri Lanka Bush Warbler before entering the park. As we started the cold journey in to the plains we saw Pied Bushchat, Paddyfield Pipit, Hill Swallow and Jerdon's Bushlark.

We reached the hotel at 1.30pm for lunch, and set out again to Victoria Park at 3pm, where we saw many of the birds we had encountered before. It was raining heavily so we decided to go to Bomuruella where we saw Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon. Then we returned to Seethaeliya and this time had a very good sighting of Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush. We got back to the hotel at 6pm and, after the checklist, had dinner and went to bed.

## Day 6

## Thursday 20th August

We started the day with a pre-breakfast birding session at Bomuruella, returning to the hotel for breakfast at 8am. After breakfast we checked out of the hotel and headed to Embilipitiya, en route stopping at the Surrey Estate for some birding. We spotted two adult Brown Wood Owls with two chicks here. Our next stop was in Ella at 1pm for lunch and a little birding from the picturesque garden of the Ella Motel.

After lunch we drove to Embilipitiya and encountered Collared Scops Owl on the hotel premises. The hotel welcomed us with the lighting of the traditional oil lamp, where each guest has to light the lamp. We did the checklist at 7.30pm then met at the restaurant at 8pm for dinner before heading to our rooms.

## Day 7

## Friday 21st August

With a picnic breakfast, we left the Centauria Hotel and headed to Udawalawe National Park for a Jeep Safari. We spotted Sri Lanka Woodshrike, Changeable Hawk Eagle, Lesser Yellownappe, Grey Heron, Intermediate Egret, Darter, Black-winged Kite, White-bellied Sea Eagle, Plum-headed Parakeet, Layard's Parakeet, Asian Koel,

Blue-faced Malkoha, Brown Fish Owl, Indian Roller, Green Bee-eater, Crimson-fronted Barbet, Marshall's Iora, Yellow Wagtail, Jerdon's Bushlark, Jungle Prinia, Plain Prinia, White-browed Fantail, Tawny-bellied Babbler, Yellow-eyed Babbler, Indian Robin and Thick-billed Flowerpecker.

Lunch was taken at a restaurant in Udawalawe, and we left for Singharaja at 2.30pm. We reached Singharaja at 5.30pm and were greeted with a hot cup of tea. After checking in to the hotel we did a little birding around the hotel before meeting up for the checklist at 7pm and concluded the day with dinner.

## Day 8

## Saturday 22nd August

After an early breakfast, we left for the Singharaja Rainforest with a picnic lunch. On our way we encountered Sri Lanka Hill Myna, Legge's Flowerpecker and White-faced Starling. Once inside the Singharaja Rainforest we spotted Ashy-headed Laughingthrush, Red-faced Malkoha, Crimson-backed Flameback, Malabar Trojan, Sri Lanka Frogmouth and Sri Lanka Blue Magpie. Our next target was Serendib Scops Owl which we encountered at the Kethalpatha area. By the end of the day we had seen 32 out of the 33 endemic bird species of Sri Lanka.

We returned to the hotel at 6.30pm, and met for the checklist at 7pm which was followed by dinner.

## Day 9

## Sunday 23rd August

After having tea at 5.30am, we headed out to the Kethalpatha area once again and saw our final endemic, Green-billed Coucal, to complete the 33. Having seen all the endemic species, there was a request to see Sri Lanka Scimitar Babbler again, so we went to the rainforest area where we saw it once more. We then returned to the hotel at 8.30am for breakfast.

After breakfast we had some free time and went on a tour of Singharaja to see the village and its people. Before long the rain came down but we continued our walk in the rain and enjoy the sightseeing. We got back to the hotel for lunch before checking out.

We reached our final hotel at 5pm and did a little birding in the hotel garden. Dinner was at 8pm after which we retired to our rooms.

## Day 10

## Monday 24th August

We did some pre-breakfast birding in the hotel garden where we saw Common Sandpiper and many other birds. After breakfast, we checked out and went to the airport for our flight back to the UK to end another Naturetrek adventure.

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## Species Lists

Birds (Bold text is endemic or near endemic)

