

Sri Lanka 2001 February

A trip with Andrew & Isabel Senior – My wife Isabel, and myself, decided in May 2000 to arrange a tour of Sri Lanka.

We've some experience of bird tours elsewhere, and were attracted to Sri Lanka for a number of reasons. Not least among these, was the list of Sri Lankan endemic birds.

Initial enquiries revealed a wide range of available tours, at a wide range of prices. Trip reports from birders who had made the trip previously suggested a few companies who offer to organise tours, and after exploring some of these, we eventually made our booking with: [A. Baur & Co.](#)(Travel) Ltd 5, Upper Chatham Street, Colombo 1, Sri Lanka.

Background

Dealing with Baur's proved a painless experience. The company is very experienced in bird watching tours, and offer a number of alternative packages. We chose a 21-day itinerary, giving us the opportunity to relax between visiting the main birding sites. This itinerary takes the visitor from airport back to airport, with Baur's making all of the necessary hotel bookings, as well as providing a personal vehicle and guide/driver for the duration of the tour. Also included were all fees to the sites visited, hire of four-wheel drive vehicles where appropriate, and even lunches!

Baur's also offer a tour which provides a vehicle along with guide/driver, but leaves you free to dictate your own pace, with the guide negotiating hotels on a day by day basis. This is probably the best option for those birders with limited time, and who wish to build a list quickly.

All the arrangements were made by E-mail. Baur's required no deposit, the whole arrangement being based on mutual trust.

Flights from Manchester to Colombo were expensive, but after some searching we eventually booked through: Trailfinders, 58, Deansgate, Manchester M3 2FF 0161 839 6969 Our route was to be Ringway to Amsterdam with KLM, and then a Martinair flight to Colombo. Total cost per head was US\$1490 for the tour, plus £350 for the flight. We took US\$ travellers cheques, and had no trouble changing these in hotels. Because of the tour we had selected, our expenses were limited to evening drinks, and tipping.

John Harrison's A Field Guide to the Birds of Sri Lanka (OUP) was our only reference for birding, and this proved perfectly adequate. It is both comprehensive and easy to use. We also had a 1:500000 road map (Berndtson & Berndtson) to help orientate ourselves.

Day by Day

25 January We arrived at Manchester in plenty of time, checked in our luggage, and went for breakfast. With only 20 minutes to go before our flight was due to leave, and

with no announcement of a boarding gate, we began to smell a rat. We eventually learned that our flight was postponed, because high winds in Amsterdam had reduced Schiphol to one runway, and that 'everything is delayed'. The delay lasted two hours, and we arrived in Amsterdam to find that 'everything' didn't include our connection, which had already left. After a bit of re-routing, we were able to get a fax off to Baur, explaining that we would be late. We arrived in Colombo at about 10:00 via KLM to Bahrain, and then Air Lanka.

Unfortunately, our luggage didn't arrive with us. We had had the foresight to take bins, scope and field guide as hand luggage, but that was about it. No tripod, no clothes other than what we were wearing to keep out the cold of Manchester, and, stupidly, no malaria tablets. Air Lanka gave us 9000 rupees to buy toiletries, and assured us that the luggage would arrive on the next flight, tomorrow morning.

Baur has an airport rep. known as Sam. Sam had received our fax, and waited at the airport until we arrived. He suggested that we should leave all the arrangements to him. We could commence our tour immediately, and Baur would take it upon themselves to chase up the baggage, clear it through customs, and deliver it to us wherever we were on the tour. This meant that we had to hand over to Sam our passports, our tickets and our luggage keys, and also sign some blank sheets of A4 upon which he would later type out his authorisation to collect the luggage on our behalf. This was all a bit disconcerting – 28hrs without sleep, and with what seemed to be all of our plans collapsing around us – I'm now being asked to hand over my passport and ticket home to a complete stranger! The alternative of course was to stay that day in Colombo, and collect our luggage personally tomorrow. We decided to take Sam's advice, so first cashing some travellers cheques before handing over the passports, we set off from Katunayake with our diver/guide, Sunil Alwis.

