

# Trip Report: Sri Lanka Endemic Birding, January 5-15, 2008

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## Introduction

Arrangements for the trip were made through Bird and Wildlife Team Ltd (website: [www.birdandwildlifeteam.com](http://www.birdandwildlifeteam.com)), a tour company formed by Sri Lanka's leading bird tour leader, Deepal Wakaragoda, better known as the discoverer of the Serindib Scops-owl. They made all the land arrangements inclusive of transportation, accommodation, meals and of course guiding. Tipping was however not covered and proved quite a hassle as we needed to keep loose change. Doreen Ang accompanied me on this trip.

## Day One (Jan 5, 2008)

We arrived on SQ466 landing at Colombo airport at 08h15 local time (Sri Lanka is 2.5 hours behind Singapore). It took us about 90 minutes to clear customs, no thanks to the long queue at the immigration. We met our guide, Deepal, who was already waiting at outside the arrival lounge. At 09h45, we left in a minivan for our first stop, Kitulgala.

We took a leisurely 2.5 hours drive in order to do some birding along the way. The House Crows seen at the airport was our first Sri Lanka bird. We quickly added to our trip list, encountering familiar species like Common Myna, Cattle Egret and Red-wattled Lapwing. The landscape of Sri Lanka was one of idyllic paddyfields and plantations. The only signs of war with the Tamil Tigers were the numerous soldiers and policemen we saw at major intersections in the city, roadblocks and on the roads. We stopped a number of times to look at birds. At one place, we got a good look at the newly split **Crested Hawk-eagle** perched on a tower. Nearby, we saw our first Sri Lankan endemic, a **Ceylon Small Barbet**, perched on a distant tree. At another spot with two flowering Red Cotton Trees in a rubber plantation, we saw a bunch of new birds. Gold-fronted Leafbirds mingled with **Purple-rumped** and Purple **Sunbirds**, Pale-billed and Thick-billed Flowerpeckers, Oriental White-eyes and our second endemic, **Ceylon Hanging Parrots**. These had red on the crown and bill, and were busy flitting from flower to flower. Exploring the nearby plantation, we also added Lesser Yellowname, the attractive **White-browed Fantail**, and two more endemics, a **Crimson-backed Woodpecker**, the distinctive red-backed split from Greater Goldenback, and a pretty **Yellow-fronted Barbet**. Four endemics in the bag and we hadn't even reached our first stop!

Our other stops also produced endemics. At one site, we stopped to look at two wheeling **Ceylon Swallows**, a split from Red-rumped Swallow, and reminiscent of the Red-bellied Swallow of Fraser's Hill in redness. The other stop produced a fly-by **Ceylon Grey Hornbill**, a Shikra and a grizzled Indian Flying Fox. Also seen along the way to Kitulgala was a flock of **Yellow-billed Babbler**, a new bird for me and one which reminded me of Jungle Babblers of North India.

Six endemics down and 28 to go!

We arrived at Kitulgala Rest House shortly before 13h00. After depositing our luggage in the rooms, we had lunch in the cafeteria. The food was rather too spicy for me and we finished quickly.

The rest house was expansive and had that old colonial charm. Bird paintings from Henry decorated the front porch of our rooms. Perched on a high spot above the Kelani River, the rest house offered a good

vista of the protected forest just across. We birded the garden from 14h35 which had a flowering tree that attracted hordes of birds. We ticked off **Indian Swiftlet**, Orange (Scarlet) Minivet, Oriental White-eye, Red-vented Bulbul and Gold-fronted Leafbird.

At 15h00, we took off our shoes and sat (or stood in my case) in the narrow dugout canoe with a outrigger across the shallow, fast-flowing river. After putting on our shoes, we climbed up the river bank to see small village huts dotting the open woods. Our first bird was a South Indian-Sri Lankan endemic, **Yellow-browed Bulbul**. Our first endemic here was the attractive **Legge's Flowerpecker**. The other birds seen at this patch included Yellow-billed Babbler, **Lesser Hill-myna**, (Square-tailed) Black Bulbul, a potential split from nominate Black, White-bellied Drongo, Purple-rumped Sunbird and Common Tailorbird.

Leaving the village, we soon entered the narrow forest trail. It wasn't long before we encountered our first forest species, just past the orange park signage. A male **Malabar Trogon** was soon coaxed out for a good view. In appearance and voice, it was reminiscent of a Red-naped Trogon. Happy at the ticking my ninth Asian trogon, we birded the narrow forest trail till we reached a pebbly stream. At the stream, Deepal motioned us to wait as he disappeared into the forest to check on his roosting night birds. After half an hour, he emerged with a smile on his face and a thumbs-up. The mythical owl was in! We walked uphill for about five minutes and then stopped by a tangle of undergrowth on a slope. Deepal pointed to a spot about ten metres away. A single male **Serindib Scops-owl** was perched a metres off the ground in a tangle of branches. It took some acrobatic positioning but we managed to get about ten minutes view at down to five metres of the orange owl. It had bright orange eyes and was in alert position, with its "false ears" clearly noticeable. It had pale green bill and feet, and its plumage was spotted with delicate black spots. A stunner and candidate for bird of the trip on the very first day of the tour! Wow!

Once safely away from the owl, we exchanged handshakes and then saw a **Brown-breasted Flycatcher** perched on the edge of the paddyfield. Its pale legs were a give-away. Yet another new bird!

Satisfied, we returned to the forest, past the rocky stream, and tried next for Ceylon Frogmouth, Ceylon Spurfowl and Chestnut-backed Owlet, with the aid of tape playback. We didn't get any response from the spurfowl. We got a close reply call from a frogmouth but didn't see it. However we did get a good look at the tiny **Chestnut-backed Owlet**, a single bird on a lofty branch, thanks to good spotting by Deepal, at 17h00.

Despite staying till 19h30, we failed to find the frogmouth. Eventually, we called it a good day and retreated to the rest house. It was a fantastic first day as we had nailed 10 of 34 endemics from a day total of 64 birds. We celebrated with another spicy Indian dinner at 20h00 and retired to our rooms an hour later.

#### Day Two (Jan 6, 2008)

We were up early for our first full day at Kitulagala. After finishing our breakfast, we were across the river by 07h00. Once we had our shoes and leech socks on, we were soon onto a bunch of **Ceylon Green-pigeons**, feeding on a fruiting tree by the shed on the bank of the Kelani River. They looked very similar to the Pompadour Green Pigeon that I've seen in Mindanao, Philippines. Moving on, we encountered a flock of the endemic **Ceylon Rufous Babblers** near a village hut, our second endemic of the morning. Other birds seen here included Oriental Magpie-robin, White-breasted Waterhen, Brown-headed Barbet, Rose-ringed Parakeet and Jerdon's Leafbird, a split from Blue-winged. Deepal detoured to a village orchard and it paid dividends almost immediately with a smart-looking sub-adult **Indian Blue Robin**, high up a branch, and the cute-looking **Dark-fronted Babbler**. We got also close up views of several Yellow-fronted Barbets.

