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VICTOR EMANUEL NATURE TOURS



**The list of birds, mammals and other wildlife
recorded on the VENT tour of Sri Lanka**



compiled by

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It doesn't happen very often, but I would happily have turned around and done it all again at the end of this truly enjoyable tour. And I wouldn't have changed any of it! Every aspect of our tour was not only lots of fun, but very birdy as well. Sri Lanka really is the Pearl of the East—magical scenery, wonderfully friendly people, superb food and, not least, magnificent birds and wild places combined to make this a very special birding trip.

The birding started almost immediately; just outside our hotel on the river we found the threatened Spot-billed Pelican to be common. One of the joys of Sri Lanka is the sheer abundance of birds almost everywhere—from the cities to the rice paddies and, of course, in the magnificent national parks. As we travelled through the island, the opportunities for distractions along the way abounded, so even our long drive to Yala on the first day of our tour seemed to pass quickly, as a brief pit stop turned into an excellent birding session and a great start to our list! In the gardens of a small guesthouse in an obscure village, we took a break from the bus and soon found Sri Lanka Hanging-Parrot, Rose-ringed Parakeet, Brown-headed Barbet, Black-hooded Oriole, Orange Minivet, the remarkable Loten's Sunbird, the endemic Legge's Flowerpecker, and nesting White-rumped Munias. Another birding stop saw us admiring a tree full of Southern Hill Mynas and White-bellied Drongos. This was all well before we had reached our home for the next four days, the legendary Yala National Park.

Four days in the southeastern dry zone allowed us to fully appreciate the wonderful diversity and incredible density of the birdlife of these woodlands, grasslands, and wetlands. The salt pans and lagoons of Bundala offer a rare opportunity in Asia—a full-on spectacle of a teeming myriad of waterbirds and waders. The coastline of southeastern Sri Lanka is truly a birding paradise. We saw evidence of the devastating effects of the recent tsunami, but there is no doubt that the natural world has totally recovered from any negative impacts. Yala National Park is surely one of the most exciting reserves in Asia, and two days of exploration by jeep was a fabulous experience. Our very skilled drivers assisted us in achieving our goal of finding some of the more shy and retiring birds we were looking for. An added bonus in Yala is the mammal spectacle, which is often compared to that of the African plains, with large congregations of Asian elephant, spotted deer, and grey langur. Strutting peacocks and open-gaped crocodiles completed the picture. In the evenings we returned to our very pleasant lodge to enjoy drinks over the bird list, and strolls through the woodlands to our cabins, in company with lots of great birds! There is nothing better than living on-site for a few days.

Our next destination was the Sinharaja rainforest in the wet zone of the southwest. These precious forests are home to many of our main targets in Sri Lanka—those wonderful endemics. Sure enough, on our first foray into the forest, we immediately encountered a very exciting mixed flock containing not only two Red-faced Malkohas (a personal favorite), but a very close White-faced Starling, one of the most difficult to find of the Sri Lankan endemics. That same evening we went in search of the recently discovered Serendib Scops-Owl. Our hopes were high, but rapidly faded as a calling bird just refused to respond, or so we thought. Just as we were about to give up hope, the bird called again, a little bit closer. Then, closer again—and then there it was, in all its glory in the middle of the spotlight beam! Serendipitous indeed! We watched this little gem for about half an hour, admiring every subtle plumage marking and savoring the company of a bird that was only discovered in 2002, and a first for a VENT tour.

From the warm, humid forests we ascended to the central mountain range and the cool respite of the highland cloud forests. Based at the wonderfully retro-colonial and aptly named Grand Hotel, we stepped out at the crack of dawn to the cloud forests and montane grasslands of Horton Plains in search of the remarkable montane endemics. In howling wind and intermittent rain, our persistence was again rewarded with great views of the scarce Sri Lanka Wood-Pigeon, the very attractive Yellow-eared Bulbul, and, very briefly, a Sri Lanka Whistling-Thrush, amongst others. Unaccountably, the usually confiding

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Dusky Blue Flycatcher, now forever to be known as Horrible Blue Flycatcher, was nowhere to be found. He redeemed himself as soon as the sun appeared, well after lunch, when he appeared as though nothing had happened and cavorted in the treetops, much to our delight!

En route to Kandy and Sigiriya, a roadside stop at a large tank (reservoir) had us admiring the rather showy Sri Lanka Swallows, with their reddish chestnut underparts. At Kandy we visited the world-famous Botanic Gardens, a super birding spot with large congregations of Alexandrine Parakeets and a number of want-birds such as Sri Lanka Small Barbet (what a super bird!), Common Hawk-Cuckoo, and Tickell's Blue Flycatcher. Sigiriya is about history and birding. Located at the geographic center of the island, the Lion Rock Fortress of Sigiriya dates from AD 477 and is surrounded by bird-rich woodlands and ancient tanks. Just outside our hotel we found gorgeous Orange-headed Thrushes and Jerdon's Nightjars. A stroll in the ruins of the water gardens of the rock in company with a pair of patrolling resident Shaheen (Peregrine) Falcons was a wonderful conclusion to our birding in Serendib—a not so unexpected and very pleasant surprise!

In total we saw a remarkable 32 of 33 endemic bird species, plus a number of endemic subspecies and near-endemic species, not to mention a whole suite of wonderful Asian (and more widespread) birds, as well as many enchanting mammals, reptiles, and butterflies. Out of a possible country list of approximately 340 bird species, we saw 245—well over 70% in two weeks! But any tour is about far more than numbers, and there were so many highlights it is hard to single out just a few. How about that European Bee-eater at Yala, only seen in Sri Lanka every three or four years; five species of stork in the first four days; our ultimately successful stalking of Sri Lanka Spurfowl, seen so well at the apogee of its trajectory; those feeding Sri Lanka Blue Magpies at Sinharaja; the less than salubrious setting in which we watched a very close Slaty-legged Rail strutting the platform to make sure we could really admire those legs; and, best of all, close, long views of a simply superb Serendib Scops-Owl. All the nightbirds were a real treat this year; we had very special looks at Chestnut-backed Owlet, Indian Scops-Owl, Brown Fish-Owl, and Jerdon's Nightjar amongst others. Could you ever tire of seeing an Indian Pitta, the comb of a Sri Lanka Junglefowl, or a male Asian Paradise-Flycatcher in flight? There were moments of great excitement—our first mixed flock, with eye level looks at Red-faced Malkoha and the normally shy and retiring White-faced Starling, as soon as we entered Sinharaja rainforest, and of frustration—I will never forgive that Horrible Blue Flycatcher!