1	<b>Sri Lanka Spurfowl</b>	<i>Galloperdix bicalcarata</i>
2	<b>Sri Lanka Junglefowl</b>	<i>Gallus lafayetii</i>
3	Indian Peafowl	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>
4	Painted Stork	<i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>
5	Asian Openbill	<i>Anastomus oscitans</i>
6	Woolly-necked Stork	<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>
7	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
8	Indian Pond Heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>
9	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
10	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
11	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
12	Great Egret	<i>Casmerodius albus</i>
13	Intermediate Egret	<i>Mesophoyx intermedia</i>
14	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
15	Spot-billed Pelican	<i>Pelecanus philippensis</i>
16	Little Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax niger</i>
17	Indian Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax fuscicollis</i>
18	Darter	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>
19	Black-winged Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>
20	Brahminy Kite	<i>Haliastur indus</i>
21	White-bellied Sea Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>
22	Gray-headed Fish Eagle	<i>Lcthyophaga ichthyaetus</i>
23	Shikra	<i>Accipiter badius</i>
24	Crested Honey Buzzard	<i>Pernis ptilorhynchus</i>
25	Crested Serpent Eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>
26	Black Eagle	<i>Lctinaetus malayensis</i>
27	Changeable Hawk Eagle	<i>Spizaetus cirrhatus</i>
28	White-breasted Waterhen	<i>Amauromis phoenicurus</i>
29	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
30	Yellow-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus malabaricus</i>
31	Red-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>
32	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
33	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
34	Rock Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>
35	<b>Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon</b>	<i>Columba torringtoniae</i>
36	Spotted Dove	<i>Stigmatopelia chinensis</i>
37	Emerald Dove	<i>Chalcophaps indica</i>
38	Sri Lanka Green Pigeon	<i>Treron pompadora</i>
39	Green Imperial Pigeon	<i>Ducula aenea</i>
40	<b>Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot</b>	<i>Loriculus beryllinus</i>
41	Alexandrine Parakeet	<i>Psittacula eupatria</i>
42	Rose-ringed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>

43	Plum-headed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula cyanocephala</i>
44	<b>Layard's Parakeet</b>	<i>Psittacula calthropae</i>
45	Asian Koel	<i>Endynamys scolopacerus</i>
46	Blue-faced Malkoha	<i>Rhopodytes viridirostris</i>
47	<b>Red-faced Malkoha</b>	<i>Phaenicophaeus pyrrhocephalus</i>
48	Greater Coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>
49	<b>Green-billed Coucal</b>	<i>Centropus chlororhynchos</i>
50	Sri Lanka Frogmouth	<i>Batrachostomus moniliger</i>
51	<b>Serendib Scops Owl</b>	<i>Otus thilohoffmanni</i>
52	Collared Scops Owl	<i>Otus bakamoena</i>
53	<b>Chestnut-backed Owlet</b>	<i>Glaucidium castanotum</i>
54	Brown Wood Owl	<i>Strix leptogrammica</i>
55	Indian Swiftlet	<i>Collocalia unicolor</i>
56	Asian Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus balasiensis</i>
57	Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>
58	Crested Treeswift	<i>Hemiprocne coronata</i>
59	Indian Roller	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>
60	Green Bee-eater	<i>Merops orientalis</i>
61	Chestnut-headed Bee-eater	<i>Merops leschenaulti</i>
62	Stork-billed Kingfisher	<i>Pelargopsis capensis</i>
63	White-throated Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>
64	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
65	Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>
66	Malabar Trogon	<i>Harpactes fasciatus</i>
67	Brown-headed Barbet	<i>Megalaima zeylanica</i>
68	<b>Yellow-fronted Barbet</b>	<i>Megalaima flavifrons</i>
69	<b>Crimson-fronted Barbet</b>	<i>Megalaima rubricapillus</i>
70	Coppersmith Barbet	<i>Megalaima haemacephala</i>
71	<b>Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill</b>	<i>Ocyrceros gingalensis</i>
72	Malabar Pied Hornbill	<i>Anthracoceros coronatus</i>
73	Lesser Yellownape	<i>Picus chlorophus</i>
74	Black-rumped Flameback	<i>Dinopium benghalense</i>
75	Crimson-backed Flameback	<i>Chrysocolaptes stricklandi</i>
76	Sri Lanka Woodshrike	<i>Tephradornis affinis</i>
77	Orange Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus flammeus</i>
78	Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike	<i>Hemipus picatus</i>
79	Common Iora	<i>Aegithina tiphia</i>
80	Marshall's Iora	<i>Aegithina nigrolutea</i>
81	Jerdon's Leafbird	<i>Chloropsis jerdoni</i>
82	Black-hooded Oriole	<i>Oriolus xanthornus</i>
83	<b>Sri Lanka Blue Magpie</b>	<i>Urocissa ornata</i>
84	House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>
85	Large-billed Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>
86	Hill Swallow	<i>Hirundo domicola</i>
87	Sri Lanka Swallow	<i>Cecropis hyperythra</i>
88	White-bellied Drongo	<i>Dicrurus caerulescens</i>
89	Sri Lanka Drongo	<i>Dicrurus lophorhinus</i>