Back in the forest, we explored the trails in search of mixed species feeding flocks but didn't find any. It was more like bits and pieces here and there. But the birds came eventually. Two *Phylloscopus* warblers were found to be not uncommon – the small **Bright-green Warbler**, a split from Greenish, and the larger **Large-billed Leaf-warbler**. Both were new for me. We also tried for the spurfowl and even got a loud response once but failed to secure a sighting. Fortunately, the other stuff in the area more than made up for the fowl miss.

During one of the spurfowl waiting sessions, I spied a movement on the forest floor to my right. Putting my bins on, I was delighted to find the much desired **Indian Pitta** in full view. Soon, Deepal and Doreen were on to it and all of us got good close views of the bird. We next turned our attention to another ground bird which Deepal had heard. With some expert playback, we were soon looking at a well-marked **Spot-winged Thrush**, an endemic. It hopped on the sloping ground before perching in full view on a branch. It was singing in return and showing very well. I also got a better look at another endemic, the **Ceylon Crested Drongo**, here. It looked decidedly unimpressive and I was reminded of a juvenile Greater Racket-tailed Drongo with a more prominent crest.

At a forest edge, we tried for Green-billed Coucal but didn't find one. We spent some time at this spot as Deepal said it was good for mixed species flocks and we waited. Two **Ceylon Scimitar-babblers** high up in the canopy were welcome sightings as were a pair of Malabar Trogons. A loud noise in the undergrowth proved on checking to be a pair of squabbling female **Ceylon Junglefowls**, another Sri Lanka endemic. The hens had intricate black bars on their wings. Eventually, the bird of the day appeared in the form of not one but two **Red-faced Malkohas**, high up the canopy. Their red faces, black breasts and white underparts were very prominent. The tail also showed a lot of white. A beautiful bird and my eleventh malkoha!

We left this spot after a close but ultimately futile attempt at seeing the spurfowl and explored a narrow hilly trail. Here we got no response from the spurfowl but we did get brief looks at the colourful **Ceylon Blue Magpie**, moving quickly through the canopy. We also tried for the endemic Brown-capped Babbler but attracted no interest.

Our six hours of birding in the Kelani Forest yielded seven endemics, a success we celebrated with lunch in the rest house. We also took a longer siesta as it was raining in the early afternoon.

In the evening, we visited the scrubby area around Sisiya's Lodge. It was just after the afternoon downpour and the birds were out in force. We got up close and personal with more than ten **Layard's Parakeets**, an attractive Sri Lankan endemic. The grey head and green nape of this species are distinctive. Our main mission here was to track down **Green-billed Coucal** before it got dark. Soon Deepal located a calling bird. We pursued the sound to its source in some villager's garden and after some anxious moments found it perched high up a coconut, drying its wings. Its green bill showed clearly as it called with head bent down, wings outstretched and tail moving with each "whoop". Other than the endemic coucal, we also got better looks at a pair of Ceylon Grey Hornbills on a fruiting tree. At dusk, we crossed the rickety old suspension bridge across to the forest and tried to call out the frogmouth. Despite waiting an hour, there was no response and all I got for my trouble was a leech on my thigh. In all, we spent about 2.5 hours birding in the evening and recorded 22 species, including the endemic coucal and parakeet.

We finished the day with 9 endemics and a day total of 70 species which included the much wanted Indian Pitta.

### Day Three (Jan 7, 2008)

This was the day we left Kitulgala but not before some last-minute birding. After breakfast, we birded the garden around the rest house and the village nearby. We finally got a good look at a pair of **Loten's Sunbird**, with its spectacularly decurved bill. Then, Deepal took us outside the compound of the rest house to the nearby village. Here, he played the 3-note call of the **Brown-capped Babbler**. While we waited for the babbler to appear, we found our second Indian Pitta and an Asian Paradise-flycatcher near a rubbish heap. We also got scope views of two perched Ceylon Swallows. We moved through the village in search of a response from the babbler and eventually got the bird near the river. The solitary bird was in a low bush and came almost to our feet (!) as it looked for an intruder. A neat bird with its distinctive brown cap and streaked underparts. Deepal also took us to another patch downstream of the river past some dilapidated houses where we got fantastic scoped views of a pair of Chestnut-backed Owlets. A very beautifully marked owl with piercing yellow eyes and chocolate back.

Our two-hour birding session around the rest-house produced 34 species including a new endemic babbler. At 08h30 we left Kitulgala Resthouse and headed for our next stop, Sinharaja.

As we neared Sinharaja after a drive of 3.5 hours, Deepal stopped above a tea estate where we stretched our legs. We found Scaly-breasted and White-rumped Munias, and then, another Sri Lankan endemic, **Black-throated Munia**. They were all perched at the top of a palm tree and Deepal had them scoped. They looked like Scaly-breasted Munias with blackish heads.

Further down the road to Sinharaja, we stopped twice to tick off birds. First was a pair of **Ceylon Hill Mynas**, an endemic, which we studied through the scope. The second was outside a villager's compound. After talking to the woman owner, Deepal searched for and eventually found a male **Ceylon Frogmouth** in its nest 5 metres up a rambutan tree. We also got scoped views of this new bird. For Doreen, there was the bonus of an entirely new family as well!

At Blue Magpie's Lodge, our home for the next three days, we dumped our bags and had a quick lunch in the dining area before venturing to the forests of Sinharaja at 14h00. While having lunch I got much closer views of two Black-throated Munias. We had to endure a very bumpy jeep ride, our mode of transport to and from the forests for the next three days, to the main park gate.

We birded for three hours in the main forest trail, taking with us a forest guide. The forests appeared taller and more extensive than Kitulgala. We got our first new endemic, **Black-capped Bulbul**, a split from Black-crested. The only other endemics we got here were a **Ceylon Scaly Thrush**, a bird with a very long bill and gold-speckled plumage tossing leaves on the forest floor, and a flock of the decidedly plain-looking **Ashy-headed Laughingthrush**, mixing with Ceylon Rufous Babblers. Also interesting were the rather tame Ceylon Junglefowls. We saw at least four birds, including the colourful males. We also had a distant Ceylon Blue Magpie. An attempt for spurfowl was again not successful. We returned to the lodge at 17h00.

In all, Day Three produced six new endemics and much better looks at Chestnut-backed Owlet and Ceylon Junglefowl. Our day total was 70 species.

#### Day Four (Jan 8, 2008)

After an early breakfast, we took the jeep to a hill on the right of the park gate and birded the hill. It was a cloudy morning. We spotted Crested Serpent-eagle and Crested Goshawk perched on bare trees and also encountered Common Iora, Dark-fronted Babbler, Legge's Flowerpecker and White-bellied Drongo. At about 08h30, Deepal and Doreen were scanning the forests below for a pair of flying White-faced Starlings, a Sri Lanka endemic. For some reason, I wasn't aware of the sighting until it was too late. Ouch! Despite waiting an hour for the starlings to return, they never did and we retreated to the main forest trail to try again for the elusive spurfowl.