We were both pretty tired from the flight, and the drive to Anuradhapura was the longest single drive of the trip – we both slept for part of the drive. Our route took us north to Puttalam, and then north-east to Anuradhapura on route 12. This drive was our introduction to birds that would soon become familiar – kingfishers, bee-eaters and Indian rollers on the roadside wires, jacanas, egrets and herons on any wet land, and red-vented bulbul and magpie robins everywhere. We arrived at our hotel in the afternoon, and after freshening up, drove out of Anuradhapura towards Mihintale in order to view some large roadside tanks (Tanks are large reservoirs, often quite ancient, constructed as part of irrigation systems). Here we saw our first storks (Painted and Openbill), Indian and pygmy cormorants, and also our first peafowl. Brahminy kites were common. We saw several large flocks of Rose-coloured Starlings coming into roost

26 January After a good night's sleep, we felt much more refreshed, but were a little late in meeting Sunil after breakfast. As we left reception, Sunil was anxiously pacing around the hotel forecourt, waiting to show us the first of Sri Lanka's endemic species – Grey Hornbill, feeding in the hotel garden. It was a promising start! We drove back to the tanks that we had viewed yesterday.

The area was awash with birds. Cormorants, egrets, herons and storks were the most noticeable species, but the tanks were fringed with trees and bushes, and searching these provided our second endemic of the day -Yellow-fronted Barbet. There were also Minivets, loras and Black-hooded Orioles, and a brief foray into the scrub saw us

flush a Rain Quail. Our main target in this area though was Blue-faced Malkhoa. We had a brief glimpse of one bird in the scrub area, but were unable to find it again once it moved. Sunil though, was absolutely determined to get us good views of this stunning bird. We left the road that divides the two tanks, and drove off onto a minor road. Almost immediately, Sunil spotted two birds moving through the trees on the side of the track, so we pulled up and waited. Within a couple of minutes, two Blue-faced Malkohas crossed the road in front of us, and showed beautifully. They were joined later by a third bird, and were almost too close to focus bins on.

Continuing along the minor road, we came to a dirt track, which followed the bank of the tank we had been watching earlier, but on the opposite side. Whilst there were plenty of birds to watch, new species were becoming less frequent. Isabel wanted to visit the Buddhist temple that seemed to be the destination of the track. We made our way up to the temple, and it was here that we met Rathanawansa.

Rathanawansa is the priest at the temple, and he made us very welcome. After showing us the site, he invited us into his home for tea. In spite of the language difficulties, we were able to explain why we were in the area, and, although not a birder himself, Rathanawansa was interested, and offered to help.

Some bird guides seem not to welcome advice from others, particularly non-birders. This was definitely not the case with Sunil, who was soon deep in conversation with Rathanawansa. It was arranged that we would return in the evening, and that Rathanawansa would take us to an area where he regularly saw Nightjars.

We returned to the hotel, and birded around the lake and hotel grounds until setting off back to the tanks. Driving directly to the temple (encountering Besra and a huge water monitor on the way), we picked up Rathanawansa and let him direct us into an area of cultivated land where he had previously seen owls roosting. We had no luck with owls I'm afraid, but did see a huge variety of birds including a group of four of the local endemic race of Red-rumped Swallow sitting on wires, and our first Paradise Flycatcher – a male of the local race. Tailorbirds, Flowerpeckers, Barbets and Prinias showed, as well as a displaying Peacock. As dusk grew near, we boarded the van, and drove back to the tank.

Rathanawansa directed us to an area, where we parked up to wait for dark. As we got out of the vehicle, two Brown Fish-owls flew across in front of the van and we watched these fly along the tank edge and out of sight. A low concrete wall edged the track, and we mounted this wall in order to get a wider view of the area. After only a minute or two, Sunil heard Indian Nightjar call, and suddenly they were all around us, and even perched on the wall as we approached. We were absolutely elated.

As we sat on the wall considering our good fortune, another monk arrived, a friend of Rathanawansa. He had bought with him a sponge cake, which he presented to Isabel! Rathanawansa was insistent that Isabel accept the cake, but finally settled on allowing her to share the cake between us all. As we sliced the cake, Rathanawansa's apprentice, a monk of about nine years of age, appeared out of the darkness with a flask of tea. The night assumed an unreal quality from that point. Here we were, sitting

under a beautifully clear starlit sky, eating cake and drinking tea with Buddhist monks, and with Indian Nightjars all around us.

At the end of the picnic, we drove Rathanawansa and the young lad back to the temple. We could barely make progress for the nightjars sitting on the track! We got out of the van and walked – the nightjars allowed us to get within a couple of paces, and then would lift off and re-settle a few yards away. It was a magical night. Eventually we left Rathanawansa, and returned to the hotel. The night remains one of our favourite memories of Sri Lanka. I understand that Sunil may use this temple as a ‘hotel’ on future ‘open’ tours, although custom forbids that women should stay overnight. The only black spot on the day was the news that our luggage hadn’t made it to Sri Lanka – it would be here tomorrow.