The backdrop to all this is, of course, Sri Lanka itself, and it is difficult for the birder not to be influenced by the thread of this nation's long and proud history and culture which is evident everywhere. As we birded around Tissa, for example, we may not have been acutely aware of the importance of this history as we watched, enchanted, the spectacle of the waterbirds of the Tissawewa Tank. These irrigation reservoirs are over two thousand years old, and it is thanks to the Sri Lankans' willingness to preserve their culture and live in harmony with wildlife that we enjoyed the privilege of experiencing this genuinely extraordinary place. The same could be said of places like Sigiriya and Kitulgala. Even as people go about their business, be it agriculture, tourism, or recreation, the birdlife and other wildlife abounds. There really can't be too many places like this in the world!

Many thanks go to Perry, Senarath and Taya, and to Sunil and Indika for their cheerful and efficient assistance. A very warm thank you to you all for your exceptionally enjoyable company! It is a very special privilege to lead birding tours to this country that I feel such affection for, and to catch up with old friends and to make wonderful new friends makes me feel very lucky indeed!

Do check out Romney's terrific website:
www.the-bathursts.net/gallery/sri_lanka/index.html

Susan Myers

Daily Itinerary

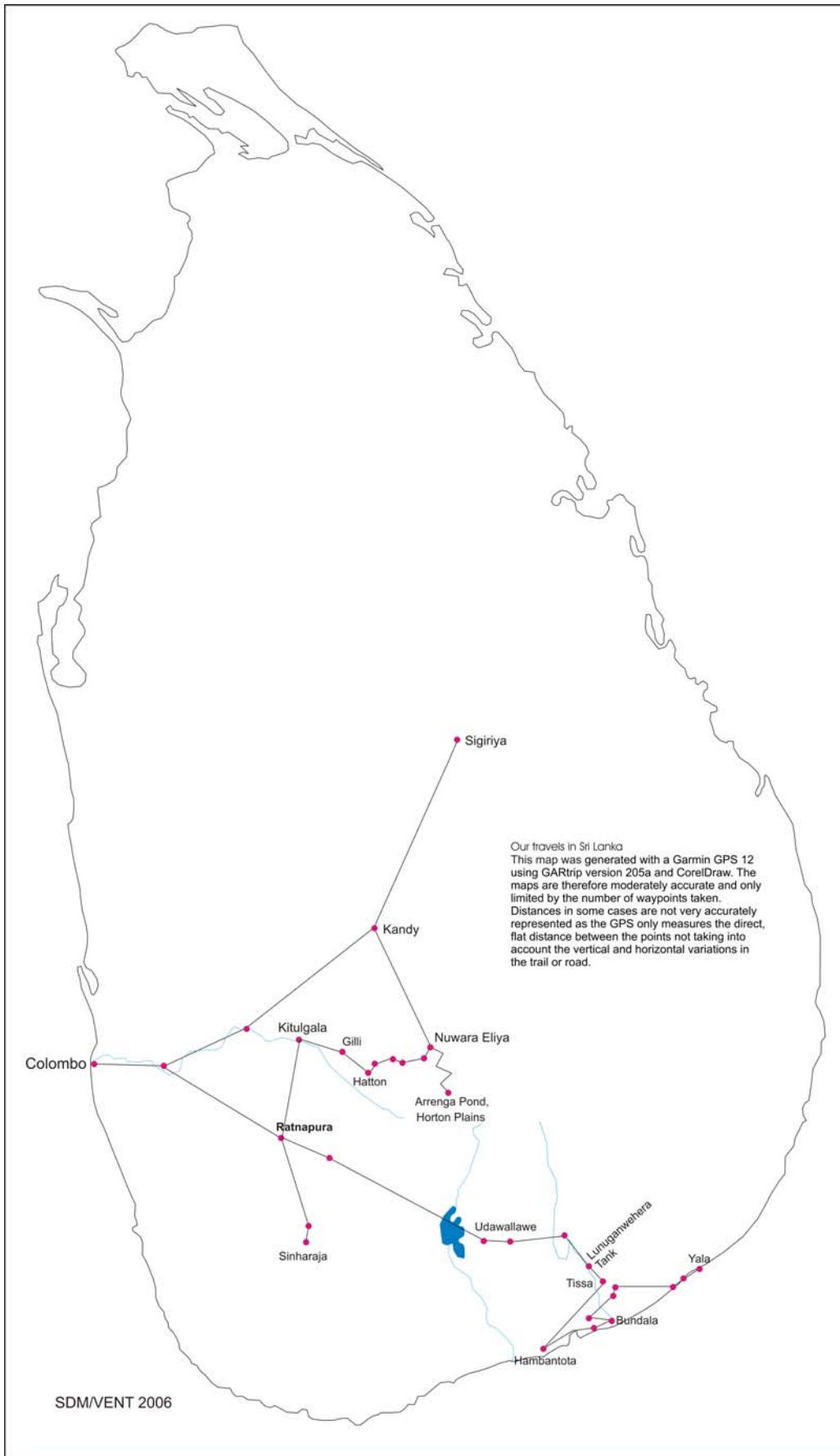
- 29 December 2006 An early morning departure for the long drive to the lovely Yala Village Hotel on the far south east coast. Our birding began with a rest stop at a guesthouse in the small town of Avissawella. Night: Yala Safari Hotel.
- 30 December We spent the morning birding from jeeps within Bundala National Park. Here amidst a mosaic of scrub jungle and coastal lagoons we couldn't believe the numbers of birds. Literally tens and probably hundreds of thousands of egrets, ibis, shorebirds and great swirling masses of Rosy Starlings put on an unforgettable show. We then spent a great afternoon at Debrawewa Tank in Tissa.
- 31 December A long and productive morning in the huge Yala National Park produced multitudes of displaying peacocks; fabulous studies of resplendent Sri Lankan Junglefowl; amazing close-up views of a Brown Fish-Owl and the lovely pastel-coloured Orange-breasted Green Pigeon to mention but a few.
- 1 January Another morning in Yala was as exciting as the previous day with lots of new birds and plenty of photographic opportunities.
- 2 January The morning was spent driving and birding along the south coast, then inland to the town of Embilipitiya. In the afternoon we visited Udawallawa National Park with some very productive birding in open grasslands and woodlands.
- 3 January We commenced the long but nevertheless fascinating drive to Ratnapura in the humid wet zone. At Sinharaja National Park, the largest and most important remnant of Sri Lanka's diverse lowland tropical forests, we enjoyed a great birding show that produced memorable views of the striking Red-faced Malkoha and the truly gorgeous Sri Lanka Blue Magpie. Night: Blue Magpie Inn.
- 4 January A full day in Sinharaja with more fabulous results!
- 5 January A fascinating and very attractive drive as we headed for the hills, stopping birding, a tea break and to admire the montane scenery. Night: Grand Hotel, Nuwara Eliya.
- 6 January An early rise for the long drive to Horton Plains National Park. Yet another wonderfully successful day's birding, albeit dodging cloud and intermittent rain, with exceptional views of the invariably elusive Sri Lanka Wood-Pigeon, the noisy and impressive Bear Leaf-Monkey, numerous Sri Lanka Scimitar Babblers, a single shy Kashmir Flycatcher, to mention but a few.
- 7 January A morning birding in the Victoria Botanical Gardens in Nuwara Eliya was remarkably successful and included fine looks at Slaty-legged Rail and an