We walked all the way to the research station, finding a better, close up view of a Ceylon Blue Magpie. What a riot of colours with blues and reds mixing to bizarre effect! On the way back, we got a response from to our spurfowl playback at noon. After waiting half an hour, a female **Ceylon Spurfowl** appeared 50 metres from us and then ran across the trail. I saw the bird but Doreen missed it. It was a plump dark bird but I could not see any other details. About 15 minutes later, the male surprised us by flying across in the same direction. I could see the white on its underparts. The views were brief but adequate. We had finally nailed the spurfowl. But we both wanted a second look if possible.

After lunch, we were back in the forest trail by 16h00. We walked all the way past the research station, where I had two views of fly-by White-faced Starlings to show for two hours of trying. It was not acceptable and I needed to try again the next day. A slow-flying **Mountain Hawk-eagle** was scant consolation even though it was a lifer for me.

Day Four thus finished on a low with just a very brief spurfowl finally in the bag but no acceptable views of the White-faced Starling. A **White-browed Bulbul** seen outside the Blue Magpie Lodge and the Mountain Hawk-eagle at Starling Hill were about the only saving graces. The day total was 61 species.

Our first full day at Sinharaja thus saw rather disappointing birding but ample rewards in other wildlife. We saw two endemic primates well – Toque Macaque and Purple-faced Leaf-monkey – as well as an unbelievable 1 metre long dark grey earthworm.

Rain came during the night and we went to bed early hoping for better birding the next day.

#### Day Five (Jan 9, 2008)

We were at Starling Hill at 06h45 to try for the early rising of the White-faced Starling. Despite waiting two hours, we failed to see it. Moving back to the main forest trail, we birded until the research centre but didn't add any new birds. Towards noon, we heard news of a bird wave from our forest guard and rushed quickly to the spot which was not far from the main gate. Malabar Trogon, Ceylon Rufous Babbler and Ashy-headed Laughinthrush were the only birds seen. We kept watch as Deepal said he heard the starling in this flock. Eventually, after about half an hour of anxious scanning, Deepal found an adult **White-faced Starling** perched in clear view, 10 metres up a tree. Our despair had ended. We had another new endemic at last!

After lunch, we resumed our birding at 14h30 and focused on getting a clearer view of spurfowl. It wasn't to be and the rainy weather didn't help. The only notable sightings after expending two hours were a Spot-winged Thrush and two more views of White-faced Starlings.

So ended Day Five with one valuable endemic in the bag and I contented at last. Our day total was 60 species.

#### Day Six (Jan 10, 2008)

This was the day we left Sinharaja. I did a spot of birding around the lodge but did not add anything new to the list except a male Asian Paradise-flycatcher with its extremely long tail. We left at 07h30 and arrived at Embilipitiya at 11h00.

After checking into the Centauria Hotel, we birded the grounds and the lake next to it for about an hour. Deepal showed us a roosting pair of Indian Scops-owl. We also checked the lake and added many waterbirds including two **Spot-billed Pelicans**, a new bird for me, and a surprise South Indian specialty, **Malabar Pied Hornbill**, two of which were exploring a distant dead tree. In all, 28 species were seen in an hour of leisurely birding here, including two lifers.

After lunch, we headed for Udawalawe National Park, a dry zone habitat. We arrived at 14h15 and quickly got into the park jeep for some dry zone forest birding. We started by looking at Tricoloured Munias, a variant of Black-headed, several Blyth's Pipits and Jerdon's Bushlarks, a split from Rufous-winged. Moving slowly along the track through savanna type habitat we soon saw the first of many Indian Peafowls and eventually our first Asian Elephants.

Birding from the open-top jeep was much easier than forest birding of the past five days. We soon added all four prinia species, including **Jungle Prinia**, a new bird for me, amongst a host of species. In all, we recorded 63 species in just three-and-a-half hours in the park, including **Grey-bellied Cuckoo**, at least 20 Malabar Pied Hornbills really close, Sirkeer Malkoha, and, after an anxious wait, the long awaited **Blue-faced Malkoha**, my last malkoha (yes!), and **Tawny-bellied Babbler**. The sole endemic, Ceylon Woodshrike, was only glimpsed as it flew before we could get a view.

Day Six thus saw no endemics but seven lifers for me including the much desired Blue-faced Malkoha. In all, a good day with 93 species recorded.

#### Day Seven (Jan 11, 2008)

After an early breakfast, we left Embilipitiya for the hills of Nurawa Eliya. En-route, we birded interesting places even though it had begun to rain in many places. About two hours from Embilipitiya, we stopped at

a farm called Thanomavila. Our luck improved almost immediately as a **Ceylon Woodshrike** popped up close after just ten minutes. At last our last remaining lowland endemic secured! A bonus here was a pair of what must surely have been **Marshall's Iora**. We spent over an hour studying the iora before convincing ourselves that this was indeed the mystery bird we saw flitting in the mango trees. We also saw a male **Black-headed Cuckooshrike**, a lifer for me. Three new birds in just 75 minutes! Fantastic!

We left the farm at 10h30 and continued our journey up to the hills of Nurawa Eliya, Sri Lanka's highest town at 1900 metres above sea level, accompanied by continuous rain.

We arrived at our hotel, Galway Forest Lodge, at 14h15 after some three-and-a-half hours drive. Lunch was next before we resumed birding shortly after 15h00. Our first stop in the hills of Sri Lanka was Victoria Park. After the entrance fee was paid, we entered the small park with our bins and brollies. It was not a good sign with grey skies and constant rain. Indian Pond-herons were the first birds we saw with now ubiquitous Red-vented Bulbul, Jungle Crow, Spotted Dove and Common Myna. Soon we found our first montane endemic, a **Ceylon White-eye** feeding on flowers. I had actually seen it while waiting at the hotel but this was a much better view. Compared with our Oriental White-eye, it has greener upperparts and darker grey underparts and also a different un-white-eye-like call.

We followed Deepal as he took us round the park to an area behind the toilet. A female **Kashmir Flycatcher** was seen here after some coaxing from the tape, a new bird for us. A short distance from here, we added the pretty endemic **Yellow-eared Bulbul** to our lists.

Eventually, we were in an overgrown bushy area next to a stream. Deepal motioned to us to keep still as he played the frog-like call of the **Slaty-legged Crake**. After 15 minutes, a bird flew up to a dead branch just four metres from us showing its dark grey legs well. Another bird also appeared below, walking slowly. What an unexpected lifer! Deepal also spotted a male Kashmir Flycatcher which I glimpsed and a female Indian Blue Robin, which I missed.

Finally, we walked towards the entrance to a bunch of old *Eugenia* trees and waited. Soon, high-pitched calls were heard as we searched the dense foliage for its owner, the elusive **Pied Thrush**. After an hour of waiting, I finally found a male perched on an open branch. The white supercilium and underparts showed well. Success at last! Unfortunately for Doreen, it soon took off with another bird and never reappeared. With the light fading rapidly in the constant rain, we decided to try for it again the next day.

So, Day Six ended on a bright note despite rainy weather. We added one dry zone endemic, two montane endemics and 5 unexpected new birds in the form of Marshall's Iora, Black-headed Cuckooshrike, Kashmir Flycatcher, Slaty-legged Crake and Pied Thrush for a day total of 80 species. We had secured 30 of 34 endemics, with just four more, all montane, to go. I couldn't wait for Day Eight!