27 January We left Anuradhapura for the drive to Sigiriya. Sri Lanka’s infrastructure is being neglected due to the expense of the war in the north, and this is plainly obvious from the roads. Even major roads are in a state of disrepair, heavily potholed in places, and unfit for high speed. Add to this the Sri Lankans’ easy going nature – life seems to proceed at a steady pace, with little evidence of rushing – and the penchant of the local dogs (and there are thousands of dogs), for laying on the tarmac, and you’re left with a realisation that you will go nowhere quickly. Indeed, Sunil only broke through the thirty miles an hour barrier on a couple of occasions during the whole trip. We stopped often at likely looking places, and added our first eagles of the trip – White-bellied Sea-eagle and Crested Serpent-eagle during one such stop. There were further good views of Grey Hornbill, as well as a large variety of herons, egrets and waders in the paddy fields and tanks.

It was late morning when we arrived at Sigiriya. Once we had left the main road, we had a fairly long drive through scrub land which gradually thickened into jungle. Again, a number of short stops were taken in order to look at birds, including a fantastic White-rumped Sharma performing like a star. One saddening aspect of this drive was to see captured porcupines, leashed outside of homes, in an obvious effort to tempt tourists in stopping for photographs. There was plenty of ‘wild’ wildlife however, most noticeably the pink-faced Toque, and grey-faced Langur monkeys. We also saw a couple of mongooses and many small Palm squirrels; perhaps more excitingly, certainly for us, our first sight of wild elephant dung!

Sigiriya is famous for its rock fortress, and a small village here is the location of a few hotels. The approach road to the village crosses a huge embankment built to contain another tank. We stopped here to scan the lake, and found our first Grey-rumped Treeswift perched in a tree overhanging the tank. This isn’t an endemic or even a particularly difficult bird to find, but, for me anyway, it was the best bird so far – an absolute stunner, sitting quietly but with its crest fully erect, just as Harrison had promised! We watched it for a while, but it was settled, and didn’t take flight.

We stayed at the Sigiriya Hotel, which was pleasant, arriving in time for lunch. Once seated in the dining room, a roofed area, with open walls, the full magnificence of the ‘rock’ could be seen. It’s difficult to describe this feature – just a huge single boulder seemingly dropped in the middle of the jungle, with a fifteen hundred years old fortress built on its summit. We walked out with Sunil during the afternoon, and saw Pied

Cuckoo, Black-headed Cuckoo-shrike, more sunbirds, pigeons, parakeets (rose-ringed) and barbets, as well as another Blue-faced Malkhoa. We also found Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike, and Booted Warbler in the hotel gardens.

In the evening we drove off to a Fish-owl stakeout near more tanks. We did see Fish-owl, but again, only brief flight views. Black-crowned Night-heron, White-browed Fantail and Stork-billed Kingfisher combined to make this a pleasant evening, but the real star of the evening was a beautiful white male Paradise Flycatcher, looking almost unearthly as it drifted through the dusk with its tail streaming behind it.

Disappointingly, our luggage was still off on travels of its own. The people at Bours had established that it was now in Delhi, and were doing their utmost to convince someone to send it on. Given the dreadful earthquake in India at this time, I doubt if our luggage had a high priority in Delhi. The hotel offered a laundry service, but not overnight, so we washed what we could get away without wearing to dinner, and had a couple of beers.

28 January An early start today, in order to have a good look around the paths and tracks in the local area. We were still unable to dress properly, and this perhaps effected Sunil's plans for the day. Nevertheless, we set off in good spirits. First bird of the day was an Indian Pitta, our first Pitta of any description. A magnificent bird, skulking in the cover of bushes initially, but showed in its full splendour after a short wait, and we had barely left the hotel grounds! The early morning is reckoned to be the most productive birding period for this site, and so it proved, We soon clocked up a pair of Brown-capped Woodpeckers, a very close view of Plaintive Cuckoo, more Paradise Flycatchers, and our first Jungle Fowl, though Isabel missed this. Endemic species included Grey Hornbill again and Brown-capped Babbler, another skulker. We continued searching the darker areas of undergrowth for Orange-headed Thrush, but we had no joy with this. Our route took us on one track that showed recent signs of elephant – damaged trees as well as fresh dung and even footprints. Sunil assured us that wild elephants were known to be in the area, but the only one we saw was a domesticated beast. We returned to the hotel via the tank, under the massif of the rock fortress, and found our first crocodile of the trip basking on an exposed rock in the tank. Very thrilling of course, but I'm cursed (or blessed, depending on circumstances!) with a vivid imagination! There was nothing solid between us and it, and where was its mates?