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elusive Pied Thrush.

In the afternoon we visited the lovely Kandy Botanic Gardens where we caught up with some more fabulous birds. The huge flocks of parakeets are a feature here.

- 8 January Another long and fascinating drive through rural areas of spice gardens and rubber plantations, this time to Sigiriya, the home of the ancient Lion Rock Fortress in the north central part of the island.
- 9 January After birding and strolling in the ruins of the ancient water garden of Sigiriya Lion Rock Fortress we headed back to Colombo. A farewell dinner of delicious Sri Lankan food and Australian wine!
- 10 January Depart Sri Lanka.



Annotated List of Birds

Bold = endemic to Sri Lanka, NE = near endemic, ES = endemic subspecies

NON-PASSERINES

1. Little Grebe *Podiceps ruficollis*
A rather localized resident. We observed six on a small pond at Debra Wewa tank, one near Yala.
2. Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*
Many seen on the coastal lagoons of Bundala National Park and at Debra Wewa tank.
3. Indian Shag *Phalacrocorax fuscicollis*
Common this year on the rich coastal lagoons of Bundala National Park and around Yala and Tissa.
4. Little Cormorant *Phalacrocorax niger*
A widespread and locally very common resident. We recorded this species daily, including breeding colonies on Debra Wewa tank and many birds attending nests within the Bundala National Park.
5. Spot-billed Pelican *Pelecanus philippensis*
Despite its status as a globally threatened species we found this species common in the wetlands of the south eastern dry zone, including large numbers in Bundala and Yala National Parks. We also observed them on the river behind our hotel in Colombo.
6. Asian Darter *Anhinga melanogaster*
Another globally (Near) Threatened species, we found it present in good numbers in the wetlands of the south eastern dry zone: 4 within the coastal lagoons of Bundala National Park; many on the Debra Wewa tank near Tissa and Yala National Park.
7. Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*
Widespread and generally common wherever wetland habitats, including wet rice-fields, are present.
8. Western Reef Egret *Egretta gularis*
One on the beachfront at Bundala.
9. Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*
Widespread and generally common resident in the wetlands of the dry south east.
10. Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*
Widespread and generally common resident in the wetlands of the dry south east but less numerous than Grey Heron.
11. Great Egret *Egretta alba*
Widespread and generally common resident in the wetlands of the dry south east but less numerous than Grey Heron. Absent from the forested hilly area around Kitulgala and Sinharaja.

12. Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia*
Observed almost daily in lower numbers in similar habitat to the other egrets.
13. Cattle Egret *Bulbulcus ibis*
Ubiquitous; widespread resident, common and locally abundant with thousands on the coastal lagoons of Bundala National Park and wetlands of the south eastern dry zone.
14. Indian Pond Heron *Ardeola grayii*
Widespread and common resident in all wetland habitats, including wet rice-fields.
15. Little Heron *Butorides striatus*
One adult in the coastal swamps of Bundala National Park and one on the Tissa Wewa Tank.
16. Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*
A rather local, lowland resident. We saw one or two in Bundala National Park and many on the Debra and Tissa Wewa tanks.
17. Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis*
Typically a skulking species, however, we had great views of up to eight birds in the coastal lagoons of Bundala National Park and on the Debra and Tissa Wewa tanks near Tissa.
18. Black Bittern *Ixobrychus flavicollis*
Super views of four of these handsome but elusive birds at the Tissa Wewa Tank near Tissa.
19. Painted Stork *Mycteria leucocephala*
Two en route to Yala; a total of 12 on the coastal lagoons of Bundala National Park; very common tanks around Tissa and in Yala National Park. This is one of the few strongholds of this globally threatened species.
20. Asian Openbill *Anastomus oscitans*
Common in the wetlands of the south eastern dry zone: on the coastal lagoons of Bundala National Park; the tanks around Tissa; in Yala National Park and Uda Walawe National Park. Also quite common on the tanks in the Sigiriya area.
21. Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus*
Super looks at six on one day and two on another in Yala National Park. One seen near Sigiriya.
22. Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*
Two seen distantly but quite well in the brackish coastal waters of Yala National Park. This is a globally threatened species with fewer than 400 individuals in all of southern Asia.
23. Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilus javanicus*
Although this species has a relatively wide range in southern Asia it is declining and is a considered a globally threatened species. We enjoyed good views of three adults on one day and a single bird on another in Yala National Park.
24. Black-headed Ibis *Threskiornis melanocephalus*
Common in the wetlands of the south eastern dry zone where we saw it in the coastal lagoons of Bundala National Park, Yala National Park and on the tanks. A generally common resident in the lowlands.