#### Day Eight (Jan 12, 2008)

We had hot tea in the hotel lobby at 04h30 before leaving for the journey to Horton Plains National Park. Rain followed us for the second straight day.

At 06h30, we stepped out from the van into the misty mossy forests, bathed in constant rain. We were on the road standing beside a pool. We took our umbrellas and bins and walked the road in very wet, windy and cold conditions. Birds were scarce but we spotted some by the pool. A male Kashmir Flycatcher was finally seen well despite its constant movement as was a Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher, a Grey Wagtail and a Common Tailorbird.

Soon, we secured our first target of the morning, a **Ceylon Wood-pigeon** perched on an exposed branch which Deepal scoped. A lovely bird with checkerboard pattern on its nape, it fluffed up its neck feathers as if to shield from the cold. Next to enter our list were two **Ceylon Bush-warblers**, which responded to Deepal's tape. They were soon seen but only briefly as they flitted from leaf to leaf, giving poor views.

About two hours later, still raining, Deepal attracted a response from a **Ceylon Whistling-thrush**. Doreen was first to see it, a female in thick woods finally showing itself and calling. In the poor light, the blue shoulder patch was not very clear but it stayed close for great views. Next to appear was an Indian Blackbird, a potential split. Its orange eye-ring, bill and legs were distinctive.

With whistling thrush secured, we retreated to the van to have our packed breakfast. We emerged half an hour later to continue our search for the last remaining endemic, Dull or Dusky Blue Flycatcher. Despite playing its song for a long time, we had no response.

The weather cleared at 09h00 and the sun appeared, triggering another appearance from the Ceylon Bush-warbler. One came within three metres and showed its buff throat, whitish eyebrow and pointed tail very well.

Bad weather soon returned and we decided to walk some more. However, another 90 minutes of birding produced just a Velvet-fronted Buthatch and we decided to leave Horton Plains at 09h45.

At length, we decided to bird a trail beside the railway station at Pattipola. The tall pine trees stood starkly in the gloomy mist. We saw Indian Blackbird and then Ceylon Bushwarblers again as the rain continued to pour.

Eventually, at about 10h45, we had a call of a **Dusky Blue Flycatcher** from high up a pine tree. Deepal spotted it and we soon found ourselves looking at a small flycatcher very high up. It came down lower accompanied by another bird. A short while later, we were looking at the birds at eye-level and then at ground level. With careful positioning, we were able to approach within 5 metres. The bright blue forehead and blackish lores were prominent on an otherwise dull blue bird. Success at last! Our last Sri Lanka endemic secured before 11h00 on Day 8!

We returned to the van and headed downhill past numerous vegetable farms. About an hour later, I spotted swallows lined up on a farm fence. I woke up Deepal and Doreen and got out of the van. Checking the rows of Barn Swallows, we were happy to see and add two **Hill Swallows** to our list. They looked much like Pacific Swallows but with more extensive rufous on their heads. A male Pied Bushchat was the only other new bird added in an otherwise uneventful drive back to the hotel.

After lunch, we were back at Victoria Park at 15h45, to look again for the Pied Thrush. It took us an hour and a half but we finally got great looks at a male, thanks to Doreen who found it feeding on fallen fruits. Two other montane endemics – Ceylon White-eye and Yellow-eared Bulbul – were also seen as was a Slaty-legged Crane.

Day Eight ended with just 42 species but with no complaints as we had finally nailed all the four remaining endemic birds of Sri Lanka. To celebrate this achievement, I stayed up late to watch a live EPL match on TV and saw Man U beat Newcastle 6-0!

#### Day Nine (Jan 13, 2005)

We left Galway Forest Lodge at 09h15 and arrived at Suisse Hotel in Kandy at 11h15. Along the way, we ticked off Hill Swallow at a tea estate. With all the endemics cleaned up, we only had one realistic tick in Kandy – Brown Fish Owl.

After lunch and a short siesta, we left for Udawattakele Forest Reserve. It was cloudy when we arrived at 15h00. Birding was slow as we walked past the entrance. We did not see anybody else. We passed a pond and ticked off a Stork-billed Kingfisher before Deepal finally pointed to a spot high in the canopy. True enough, he had located two roosting **Brown Fish-owls** within 5 minutes of our arrival! We got scoped views to our satisfaction before moving on up the hilly trail. The forest was open but birdlife was scarce. We got our first White-rumped Shama and then great views of a male and two female Crimson-backed Flamebacks. Doreen also found our third Indian Pitta hopping in a ravine. Deepal had also been playing the call of the **Spot-bellied (Forest) Eagle-owl** all this while without success when he stopped and pointed to a

lofty branch. We could not believe our eyes! It was a Spot-bellied Eagle-owl indeed and it was perched in an open branch. We watched it for about half an hour taking in all the details including its black eyes, heavy barred breast and chevron spotted white belly. Its back was brown edged with buff. Its talons were black. It had an erect wispy black-and-white crest. The bird of the trip for me!

Happy, we left the reserve at 18h00 and returned to our hotel.

Day Nine ended with just 40 species but with the bird of the trip seen extremely well.

#### Day Ten (Jan 14, 2008)

After breakfast, we left Suisse Hotel at 07h15 and arrived at Chilaw Sandspits, a Christian community near Colombo, at 10h00, in warm, sunny weather. This is a sandy beach with mangroves and a lagoon and we saw lots of waterbirds, including seven tern species. In 90 minutes, we saw 30 species including two **Great Thick-knees** and two **Eurasian Oystercatchers**, both new birds for me.

We had good curry and rice lunch at nearby Chilaw Rest House before heading north to Mundel where we visited a series of tanks and fields from 13h30. At the first stop, we added some waders but no **Little Stints**. We only got two Little Stints feeding with Marsh Sandpipers at the second stop (near M Eliya railway station). These were scoped although still a little distant for me.

Finally we stopped at a farm and dry zone grassland on the way south to Colombo. This was where we remained until 17h30 where we got a host of grassland species. The expected **Indian Stone-curlew** gave us the run-around and took us until 17h00 before we saw it well standing in the open grassland. Other new birds included surprises in the form of three **Richard's Pipits** and a female **Montagu Harrier**, and at least four **Oriental Skylarks**. Other birds of interest included Grey Francolin and Ashy-crowned Finch-larks.

Tired but satisfied we retired to our hotel in Negumbo for our last night in Sri Lanka. In all, our final day had produced 92 species including seven lifers.

#### Day Eleven (Jan 15, 2008)

Checked out of Browns Hotel at 06h45 and got taxi to airport at 07h00. SQ467 departed Colombo at 09h30 and we arrived in Changi Terminal 3 at 15h00 after a flight of 3 hours 20 minutes.

### **Birding Highlights**

The intent of our eleven-day trip to Sri Lanka was to see as many birds as possible, and in particular localized species. We had four objectives. First, to see all the Sri Lankan endemics. Second, the South Indian/Sri Lanka endemics such as Blue-faced Malkoha. Third, to see the migrants not easily seen elsewhere such as Indian Pitta and fourth, to see any potential lifers. Consulting Wheatley's "Where to Watch Birds in Asia" and numerous trip reports on Sri Lanka in Surfbirds, I estimated a yield of between 50 and 75 species.