90	Paddyfield Pipit	<i>Anthus rufulus</i>
91	Jerdon's Bushlark	<i>Mirafra affinis</i>
92	Oriental Skylark	<i>Alanda gulgula</i>
93	Black-capped Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus melanicterus</i>
94	Red-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>
95	<b>Yellow-eared Bulbul</b>	<i>Pycnonotus penicillatus</i>
96	White-browed Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus luteolus</i>
97	Yellow-browed Bulbul	<i>Acritillas indica</i>
98	Black Bulbul	<i>Hypsipetes leucocephalus</i>
99	Jungle Prinia	<i>Prinia sylvatica</i>
100	Ashy Prinia	<i>Prinia socialis</i>
101	Plain Prinia	<i>Prinia inornata</i>
102	Common Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>
103	<b>Sri Lanka Bush Warbler</b>	<i>Bradypterus palliseri</i>
104	White-browed Fantail	<i>Rhipidura aureola</i>
105	Black-naped Monarch	<i>Hypothymis azurea</i>
106	<b>Brown-capped Babbler</b>	<i>Pellorneum fuscocapillus</i>
107	<b>Sri Lanka Scimitar Babbler</b>	<i>Pomatorhinus melanurus</i>
108	Dark-fronted Babbler	<i>Rhopocichla atriceps</i>
109	Tawny-bellied Babbler	<i>Dumetia hyperythra</i>
110	Yellow-eyed Babbler	<i>Chrysomma sinense</i>
111	<b>Orange-billed Babbler</b>	<i>Turdoides rufescens</i>
112	Yellow-billed Babbler	<i>Turdoides affinis</i>
113	<b>Ashy-headed Laughingthrush</b>	<i>Garrulax cinereifrons</i>
114	<b>Sri Lanka Hill Myna</b>	<i>Gracula ptilogenys</i>
115	Southern Hill Myna	<i>Gracula indica</i>
116	Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>
117	<b>White-faced Starling</b>	<i>Sturnornis albofrontatus</i>
118	<b>Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush</b>	<i>Myophonus blighi</i>
119	<b>Spot-winged Thrush</b>	<i>Zootera spiloptera</i>
120	<b>Sri Lanka Thrush</b>	<i>Zootera imbricata</i>
121	Indian Blackbird	<i>Turdus simillimus</i>
122	Oriental Magpie Robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>
123	Indian Robin	<i>Copsychus fulicatus</i>
124	Pied Bushchat	<i>Saxicola caprata</i>
125	<b>Dull-blue Flycatcher</b>	<i>Eumyias sordidus</i>
126	Gray-headed Canary Flycatcher	<i>Culicicapa ceylonensis</i>
127	Thick-billed Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum agile</i>
128	<b>Legge's Flowerpecker</b>	<i>Dicaeum vincens</i>
129	Pale-billed Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum erythrorhynchos</i>
130	Purple-rumped Sunbird	<i>Leptocoma zeylonica</i>
131	Purple Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris asiaticus</i>
132	Loten's Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris lotenius</i>
133	Oriental White-eye	<i>Zosterops palpebrosus</i>
134	<b>Sri Lanka White-eye</b>	<i>Zosterops ceylonensis</i>
135	Velvet-fronted Nuthatch	<i>Sitta frontalis</i>
136	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>

137	Streaked Weaver	<i>Ploceus manyar</i>
138	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
139	White-rumped Munia	<i>Lonchura striata</i>
140	Scaly-breasted Munia	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>
141	Black-headed Munia	<i>Lonchura malacca</i>

## Mammals

	<b>Mammals</b>	<b>Scientific name</b>
1	Toque Macaque	<i>Macaca sinica</i>
2	Grey Langur	<i>Presbytis entellus</i>
3	Purple-faced Leaf Monkey	<i>Presbytis vetulus</i>
4	Ruddy Mongoose	<i>Herpestes smithii</i>
5	Indian Elephant	<i>Elephas maximus</i>
6	Spotted Deer (Chital)	<i>Cervus axis</i>
7	Sambar	<i>Cervus unicolor</i>
8	Indian Palm Squirrel	<i>Funambulus palmarum</i>
9	Grizzled Giant Squirrel	<i>Ratufa macroura</i>
10	Dusky Squirrel	<i>Funambulus sublineatus</i>
11	Indian Hare	<i>Lepus nigricollis</i>
12	Indian Flying Fox	<i>Pteropus gigantea</i>
13	Lesser False Vampire Bat	<i>Megaderma spasma</i>
14	Layard's Squirrel	<i>Funambulus layardi</i>

## Amphibians & Reptiles

	<b>Amphibians &amp; Reptiles</b>	<b>Scientific Name</b>
1	Water Monitor	<i>Varanus salvator</i>
2	Brown-back Tree Snake	<i>Boiga irregularis</i>
3	Keel-back Snake	<i>Xenochrophis asperrimus</i>
4	Kangaroo Lizard	<i>Otocryptis weigmanni</i>
5	Black-cheeked Lizard	<i>Calotes nigrilabris</i>
6	Rhino-horn Lizard	<i>Ceratophora stoddartii</i>
7	Green Garden Lizard	<i>Calotes calotes</i>
8	Common Garden Lizard	<i>Calotes versicolor</i>

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