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25. Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*
A moderately common resident in the wetlands of the south east's dry zone. We saw them in Bundala National Park and Yala National Park.
26. Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus*
Four birds were seen distantly on a lagoon in Bundala National Park.
27. Lesser Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna javanica*
Many seen daily in the wetlands of the south eastern dry zone.
28. Garganey *Anas querquedula*
More than 50 in the coastal lagoons of Bundala National Park; common on the Debra and Tissa Wewa tanks near Tissa; several in wetlands *en route* between Bundala and Embilipitiya
29. Oriental Honey-Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*
One seen en route to Yala near Udawallawa; one or two in the Nuwara Eliya area.
30. Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus*
A single adult was seen perched in Udawallawa National Park as we traveled to Yala; we then saw a total of four on our afternoon safari in Udawallawa.
31. Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus*
A handsome and generally common resident. We recorded them throughout the dry south east at the tanks, in Bundala National Park and in Yala National Park.
32. White-bellied Sea-Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster*
Up to four daily in Bundala and Yala National Parks and around the tanks of the south east.
33. Grey-headed Fish-Eagle *Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus*
Brief looks at two adults of this increasingly uncommon species within the coastal lagoons of Bundala National Park and one excellent scope view at Udawallawa. A globally Near Threatened species.
34. Crested Serpent-Eagle *Spilornis cheela spilogaster* ES
This widespread resident was seen in ones and twos most days in and around Bundala and Yala national parks.
35. Western Marsh Harrier *Circus approximans*
One in Yala National Park.
36. Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*
Fabulous looks at a spectacular male and female in flight over the grasslands of Udawallawa National Park.
37. Shikra *Accipiter badius*
One on the drive to Yala; two in Bundala National Park and two between Yala and Embilipitiya, including one perched on a wire outside our hotel which then swooped down to our feet to catch a lizard.
38. Besra *Accipiter virgatus*
Great looks at this scarce resident at Bundala National Park.

39. Himalayan Buzzard *Buteo burmanicus*
A single bird seen near Kandy.
40. Black Eagle *Ictinaetus malayensis*
Some spectacular looks at this impressive raptor, including two en route to Yala and one near Sinharaja.
41. Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus*
Another spectacular bird put on a real show for us as it soared over the Udawalla grasslands right over our jeep.
42. Crested Hawk-Eagle *Spizaetus cirrhatus* NE
Some fabulous views of the very distinctive, long crested taxon now recognized by Rasmussen as a distinct species (cf. Changeable Hawk Eagle *C. limnaeetus*). In addition this is an endemic subspecies *ceylonensis* that exhibits differences in morphology and vocalizations to the South Indian nominate subspecies. This year we saw this bird at Udawallawa, Yala and around the tanks.
43. Eurasian Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*
One in Bundala National Park.
44. **Sri Lanka Spurfowl** *Galloperdix bicalcarata*
Definitely a trip highlight! Super views for all as the bird flew over the road at Sinharaja National Park in response to playback. It was with considerable forethought and insight that I positioned you all at the apogee of the trajectory to allow for optimal views (thanks Chris)! Great bird and one of the most difficult of the Sri Lanka endemics.
45. **Sri Lanka Junglefowl** *Gallus lafayettii*
Moderately common in the dry south east, with many individuals providing close good looks at this handsome endemic. Also seen or heard most days around Sinharaja and Sigiriya.
46. Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus*
Common in the lowlands of the south eastern 'dry zone': Bundala National Park and neighbouring areas; Yala National Park and *en route* between Bundala and Embilipitiya.
47. Slaty-legged Crake *Rallina eurizonoides*
Superb views of one bird in very dense vegetation in the Victoria Botanical Gardens at Nuwara Eliya. This is a very shy and scarce albeit widespread species; apparently a regular winter visitor to the hills of Sri Lanka.
48. White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus*
Widespread and locally common; this common resident was seen almost daily.
49. Ruddy-breasted Crake *Porzana fusca*
One bird was seen briefly but well in a roadside ditch at Tissawewa tank.
50. Purple Swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio*
A common resident recorded daily throughout the wetlands of the south-eastern dry zone.
51. Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*
This resident species was recorded at daily throughout the wetlands of the south eastern dry zone.

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52. Pheasant-tailed Jacana *Hydrophasianus chirurgus*
A wonderfully common resident, we enjoyed close looks at this gorgeous bird in full breeding plumage on a daily basis in the south east.
53. Greater Painted-Snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*
Outstanding views again this year of a stunning female in wetlands just outside the entrance to Bundala National Park.
54. Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*
Seen daily throughout the wetlands of the south eastern dry zone where common.
55. Great Thick-knee *Esacus recurvirostris*
This wonderful resident bird was notably common within Bundala and Yala national parks.
56. Small Pratincole *Glareola lactea*
We saw two of this resident species in Bundala National Park.
57. Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*
Very common in Bundala National Park in the south-east.
58. Grey Plover (Black-bellied Plover) *Pluvialis squatarola*
Three on a saline lake in Bundala National Park.
59. Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*
One in Bundala National Park. An uncommon winter visitor.
60. Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*
Seen in low numbers at the margin of wetlands in the south eastern dry zone.
61. Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*
Several seen on most days in the wetlands of the south eastern dry zone.
62. Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*
Large numbers on saline coastal lakes within and close to Bundala National Park; also within Yala National Park..
63. Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*
Large numbers on saline coastal lakes within and close to Bundala National Park.
64. Yellow-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus malabaricus* NE
This attractive Indian sub-continent endemic was notably common in the south east.
65. Red-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus*
Widespread and moderately common throughout the south east dry zone; also around Sigiriya.
66. Pintail Snipe *Gallinago stenura*
Several seen well in Bundala National Park and one at Tissawewa tank.
67. 'Western' Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*
A few recorded in the wetlands of the south eastern dry zone: 2 in Bundala and a total of 5 in Yala.

NOTE: Apparently well differentiated from 'Eastern' Black-tailed Godwit *L. (limosa) melanuroides* in terms of plumage, degree of sexual dimorphism and size. Proposed as a separate species by Rasmussen (2005).

68. Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*
One recorded in the Tissa area.
69. Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*
Common, seen daily in the wetlands of the south eastern dry zone.
70. Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*
Common, seen daily in the wetlands of the south eastern dry zone.
71. Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularis*
Common, seen daily in the wetlands of the south eastern dry zone.
72. Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*
One seen well in Bundala National Park; one en route to Nuwara Eliya.
73. Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*
Common, seen daily in the wetlands of the south eastern dry zone.
74. Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*
Widespread, low numbers (2-10) seen almost daily in the dry zone.
75. Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*
Quite common in the salt-ponds within Bundala National Park; a total of 2 recorded in Yala National Park.
76. Sanderling *Calidris alba*
One in Bundala National Park.
77. Little Stint *Calidris minuta*
Common throughout the wetlands of the south eastern dry zone.
78. Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*
One expertly spotted by Bernie in the salt-pans at Bundala National Park.
79. Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*
Several thousand at the Bundala salt-ponds and neighbouring wetlands.
80. Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*
Just one of this highly sought after birds in the midst of other shorebirds at Bundala salt-ponds.
81. Brown-headed Gull *Larus brunnicephalus*
Two at Bundala salt-ponds; two Embilipitiya.
82. Gull-billed Tern *Sterna nilotica*
Widespread and present in low numbers throughout the wetlands of the south eastern dry zone.

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83. Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*
Quite common in Bundala and surrounding wetlands of the south eastern dry zone.
84. Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*
A total of three of this scarce species were seen very well in a mixed flock of terns on the salt-pans of Bundala National Park.
85. Great Crested Tern *Sterna bergii*
Many seen in Bundala National Park.
86. Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*
Very common in Bundala and Yala national parks.
87. Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*
Common throughout the wetlands of the south eastern dry zone and Sigiriya especially over fresh-water tanks.
88. White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*
A number seen in Bundala National Park.
89. Feral Rock Pigeon *Columba livia*
Widespread and a generally ubiquitous commensal of man.
90. **Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon** *Columba torringtonii*
Outstanding views of six of these subtly handsome endemics as they fed at a fruiting trees and flew within the montane forest at the edge of Horton Plains.
91. Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis ceylonensis* ES
Widespread, seen daily.
92. Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*
Just two seen in Yala National Park.
93. Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps indica robinsoni* ES
One or two seen daily at Sinharaja.
94. Orange-breasted Green Pigeon *Treron bicincta leggei* ES
This handsome bird was seen very well in good numbers daily in woodlands in Bundala and Yala and surrounds.
95. **Sri Lanka Green Pigeon** *Treron pompadora*
We saw one female bird poorly near our accommodation at Sinharaja but fortunately found a super flock of 8 the following day in a tea plantation just outside the park.
96. Green Imperial Pigeon *Ducula aenea*
Common and widespread, seen almost daily.
97. **Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot** *Loriculus beryllinus*
Three birds were seen briefly at our first birding spot Avissawella, we then saw up to 6 of this terrific bird very well daily at Sinharaja.

98. Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria*
Three perched in Udawallawa; two on the outskirts of Sinharaja National Park; and very common in Kandy Botanic Gardens and around Sigiriya.
99. Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*
Very common and seen daily in the dry south east and Sigiriya.
100. Plum-headed Parakeet *Psittacula cyanocephala*
Just two seen in Udawallawa National Park.
101. **Layard's Parakeet** *Psittacula calthropae*
Great views of this pretty endemic at Sinharaja on a number of occasions.
102. Pied Cuckoo *Clamator jacobinus*
Four recorded in Bundala National Park; four in Udawallawa National Park. A terrific bird!
103. Common Hawk Cuckoo *Cuculus varius*
One seen and heard very well in the Kandy Botanic Gardens.
104. Banded Bay Cuckoo *Cacomantis sonneratii*
Heard a number of times at Kitulgala with only one seen.
105. Grey-bellied Cuckoo *Cacomantis passerinus*
Up to three seen daily in the south east dry zone.
106. Asian Koel *Eudynamys scolopacea*
Seen and heard daily almost throughout with the exception of the highlands around Nuwara Eliya and Horton Plains.
107. Blue-faced Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus viridirostris*
Three in Bundala; one daily in Yala.
108. Sirkeer Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus leschenaultii*
Just one of this secretive bird seen at Yala.
109. **Red-faced Malkoha** *Phaenicophaeus pyrrhocephalus*
Definitely a trip highlight with super views of this very exciting bird in a mixed flock in Sinharaja National Park.
110. Greater Coucal *Centropus sinensis*
Seen or heard daily.
111. **Green-billed Coucal** *Centropus chlororhynchus*
One of this scarce endemic was seen very well at Sinharaja. The unobtrusive behaviour of this bird plus the distinctive green bill are really the only features to differentiate it from the previous species.
112. Indian Scops Owl *Otus bakkamoena*
We enjoyed amazing views of two of this very attractive bird as they roosted in the backyard of a villager's house just near Hambantota. Thanks to the wonderful Sri Lankan hospitality we enjoyed not only this bird but a number of others as well.