In total, I recorded 228 species (only one heard only – Brown Hawk-owl) during this trip, including all 34 Sri Lanka endemics and 12 of 15 species restricted to South India and Sri Lanka. See below for full checklist.

My overall impression of Sri Lankan avifauna based on this short visit is of low diversity and very low density, somewhat offset by the relatively high endemism (low compared to Philippines). The species total for a morning birding is slightly below that for Singapore forest birding and far below Malaysian forest birding. The forest was often quiet for long periods until a mixed flock encounter. Rain or the lack of rain also seemed to affect lowland Sri Lankan rainforest bird diversity. In contrast, the dry zone was far more productive with over 50 species seen in a couple of hours.

The majority of the endemics were easily seen in the right habitat except for the spurfowl which was difficult to see and the only endemic we did not see well on this trip. Interestingly, all nocturnals were seen in the day, including the famed Serindib Scops-owl, which was very nice and convenient.

### **Other Wildlife**

Non-bird wildlife was also quite abundant, especially in the dry zone. In wet zone forests, Indian Giant Squirrel was frequently sighted while both Toque Macaque and Purple-faced Leaf-monkeys were common. In dry zone, we got Asian Elephant, Water Buffalo, Chital and Grey Langur.

Leeches were quite abundant in the wet forests even in Kandy. Unlike Malaysian forests, these leeches were small and aggressive. They let you know when they have bitten you and they scour all over your body. I picked off two from my neck! A big earthworm at Sinharaja was also interesting as it was the biggest I have ever seen. Also of interest at Sinharaja were as was a rat snake and a Green Vine Snake, butterflies and fish (saw the endemic suckers).

### **Complete Species List**

(Nomenclature and systematics follow Deepal Warakagoda's Field Checklist with some exceptions. Endemics are referred to in capitals.)

**Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

A lone individual seen in a pond at Mundel on Jan 14.

**Spot-billed Pelican** *Pelecanus philippensis*

Two seen in the lake beside Centauria Hotel at Embilipitiya on Jan 10.

**Little Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax niger*

Common on wayside ponds.

**Indian Shag** *Phalacrocorax fuscicollis*

Seen well at Embilipitiya on Jan 10 and at Kandy on Jan 13.

**Great Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Several in the lake at Embilipitiya on Jan 10.

**Oriental Darter** *Anhinga melanogaster*

One with Indian Shags on the road from Embilipitya to Udawalawe NP on Jan 10.

**Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta*

Common in wetlands throughout. One bird seen in nuptial plumage at Mundel on Jan 14.

**Great Egret** *Egretta alba*

Occasional sightings.

**Intermediate Egret** *Egretta intermedia*

Common in wetlands and fields throughout.

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea*

Common in wetlands.

**Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea*

Occasional in wetlands, not as common as Grey.

**Eastern Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus coromandus*

Very common in grasslands, fields and rubbish dumps throughout.

**Indian Pond-heron** *Ardeola grayii*

Very common in wetlands, fields and parks throughout. Also present at Victoria Park.

**Striated Heron** *Butorides striatus*

A number seen in a tank at Mundel on Jan 14.

**Black-crowned Night-heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax*

An adult seen in a roadside wetland between Embilipitiya and Nurawa Eliya on Jan 11.

**Black Bittern** *Dupetor flavicollis*

An immature seen in a roadside wetland between Embilipitiya and Nurawa Eliya on Jan 11.

**Asian Openbill** *Anastomus oscitans*

Common.

**Black-headed Ibis** *Threskiornis melanocephalus*

One seen with a Grey Heron at Embilipitiya on Jan 10 and two in flight seen between Embilipitiya and Nurawa Eliya on Jan 11.

**Lesser Whistling-duck** *Dendrocygna javanica*

Rather common in wetlands throughout.

**Cotton Teal** *Nettapus coromandelianus*

A dozen seen in a tank at Mundel on Jan 14.

**Garganey** *Anas querquedula*

Two seen with whistling-ducks at a tank at Mundel on Jan 14.

**Oriental Honey-buzzard** *Pernis ptilorhynchus*

One in flight over Kelani River on Jan 5.

**Black-winged Kite** *Elanus caeruleus*

One seen at Udawalawe on Jan 10 and one at Mundel fields on Jan 14.

**Brahminy Kite** *Haliastur indus*

Regularly encountered in cultivation and open country.

**White-bellied Sea-eagle** *Haliaeetus leucogaster*

Encountered in Embilipitiya, Udawalawe and Kandy.

**Crested Serpent-eagle** *Spilornis cheela*

Common in cultivation, scrub and forests.

**Montagu's Harrier** *Circus pygargus*

A female seen in grassland at Mundel on Jan 14.

**Crested Goshawk** *Accipiter trivirgatus*

Singles at Sinharaja on Jan 8 and 9.

**Shikra** *Accipiter badius*

Regular in all wooded habitats.

**Black Eagle** *Ictinaetus malayensis*

One seen well over Blue Magpie Lodge, Sinharaja on Jan 9.

**Booted Eagle** *Hieraaetus pennatus*

One pale morph at Udawalawe NP on Jan 10.

**Rufous-bellied Eagle** *Hieraaetus kienerii*

One adult at Sinharaja on Jan 10.

**Crested Hawk-eagle** *Spizaetus cirrhatus*

Relatively common in cultivation and woods, first seen on Jan 5. A recent split from Changeable Hawk-eagle, *S. limnaetus*.

**Mountain Hawk-eagle** *Spizaetus nipalensis*

One seen well at Sinharaja on Jan 8.

**Grey Francolin** *Francolinus pondicerianus*

Three seen in a field at Mundel on Jan 14.

**CEYLON SPURFOWL** *Galloperdix bicalcarata*

Heard regularly in wet zone forests but only seen (a pair) at Sinharaja on Jan 9.

**CEYLON JUNGLEFOWL** *Gallus lafayetii*

Two females seen fighting at Kitulgala on Jan 6 and seen and heard daily at Sinharaja from Jan 7-10.

**Indian Peafowl** *Pavo cristatus*

Several seen at Udawalawe NP on Jan 10.

**Barred Buttonquail** *Turnix suscitator*

A pair seen well at Udawalawe NP on Jan 10.

**Slaty-legged Crane** *Rallina eurizonoides*

Two seen at Victoria Park on Jan 11 and one on Jan 12.

**White-breasted Waterhen** *Amaurornis phoenicurus*

Regular in wetlands throughout.

**Purple Swamphen** *Porphyrio porphyrio*

Fairly common in wetlands throughout.

**Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus*

Two seen between Kandy and Colombo on Jan 14.

**Pheasant-tailed Jacana** *Hydrophasianus chirurgus*

A few seen in roadside wetland between Embilipitiya and Nurawa Eliya on Jan 11 and several in tanks at Mundel on Jan 14. All birds in breeding plumage.

**Eurasian Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus*

Two seen well at Chilaw Sandspits on Jan 14. Apparently a rarity in Sri Lanka.

**Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva*

A number seen at Mundel on Jan 14.

**Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola*

Two seen at Mundel on Jan 14.

**Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus*

One odd female plumaged bird seen at Chilaw on Jan 14.

**Lesser Sand Plover** *Charadrius mongolus*

Several seen at Chilaw and Mundel on Jan 14.

**Greater Sand Plover** *Charadrius leschenaultii*

A number at Chilaw and Mundel on Jan 14.

**Yellow-wattled Lapwing** *Vanellus malabaricus*

A few at Embilipitiya on Jan 10 and about 6 at Mundel on Jan 14.

**Red-wattled Lapwing** *Vanellus indicus*

Common in wetlands throughout.

**Pintail Snipe** *Gallinago stenura*

A few flushed in open field at Mundel on Jan 14.

**Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa*

About half a dozen seen in flooded marsh at Mundel on Jan 14.

**Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus*

One at Chilaw Sandspits on Jan 14.

**Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus*

A few at Chilaw and Mundel on Jan 14.

**Common Greenshank** *Tringa neublaria*

Present at Chilaw and Mundel on Jan 14.

**Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis*

Present at Mundel on Jan 14.

**Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola*

Two birds seen at Mundel on Jan 14.

**Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos*

Reasonably common in suitable habitats throughout including Kelani River and Victoria Park.

**Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres*

2-4 at Chilaw Sandspits on Jan 14.

**Sanderling** *Calidris alba*

About 100 at Chilaw Sandspits on Jan 14.

**Little Stint** *Calidris minuta*

Two non-breeding birds seen in a pond at Mundel with Marsh Sandpipers on Jan 14.

**Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus*

Reasonably common in wetlands throughout.

**Indian Stone-curlew** *Burhinus indicus*

One seen at a field at Mundel on Jan 14.

**Great Thick-knee** *Esacus recurvirostris*

Two seen in an island at Chilaw Sandspits on Jan 14.

**Brown-headed Gull** *Larus brunnicephalus*

About six seen at Chilaw Sandspits on Jan 14.

**Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica*  
Several at Chilaw Sandspits on Jan 14.

**Caspian Tern** *Hydroprogne caspia*  
About 50 seen at Chilaw Sandspits on Jan 14.

**Lesser Crested Tern** *Thalasseus bengalensis*  
Several at Chilaw Sandspits on Jan 14.

**Great Crested Tern** *Thalasseus bergii*  
Several at Chilaw Sandspits on Jan 14.

**Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo*  
A few at Chilaw Sandspits on Jan 14.

**Little Tern** *Sterna albifrons*  
A few at Chilaw Sandspits on Jan 14.

**Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybrida*  
Reasonably common in wetlands throughout.

**Rock Pigeon** *Columba livia*  
Common in or near human habitations and farms.

**CEYLON WOODPIGEON** *Columba torringtonii*  
One seen at Horton Plains on Jan 12.

**Spotted Dove** *Streptopelia chinensis*  
Common in more open habitats throughout.

**Eurasian Collared-dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*  
One seen at Mundel on Jan 14.

**Emerald Dove** *Chacophaps indica*  
Common in wetzone forests.

**Orange-breasted Green-pigeon** *Treron bicincta*  
Several seen at Udawalawe NP on Jan 10.

**CEYLON GREEN-PIGEON** *Treron pompadora*  
Present at Kitulgala, Sinharaja and Udawalawe. Split from Pomapadour Green-pigeon.

**Green Imperial-pigeon** *Ducula aenea*  
Common in wet zone forests.

**CEYLON HANGING-PARROT** *Loriculus beryllinus*  
Common in lowland forests and adjacent vegetation.

**Alexandrine Parakeet** *Psittacula eupatria*  
Fairly common in cultivation throughout.

**Rose-ringed Parakeet** *Psittacula krameri*  
Very common in open areas.

**Plum-headed Parakeet** *Psittacula cyanocephala*  
Seen at Sisiya on Jan 7 and Udawalawe on Jan 10.

**LAYARD'S PARAKEET** *Psittacula calthropae*  
Common in wet zone forests especially at Sinharaja.

**GREEN-BILLED COUCAL** *Centropus chlororhynchos*  
One seen at Sisiya's on Jan 6.

**Southern Coucal** *Centropus parroti*  
Reasonably common in cultivation and forests up to the elevation of Horton Plains (Jan 12).

**Sirkeer Malkoha** *Taccocua leschenaultii*  
One seen at Udawalawe on Jan 10.

**RED-FACED MALKOHA** *Phaenicophaeus pyrrhocephalus*  
One seen at Kitulgala on Jan 6.

**Blue-faced Malkoha** *Phaenicophaeus viridirostris*  
One seen at Udawalawe on Jan 10, the last malkoha for me.

**Jacobin Cuckoo** *Clamator jacobinus*  
One seen at Udawalawe on Jan 10 and Mundel on Jan 14.

**Asian Koel** *Eudynamis scolopacea*  
Common.

**Banded Bay Cuckoo** *Cacomantis sonneratii*  
One seen at Sisiya's on Jan 6.

**Grey-bellied Cuckoo** *Cacomantis passerinus*  
A few seen well at Udawalawe on Jan 10.

**Common Hawk-cuckoo** *Hierococcyx varius*  
One heard at Kitulgala on Jan 6 and seen at Sinharaja on Jan 8.

**Indian Cuckoo** *Cuculus micropterus*  
One seen at Sinharaja on Jan 8.

**SERINDIB SCOPS-OWL** *Otus thilohoffmanni*  
One male seen well at Kitulgala on Jan 5.

**Indian Scops-owl** *Otus bakkamoena*  
A pair in the Centauria Hotel garden at Embilipitiya on Jan 10. Split from Collared and Sunda Scops-owls.

**Forest Eagle-owl** *Bubo nipalensis*  
A stunning adult seen at Udawattakele on Jan 13.

**Brown Fish-owl** *Ketupa zeylonensis*  
A pair seen at Udawattakele on Jan 13.

**CHESTNUT-BACKED OWLET** *Galucidium castanonotum*  
Seen at Kitulgala on Jan 5 and 7.

**Brown Hawk-owl** *Ninox scutulata*  
One heard at Kitulgala on Jan 5.

**Ceylon Frogmouth** *Batrachostomus monileger*

One heard at Kitulgala on Jan 5 and a male seen near Sinharaja on Jan 7.

**Indian Swiftlet** *Collocalia unicolor*

Common in suitable habitats throughout.

**Brown-throated Needletail** *Hirundapus giganteus*

Several seen at Sinharaja on Jan 8 and 9.

**Asian Palm-swift** *Cypsiurus balasiensis*

Common in suitable habitats throughout.

**Little Swift** *Apus affinis*

A number seen at Mundel on Jan 14.

**Crested Treeswift** *Hemiprocne coronata*

Reasonably common in wooded areas.

**Malabar Trogon** *Harpactes fasciatus*

Present daily in Kitulgala and Sinharaja. My 1,200<sup>th</sup> life bird.

**Common Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis*

One at Kelani River on Jan 6 and another in the Royal Pond at Udawattakele on Jan 13.

**Stork-billed Kingfisher** *Pelargopsis capensis*

Reasonably common throughout.