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113. **Serendib Scops Owl** *Otus thilohoffmanni*
Wow! After some anxious moments we tracked down this diminutive beauty and revelled in fabulous views for over half an hour. Unbelievably, this species was only discovered in 2001 and formally described in 2004! This was a new bird for me and for any VENT tour – I have to say it was the trip highlight for me, at least. Incidentally, you may be interested to know that the scientific name of the owl honours Thilo Hoffmann, the former Swiss director of Baur's, our ground agent, who was responsible for the preservation of Sinharaja forest as a nature reserve.
114. **Brown Fish Owl** *Ketupa zeylonensis*
We found a wonderful habituated bird at a ranger's house in Yala.
115. **Chestnut-backed Owlet** *Glaucidium castanonotum*
One gorgeous bird at the Blue Magpie Lodge at Sinharaja.
116. **Jerdon's Nightjar** *Caprimulgis atripennis*
Two sensationally responsive birds at the back of our lodge in Sigiriya. Fabulous looks at this scarce regional endemic.
117. **Indian Nightjar** *Caprimulgus asiaticus eidos* ES
We spotted six en route to Yala National Park.
118. **Indian Swiftlet** *Collocalia unicolor*
Seen daily in their 100's throughout.
119. **Brown-backed Needletail** *Hirundapus giganteus*
Three at Sinharaja.
120. **Asian Palm-Swift** *Cypsiurus balasiensis*
Recorded daily throughout.
121. **Crested Tree-Swift** *Hemiprocene longipennis*
Common at Bundala and Yala.
122. **Malabar Trogon** *Harpactes fasciatus fasciatus* ES
Four and two seen very well by all at Sinharaja.
123. **Common Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis*
One to three seen almost daily in the dry zones.
124. **Stork-billed Kingfisher** *Halcyon capensis*
We were treated to super views of this amazing kingfisher at Bundala and Yala national parks.
125. **White-throated Kingfisher** *Halcyon smyrnensis*
Common and widespread, recorded daily except at Horton Plains.
126. **Pied Kingfisher** *Ceryle rudis*
Three seen perched on a signboard on the edge of the Tissa Tank.
127. **Little Green Bee-eater** *Merops orientalis*
This gorgeous bird is very common in the south east dry zone.

128. Blue-tailed Bee-eater *Merops philippinus*
Common and widespread throughout, recorded daily.
129. Chestnut-headed Bee-eater *Merops leschenaulti*
Three of this most gorgeous of the Asian bee-eaters in Yala National Park, very common in Udawalla.
130. European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*
Yet another trip highlight! Fabulous close views of this winter visitor to Sri Lanka. It is generally only found every 3-4 years in very low numbers in Sri Lanka so it was a real treat and great spotting by Senarath!
131. Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis*
Recorded daily in the south east.
132. Common Hoopoe *Upupa epops ceylonensis* ES
Up to six daily in the south east.
133. **Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill** *Ocyceros gingalensis*
A male and female en route to Sinharaja, then another two in Sinharaja National Park.
134. Malabar Pied Hornbill *Anthracoceros coronatus*
Recorded almost daily in the south east.
135. Brown-headed Barbet *Megalaima zeylanica*
Seen or heard almost daily, including some exceptional close views in the Kandy Botanic Gardens, except on the Horton Plains.
136. **Yellow-fronted Barbet** *Megalaima flavifrons*
Up to four seen on two days at Sinharaja.
137. **Sri Lanka Small Barbet** *Megalaima rubricapilla*
Superb views of two of this pretty endemic in the Kandy Botanic Gardens.
138. Coppersmith Barbet *Megalaima haemacephala*
Two en route to Yala; heard at Yala and Udawallawa.
139. Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker *Picoides nanus*
Two in Bundala National Park and one in Yala National Park.
140. Yellow-crowned Woodpecker *Picoides mahrattensis*
One in Bundala, two in Yala and one in Udawallawa national parks.
141. Lesser Yellownape *Picus chlorolophus wellsi* ES
One at Bundala; one at Sinharaja; heard at Sigiriya.
142. Black-rumped Flameback *Dinopium benghalense psarodes* ES
Four flighty birds seen briefly at Debra Wewa tank, Tissa. One seen very well at Sinharaja.
143. **Crimson-backed Flameback** *Chrysocolaptes lucidus*
Two at Tissa, super views of one male on the Horton Plains, and two seen in the Kandy Botanic Gardens.

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144. White-naped Woodpecker *Chrysocolaptes festivus tantus* ES, NE
Thanks again to some very friendly villagers in Tissa we got to see this fantastic and scarce woodpecker. This is a regional endemic but interestingly in Sri Lanka it seems to areas of coconut palms.

PASSERINES

145. Indian Pitta *Pitta brachyura*
Great looks of at least four superb birds at Yala, Udawallawa, Sigiriya.
146. Jerdon's Bushlark *Mirafra affinis*
Common in Bundala, Yala and Udawallawa.
147. Ashy-crowned Sparrow Lark *Eremopterix grisea*
Many seen in Bundala and Yala national parks.
148. Oriental Skylark *Alauda gulgula*
Two in Bundala, two in Yala.
149. Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*
Very common throughout.
150. Hill Swallow *Hirundo domicola*
One seen with the above in farmland near the Horton Plains.
151. Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica hyperethra*
A few seen en route to Yala and to Embilipitiya.
152. **Sri Lanka Swallow** *Hirundo hyperythra*
Absolutely fabulous views of up to three sensational birds at eye-level on the levee across the Lunugawehera dam en route to Udawallawa.
153. Forest Wagtail *Dendronanthus indica*
Four birds were seen in the riverine forest at Yala; another two at the Victoria Gardens, Nuwara Eliya.
154. Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*
Two en route to Yala.
155. Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*
Common and recorded daily at all locations except for the dry south east.
156. Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi*
A couple in Yala National Park.
157. Paddyfield Pipit *Anthus rufulus*
Daily and common in the south east dry zone.
158. Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii*
Possibly one recorded in Yala NP.

159. Black-hooded Oriole *Oriolus xanthornus ceylonensis* ES
This beautiful bird was seen most days throughout except for on the Horton Plains, with a maximum of 6 in the Tissa area.
160. Black-headed Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina melanoptera*
A very handsome bird seen at Yala and Sinharaja, where a male and female bird were recorded in the gardens of our lodge.
161. Small Minivet *Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*
A few seen daily in the south east dry zone and at Sigiriya.
162. Orange Minivet *Pericrocotus flammeus*
Common at Sinharaja and Kandy.
163. Bar-winged Flycatcher-Shrike *Hemipus picatus*
Just one on the Horton Plains.
164. **Sri Lanka Woodshrike** *Tephrodornis pondicerianus*
One or two daily in woodland at Bundala, Yala and Sigiriya.
165. **Black-capped Bulbul** *Pycnonotus melanicterus*
Common at Sinharaja.
166. White-browed Bulbul *Pycnonotus luteolus insulae* ES
Six at Lunuganwehera tank and very common in Bundala National Park.
167. Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer cafer* ES
Arguably one of the most common and widespread birds in Sri Lanka, recorded daily.
168. **Yellow-eared Bulbul** *Pycnonotus penicillatus*
More than 20 of this attractive endemic were seen on the Horton Plains.
169. Yellow-browed Bulbul *Hypsipetes indicus guglielmi* ES
Common in the Sinharaja area; one en route to Yala and one en route to Sigiriya.
170. Square-tailed Black Bulbul *Hypsipetes ganeesa*
Very common in the wet zone.
171. Jerdon's Leafbird *Chloropsis jerdoni*
A pair seen very well in the Kandy Botanic Gardens.
172. Golden-fronted Leafbird *Chloropsis aurifrons*
One recorded at Sinharaja.
173. Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia*
Up to four daily in the dry zones, a common garden bird.
174. **Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush** *Myophonus blighi*
This species is known as one of the most elusive of the Sri Lankan endemics and he really lived up to his reputation providing a good view but in very poor light in bad weather at the Arrenga Pond on Horton Plains, after which he never deigned to show himself again.

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175. Pied Thrush *Zoothera wardii*
Brief looks at a truly beautiful bird, one recorded in the Victoria Gardens, Nuwara Eliya where the powers-that-be have decided to cut away the “unsightly” vegetation on the stream banks that this bird favours.
176. Orange-headed Thrush *Zoothera citrina*
Super looks at two of this fancy ground-thrush near our accommodation at Sigiriya.
177. **Spot-winged Thrush** *Zoothera spiloptera*
Super looks at a total of ten birds over two days in rainforest at Sinharaja.
178. Indian Blackbird *Turdus simillimus*
One seen very well at the Arrenga Pond on the Horton Plains. A near-endemic to Sri Lanka and South India, the Sri Lanka race is so distinctive it may warrant specific, endemic status. One to watch!
179. Indian Blue Robin *Luscinia brunnea*
One glimpsed in the Victoria Gardens, Nuwara Eliya.
180. Oriental Magpie Robin *Copsychus saularis ceylonensis* ES
Common – recorded daily at all sites.
181. White-rumped Shama *Copsychus malabaricus leggei* ES
We saw one briefly at Yala and another very well at Sigiriya.
182. Indian Robin *Saxicoloides fulicata leucoptera* ES
A dry zone species, common in Bundala, Yala and surrounds.
183. Pied Bushchat *Saxicola caprata atrata* ES
Very common on the Horton Plains.
184. **Sri Lanka Bush Warbler** *Bradypterus palliseri*
Just one of this shy but vocal species in the grassy understorey of the forests on Horton Plains.
185. Pallas’s Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola*
Possibly heard at the Tissawewa tank, Tissa.
186. Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*
One at Bundala; two at Yala; one Udawallawa.
187. India Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus brunnescens*
One in Bundala National Park; up to 6 at the Tissawewa tank.
188. Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius fernandonis* ES
Recorded at all sites except Sinharaja.
189. Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*
Many on the Horton Plains, one at Sigiriya.
190. Green Warbler *Phylloscopus nitidus*
One at Sinharaja.

191. Large-billed Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus magnirostris*
Up to six daily at Sinharaja.
192. Hume's Whitethroat *Sylvia althaea*
One seen by Bernie in scrub in Yala National Park.
193. Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*
Common in Bundala and the at the tanks around Tissa and Sigiriya.
194. Grey-breasted Prinia *Prinia hodgsonii leggei* ES
Two were seen on the Udawallawa boundary, very common within Udawallawa National Park, also seen at Sigiriya.
195. Jungle Prinia *Prinia sylvatica vailda* ES
Two on edges of the Lunuganwehera tank; one in Yala; very common in Udawallawa National Park; one at Sigiriya.
196. Ashy Prinia *Prinia socialis brevicauda* ES
One at Lunuganwehera tank; six in Yala National Park; very common in Udawallawa National Park.
197. Plain Prinia *Prinia inornata insularis* ES
Common at all sites in the dry south east zone.
198. Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica*
One in Yala; two daily in Sinharaja.
199. Brown-breasted Flycatcher *Muscicapa muttui*
One at Yala; a total of five at Sinharaja.
200. Kashmir Flycatcher *Ficedula subrubra*
One of this scarce and declining north India migrant at the Arrenga Pond on the Horton Plains.
201. **Dull-blue Flycatcher** *Eumyias sordida*
Aka the Horrible Blue Flycatcher, so called due to his very rude habit of hiding from birders all morning until we are just about driven to distraction and then suddenly appearing at the last minute to taunt us with his lovely blue plumage and pretty song! Thanks Chris for at last tracking down a good view of this rather unflatteringly named endemic on the Horton Plains.
202. Tickell's Blue Flycatcher *Cyornis tickelliae jerdoni* ES
A male and female showed wonderfully in the botanic gardens at Kandy; a couple more seen well at our Kitulgala rest stop.
203. Grey-headed Flycatcher *Culicacapa ceylonensis*
Four on the Horton Plains.
204. White-browed Fantail *Rhipidura aureola*
Common in Yala and Udawallawa; one at Sigiriya.
205. Black-naped Monarch *Hypothymis azurea ceylonensis* ES
A total of five in Sinharaja National Park.