**White-throated Kingfisher** *Halcyon smyrnensis*

Very common.

**Lesser Pied Kingfisher** *Ceryle rudis*

One seen en-route to Nurawa Eliya on Jan 11 and two at Mundel on Jan 14.

**Little Green Bee-eater** *Merops orientalis*

Common in dry zone areas.

**Blue-tailed Bee-eater** *Merops philippinus*

Common throughout. Also at Victoria Park.

**Chestnut-headed Bee-eater** *Merops leschenaultii*

Fairly common.

**Indian Roller** *Coracias benghalensis*

Regular in dry zone.

**CEYLON GREY HORNBILL** *Ocyeros gingalensis*

Common at Kitulgala.

**Malabar Pied Hornbill** *Anthracoceros coronatus*

Two at Embilipitiya on Jan 10 and at least 20 birds flocking at a fruiting tree at Udawalawe also on Jan 10.

**Brown-headed Barbet** *Megalaima zeylanica*

Regular but does not invade forests.

**YELLOW-FRONTED BARBET** *Megalaima flavifrons*

Very common in wet zone forests.

**CEYLON SMALL BARBET** *Megalaima rubricapillus*

Common in more open areas outside of forests. Split from Crimson-fronted Barbet of South India.

**Coppersmith Barbet** *Megalaima haemacephala*

Seen at Udawalawe on Jan 10.

**Indian Pygmy Woodpecker** *Dendrocopus nanus*

One seen en-route to Kitulgala on Jan 5 and another at Thano on Jan 11. Split from Brown-capped Woodpecker.

**Yellow-fronted Pied Woodpecker** *Dendrocopus mahrattensis*

1-2 at Udawalawe on Jan 10 and 1 at Thana Farm on Jan 11.

**Lesser Yellownape** *Picus chlorolophus*

One seen en-route to Kitulgala on Jan 5 and one at Kitulgala on Jan 6.

**Black-rumped Flameback** *Dinopium benghalense*

Common throughout including mountains.

**CRIMSON-BACKED FLAMEBACK** *Chrysocolaptes stricklandi*

One seen en-route to Kitulgala on Jan 5, one at Sinharaja on Jan 9 and up to three at Udawattakele on Jan 13. Split from Greater Goldenback.

**Indian Pitta** *Pitta brahyura*

Singles seen at Kitulgala on Jan 6 and 7, and at Udawattakele on Jan 13. Also heard elsewhere.

**Jerdon's Bushlark** *Mirafra affinis*

Several in dry scrub at Udawalawe on Jan 10 and one at Thano Farm on Jan 11. Split from Rufous-winged Bushlark.

**Ashy-crowned Finch-lark** *Eremopterix griseus*

About 12 at Mundel fields on Jan 14.

**Oriental Skylark** *Alauda gulgula*

4 seen in Mundel fields on Jan 14.

**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*

Common.

**Hill Swallow** *Hirundo domicola*

Two seen with Barn Swallows near Pattipola on Jan 12 and a few en-route from Nurawa Eliya to Kandy in a tea estate on Jan 13. A split from Pacific Swallow, *H. tahitica*.

**Red-rumped Swallow** *Hirundo daurica*

A number seen at Udawalawe on Jan 10.

**CEYLON SWALLOW** *Hirundo hyperythra*

Two seen en-route to Kitulgala on Jan 5 and two seen close up outside Kitulgala Resthouse on Jan 7. Split from Red-rumped Swallow, *H. daurica*.

**Forest Wagtail** *Dendronanthus indicus*

One seen at Kitulgala on Jan 6 and a number at Victoria Park on Jan 11-12.

**Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea*

Singles at Kelani River on Jan 6-7 and at Victoria Park on Jan 11-12.

**Richard's Pipit** *Anthus richardi*

Three seen and heard (a House Sparrow-like schreep) at Mundel on Jan 14.

**Paddyfield Pipit** *Anthus rufulus*

Common in grasslands.

**Blyth's Pipit** *Anthus godlewskii*

Several at Udawalawe on Jan 10.

**Black-headed Cuckooshrike** *Coracina melanoptera*

A male seen at Thano Farm on Jan 11.

**Small Minivet** *Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*

A pair seen at Thano Farm on Jan 11.

**Orange Minivet** *Pericrocotus flammeus*

Common in wet zone forests.

**Pied Flycatcher-shrike** *Hemipus picatus*

Singles seen at Kitulgala on Jan 6, Sinharaja on Jan 9 and Horton Plains on Jan 12.

**CEYLON WOODSHRIKE** *Tephrodornis affinis*

A single glimpsed at Udawalawe on Jan 10 and an adult seen close at Thano Farm on Jan 11. Split from Common Woodshrike.

**Asian Paradise-flycatcher** *Terpsiphone paradisi*

Reasonably common in gardens and woods.

**Black-naped Monarch** *Hypothymis azurea*

Common in wooded habitats.

**White-browed Fantail** *Rhipidura aureola*

One seen well en-route to Kitulgala on Jan 5.

**BLACK-CAPPED BULBUL** *Pycnonotus melanicterus*

Common at Sinharaja. Split from Black-crested Bulbul.

**Red-vented Bulbul** *Pycnonotus cafer*

The commonest bulbul in all habitats including Victoria Park.

**YELLOW-EARED BULBUL** *Pycnonotus penicillatus*

Present at Victoria Park on Jan 11-12 and at Horton Plains on Jan 12.

**White-browed Bulbul** *Pycnonotus luteolus*

One seen at Blue Magpie Lodge on Jan 8. Also seen at Embilipitiya on Jan 10 and heard at Mundel on Jan 14.

**Yellow-browed Bulbul** *Iole indica*

Common in wet zone forests.

**Square-tailed Black Bulbul** *Hypsipetes ganeesa*

Common in wet zone forests. Split from Black Bulbul.

**Common Iora** *Aegithina tiphia*

Common in gardens, farms and forest edges.

**Marshall's Iora** *Aegithina nigrolutea*

One pair seen well at Thano Farm on Jan 11.

**Gold-fronted Leafbird** *Chloropsis aurifrons*

Common at Kitulgala.

**Jerdon's Leafbird** *Chloropsis jerdoni*

One pair seen well at Kitulgala on Jan 6. A potential split from Blue-winged Leafbird, *C. cochinchinensis*.

**Brown Shrike** *Lanius cristatus*

Common from lowlands to mountains. Both subspecies *lucionensis* and *cristatus* encountered.

**Pied Thrush** *Zoothera wardii*

A male seen briefly with another bird at Victoria Park on Jan 11. Another male, this time seen much better, feeding on fruits here on Jan 12. My 1,100<sup>th</sup> Asian bird.

**SPOT-WINGED THRUSH** *Zoothera spiloptera*

Regular in wet zone forests.

**CEYLON SCALY THRUSH** *Zoothera imbricata*

One seen well at Sinharaja on Jan 7. Split from Scaly Thrush.

**Indian Blackbird** *Turdus simillimus*

Two seen at Horton Plains on Jan 12. A split from Eurasian Blackbird.

**CEYLON WHISTLING-THRUSH** *Myophonus blighi*

A female seen at Horton Plains on Jan 12.