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206. Asian Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi ceylonensis* ES
Up to four daily at all sites.
207. **Brown-capped Babbler** *Pellorneum fuscicapillum*
Two very responsive birds seen at Sinharaja. Another cool endemic!
208. **Sri Lanka Scimitar-Babbler** *Pomatorhinus horsfieldi*
We were treated to super views of two responsive birds at the arboretum at Sinharaja. We also recorded at least six on the Horton Plains, where on call alone we can judge this species to be abundant albeit relatively shy.
209. Tawny-bellied Babbler *Dumetia hyperythra phillipsi* ES
Brief views for some in Yala.
210. Dark-fronted Babber *Rhopocichla atriceps nigrifrons* ES
A rather elusive near-endemic species that can be difficult to get good looks at, we recorded four one day at Sinharaja and found them to be very common on the Horton Plains.
211. Yellow-eyed Babbler *Chrysomma sinense nasale* ES
Super looks at two birds attending a nest in scrubby brush along the road through Udawallawa National Parks. This bird is a favourite of mine!
212. **Sri Lanka Rufous Babbler** *Turdoides rufescens*
Very common in Sinharaja National Park where we saw it daily, it is an important bird in mixed flocks in particular.
213. Yellow-billed Babbler *Turdoides affinis taprobanus* ES
Common and widespread, seen daily except on the Horton Plains.
214. **Ashy-headed Laughingthrush** *Garrulax cinereifrons*
Somewhat scarce this year, we only saw four birds in a mixed flock on our first birding outing into Sinharaja NP.
215. Great Tit *Parus major*
Quite common in the high altitude areas on the Horton Plains and in the Victoria Gardens.
216. Velvet-fronted Nuthatch *Sitta frontalis*
Two of this beauty on the Horton Plains.
217. Purple-rumped Sunbird *Nectarinia zeylonica zeylonica* NE
Recorded daily at all sites except Horton Plains.
218. Purple Sunbird *Nectarinia asiatica*
Common in almost throughout.
219. Loten's Sunbird *Nectarinia lotenia lotenia* ES, NE
Six at our first birding stop at the town of Avissawella, thereafter seen at Udawallawa, Horton Plains and Sigiriya.
220. Thick-billed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum agile zeylonicum* ES
One was seen at Avissawella, one at Yala National Park.

221. **Legge's Flowerpecker** *Dicaeum vincens*
Our first bird was seen very well at Avissawella, very common at Sinharaja National Park where we enjoyed some exceptional looks.
222. Pale-billed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum erythrorhynchos ceylonense* ES
Recorded daily at Sinharaja and Sigiriya; also six at Yala and Kandy.
223. **Sri Lanka White-eye** *Zosterops ceylonensis*
Common on the Horton Plains.
224. Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosa*
Seen at Yala, Sinharaja and Sigiriya where quite common.
225. Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*
Seen almost daily in good numbers.
226. Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis*
Just one in Bundala National Park.
227. Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocerus*
One in Udawallawa National Park.
228. White-bellied Drongo *Dicrurus caerulescens*
Seen almost daily except on the Horton Plains.
229. **Sri Lanka Crested Drongo** *Dicrurus lophorinus*
This distinctive newly split endemic species was seen daily in Sinharaja National Park.
230. Ashy Woodswallow *Artamus fuscus*
Four at Attidiya marshes; six in Bundala NP.
231. **Sri Lanka Blue Magpie** *Urocissa ornata*
Amazing views of four birds feeding at the back of the hut at the arboretum in Sinharaja was followed up by looks of two and one bird also in Sinharaja.
232. House Crow *Corvus splendens*
Common anywhere near human habitation.
233. Indian Jungle Crow *Corvus culminatus*
Ubiquitous.
234. **White-faced Starling** *Sturnus senex*
Incredible eye-level looks at one close bird in a mixed feeding flock were followed by close studies of a perched bird the following day, Sinharaja National Park. A handsome endemic that is rarely seen this well!
235. Brahminy Myna *Sturnus pagodarum*
A total of 14 birds over two days in Yala NP.
236. Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus*
Abundant within Bundala with numerous large flocks and very common in Yala.

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237. Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis melanosternus* ES
Ubiquitous.
238. **Sri Lanka Myna** *Gracula ptilogenys*
Four at Sinharaja.
239. Southern Hill Myna *Gracula indica*
Common en route to Yala; up to four near Sinharaja.
240. House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*
Ubiquitous.
241. Streaked Weaver *Ploceus manyar*
One in breeding plumage in Yala; two in the Tissa area.
242. White-throated Munia (Indian Silverbill) *Lonchura malabarica*
Six seen feeding on the ground in Yala; very common in Udawallawa National Park.
243. Black-throated Munia *Lonchura kelaarti*
Only one bird seen on two days in rice paddies on the walk into our lodge at Sinharaja.
244. Scaly-breasted Munia *Lonchura punctulata*
Common at all low altitude sites.
245. Black-headed Munia *Lonchura malacca*
Very common in Bundala and Yala national parks.

Mammals

1. Giant Flying Fox *Pteropus giganteus*
A couple of huge colonies were found en route to Kitulgala, near Tissa and at Sigiriya.
2. **Toque Macaque** *Macaca sinica*
Common throughout.
3. Sri Lanka Grey Langur *Presbytis entellus*
Common in the dry zone.
4. Purple-faced Leaf-Monkey *Trachypithecus vetulus*
A few seen on the Horton Plains (where the local subspecies is known as Bear Leaf-Monkey) and at Sigiriya.
5. Common (Golden) Jackal *Canis aureus*
Up to six seen daily in Yala and in Bundala.
6. Ruddy Mongoose *Herpestes smithii*
One at Sinharaja, one at Udawallawa.
7. Stripe-necked Mongoose *Herpestes vitticollis*
One in Yala National Park.

8. Brown Mongoose *Herpestes fuscus*
One feeding in the rubbish tip behind our lodge at Sinharaja.
9. Large Grey Mongoose *Herpestes edwardsii*
Up to four at Yala.
10. Jungle Cat *Felis chaus*
One seen briefly as it crossed in front of our jeep in Udawallawa National Park.
11. Asian Elephant *Elaphus maximus*
Many seen daily in the south east - common.
12. Wild Boar *Sus scrofa*
Up to 40 recorded in Yala.
13. Sambar *Cervus unicolor*
Up to five in Yala, six on the Horton Plains.
14. Spotted Deer *Axis axis*
Common in Bundala and Yala.
15. Grizzled Giant Squirrel *Ratufa macroura*
One superb animal at Sinharaja.
16. Three-striped Palm Squirrel *Funambulus palmarum*
Seen daily throughout.
17. Dusky Palm Squirrel *Funambulus sublineatus*
One at Sinharaja; one at Sigiriya.
18. Black-naped Hare *Lepus nigricollis*
Many daily in Bundala and in Yala National Park.

Reptiles

Water Monitor *Varanus salvator*

Land Monitor *V. bengalensis*

Garden Calotes *Calotes variegatus*

Black-cheeked Calotes *Calotes sp.*

Indian Rock Python

Bronzeback Snake *Dendrolaphus sp.*

Dog-faced Water Snake

Star Tortoise