**Asian Brown Flycatcher** *Muscicapa dauurica*

Common at Kitulgala.

**Brown-breasted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa muttui*

Common in lowland forests.

**Kashmir Flycatcher** *Ficedula subrubra*

A few at Victoria Park on Jan 11-12 and a male at Horton Plains on Jan 12.

**DUSKY BLUE FLYCATCHER** *Eumyias sordidus*

A pair seen at Horton Plains on Jan 12.

**Tickell's Blue Flycatcher** *Cyornis tickelliae*

Common in lowland.

**Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher** *Culicicapa ceylonensis*

One seen at Horton Plains on Jan 12.

**Indian Blue Robin** *Luscinia brunnea*

A subadult male at Kitulgala on Jan 6.

**Oriental Magpie-robin** *Copsychus saularis*

Common.

**White-rumped Shama** *Copsychus malabaricus*

A male at Udawattakele on Jan 13.

**Indian Black Robin** *Saxicoloides fulicatus*

Common in dry zone.

**Pied Bushchat** *Saxicola caprata*

A male seen at Nurawa Eliya on Jan 12.

**ASHY-HEADED LAUGHINGTHRUSH** *Garrulax cinereifrons*

Encountered daily at Sinharaja forest.

**BROWN-CAPPED BABBLER** *Pellorneum fuscicapillus*

One seen well at Kitulgala on Jan 7 and another glimpsed at Udawattakele on Jan 13.

**CEYLON SCIMITAR-BABBLER** *Pomatorhinus melanurus*

Fairly common in forests from lowlands to mountains. Split from Indian Scimitar-babbler.

**Tawny-bellied Babbler** *Dumetia hyperythra*

Encountered in dry zone habitats.

**Dark-fronted Babbler** *Rhopocichla atriceps*

Common in wet zone forests.

**Yellow-eyed Babbler** *Chrysomma sinense*

Seen at Udawalawe on Jan 10.

**CEYLON RUFOUS BABBLER** *Turdoides rufescens*

Fairly common at Kitulgala and Sinharaja.

**Yellow-billed Babbler** *Turdoides affinis*

Common garden bird.

**Zitting Cisticola** *Cisticola juncidis*

Found in dry zone habitats.

**Grey-breasted Prinia** *Prinia hodgsonii*

Dry zone species.

**Ashy Prinia** *Prinia socialis*

Dry zone species.

**Jungle Prinia** *Prinia sylvatica*

Dry zone species.

**Plain Prinia** *Prinia inornata*

Dry zone species.

**Common Tailorbird** *Orthotomus sutorius*

Common in all wooded habitats up to the mountains. Has browner wings than Malaysian birds.

**CEYLON BUSH-WARBLER** *Elaphrornis palliseri*

A number seen and heard at Horton Plains on Jan 12.

**Blyth's Reed-warbler** *Acrocephalus dumetorum*

Common in dry zone scrub.

**Sykes's Warbler** *Hippolais rama*

One seen well at Blue Magpie Lodge on Jan 8. A split from Booted Warbler.

**Bright-green Warbler** *Phylloscopus nitidus*

Common in forests. Split from Greenish Warbler.

**Large-billed Leaf-warbler** *Phylloscopus magnirostris*

Common in forests.

**Hume's Whitethroat** *Sylvia althaea*

One seen at Mundel field on Jan 14. A split from Lesser Whitethroat. Split from Lesser Whitethroat.

**Grey Tit** *Parus cinereus*

Common at Nurawa Eliya and Horton Plains. Split from Great Tit, *P. major*.

**Velvet-fronted Nuthatch** *Sitta frontalis*

Singles seen at Victoria Park on Jan 11 and Horton Plains on Jan 12.

**Thick-billed Flowerpecker** *Dicaeum agile*

1-2 seen en-route to Kitulgala on Jan 5.

**LEGGÉ'S FLOWERPECKER** *Dicaeum vincens*

Common at Kitulgala and Sinharaja.

**Pale-billed Flowerpecker** *Dicaeum erythrorhynchos*

The common flowerpecker here, seen up to the mountains.

**Purple-rumped Sunbird** *Leptocoma zeylonica*

Common in lowland forests.

**Purple Sunbird** *Cynnyris asiaticus*

Common in gardens and dry zone.

**Loten's Sunbird** *Cynnyris lotenius*

Fairly common in forest edges and dry zone.

**CEYLON WHITE-EYE** *Zosterops ceylonensis*

Common in the hills.

**Oriental White-eye** *Zosterops palpebrosus*

Frequented flowering trees at Kitulgala.

**Indian Silverbill** *Euodice malabarica*

A number seen at Udawalawe on Jan 10.

**White-rumped Munia** *Lonchura striata*

Common throughout.

**BLACK-THROATED (HILL) MUNIA** *Lonchura kelaarti*

A few seen in a tea estate near Sinharaja on Jan 7. Also 2 seen well at Blue Magpie Lodge on Jan 7. The 34<sup>th</sup> endemic split from sister species of South India although not recognized by some, e.g. Rasmussen.

**Scaly-breasted Munia** *Lonchura punctulata*

Recorded in dry zone, gardens and at Victoria Park.

**Tricoloured Munia** *Lonchura malacca*

A number of the white-bellied race seen at Udawalawe on Jan 10.

**House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*

Common in human habitations.

**Streaked Weaver** *Ploceus manyar*

Encountered in open country and wetlands. One seen building a nest en-route to Thana on Jan 11.

**Baya Weaver** *Ploceus philippinus*

Encountered in open country and wetlands.

**WHITE-FACED STARLING** *Sturnus albofrontata*

An adult seen well at Sinharaja on Jan 8 and two fly-bys here on Jan 9.

**Rosy Starling** *Sturnus roseus*

Common at Udawalawe NP.

**Common Myna** *Acridotheres tristis*

Common in towns, villages, dry zone and up the mountains.

**CEYLON HILL-MYNA** *Gracula ptilogenys*

A pair seen near Sinharaja on Jan 7. Subsequently, seen and heard daily at Sinharaja.

**Lesser Hill-myna** *Gracula indica*

Regular in wooded areas, a pair was finally seen well at Udawattakele on Jan 13. Split from Common Hill-myna, *G. religiosa*.

**Black-hooded Oriole** *Oriolus xanthornus*

Common oriole here.

**White-bellied Drongo** *Dicrurus caeruleus*

Common drongo here.

**CEYLON CRESTED DRONGO** *Dicrurus lophorinus*

Common lowland drongo. Split from Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, *D. paradiseus*.

**Ashy Woodswallow** *Artamus fuscus*

Regular in cultivation, often seen perching on wires.

**CEYLON BLUE MAGPIE** *Urocissa ornata*

1-2 seen briefly at Kitulgala on Jan 6. A distant bird was also seen at Sinharaja on Jan 7 and one was finally seen well near the research station at Sinharaja on Jan 8.

**House Crow** *Corvus splendens*

Common.

**Indian Jungle Crow** *Corvus culminatus*

Common. Split from Large-billed Crow, *C. macrorhynchos*. Sri Lanka birds looked much smaller and glossier than their Malaysian counterparts.