We were soon distracted by a raptor calling from a nearby tree, and followed Sunil to find a juvenile eagle calling from a bare branch. I find raptor identification especially difficult, and I was unable to make a sure identification. Some moments later however all became clear when two adult Changeable Hawk-eagles responded to the call. Sunil later identified the nest.

Lunch time, and early afternoon, are generally quiet for birds, and our routine was to take it easy for a few hours before venturing out again during the evening. I wasn't particularly weary, and decided to take a walk out on my own. It was very hot, but cooler along the jungle tracks. After a couple of hours of peering into dark cover, I came to the main road to the village, and decided to walk the road back, mainly to admire the excellent views of the fortress. I was still casually glancing into cover and

a brief movement attracted my attention. Squatting by the side of the road, I waited, and an Indian Pitta hopped into view. As I brought up my bins, there was further movement, and a Brown-capped Babbler joined the Pitta. I know this sounds unlikely, but as I scanned from Pitta to Babbler, another bird revealed itself, tossing aside the leaf litter as it hunted for food – an adult male Orange-headed Thrush! I actually had all three birds in the same field of view of the bins on a number of occasions. This was the only view I had of Orange-headed Thrush throughout the trip, and although we searched at a number of other sites, neither Isabel nor Sunil saw one at all. We all three returned to the same site later, but though the Pitta and Babbler both showed, we couldn't find the thrush.

The evening walk brought us a good variety of birds, including three species of Barbet, Chestnut-headed Bee-eater, Greater Flameback and Blue-winged Leafbird. Late evening news – our luggage was still in Delhi, in spite of the assurances which Air Lanka had given Baur. By now, Sunil was offering us clothes from his own wardrobe, and it was looking as if I'd have to bite the bullet and buy a razor!

29 January The rock fortress at Sigiriya is a well known site for a local race of Peregrine known as Shaheen. I thought I'd seen a pair of these birds while out on my own yesterday, but though the flight profile looked right, they were distant, and I wasn't totally convinced. So, when Isabel suggested that we take a day off from birding, and attempt the tourist route up to the fortress, I was easily convinced.

Consequently, we set off early, in order to make the climb before the full heat of the day. Sunil found us a guide, but refused to climb the rock himself, claiming vertigo and an aversion to heights. The rock is surrounded by a number of moats and walls, which enclose the 'winter palace' – a series of gardens, pools and terraces – and we walked through these before commencing the climb.

Climbing the rock isn't too strenuous; the whole route is a series of stairs cut into the rock, with a couple of stretches of cast iron walkways, installed by the British in the 1930s, linking across areas where the stone stairs run out. A steady climb brings you to the 'Lion Gate', imposing remains of what must have been a fantastic structure, which represents the half way point. We stopped to rest here. Sunil had impressed upon our guide the need to see Shaheen, and the lad really did try. We saw the holes in the rock where the birds roost, complete with the tell tale white markings, but of the birds, no sign! I spent some time going through the flocks of hirundines and swifts which continually hunt around the rock, and was able to pick out Indian Swiftlet and Little Swift, but I saw no raptors at all. Having come so far, we decided to push on to the summit, and have a look at the summer palace.

It was certainly worth the effort. Fabulous views in all directions and a male Blue Rock-thrush performing at the very top. I spent some time in silent admiration for a king who used to live alone up here for six months of the year, with only five hundred concubines for company!

Archaeologically, the site is fantastic. It's claimed to be another 'eighth wonder of the world', but this one really does live up to the title; thoroughly recommended to anyone with even only a passing interest. Sunil's warnings of vertigo however, should be taken

seriously – my vivid imagination again I suppose, but those walkways are seventy years old!

We went shopping in the afternoon, though there is limited opportunity in Sigiriya. We were desperate for a change of clothes, and I was told that remaining unshaven any longer was not an option. We managed to sufficient gear to get by for the next day or so, but still no malaria tablets. Thankfully, this time of year sees the mosquitoes at their quietest. Back at the hotel, an eight foot rat snake was our first serpent of the trip, lazily working it's way across the hotel car park, after a shower of rain.

Later that afternoon, Sunil offered the chance to drive to Ritigala Natural Reserve. This was a site with which Sunil was unfamiliar, but he'd heard that Spurfowl was a possibility here. Spurfowl seems to be one of the most difficult of the endemics to see, so I was happy to give it a shot. Birdwise however, it proved disappointing.

Certainly the site looked promising, but the weather was against us, with overcast skies and steady drizzle. Sunil found a local guide who took us to the Spurfowl site, but we had no luck. This site also offers some archaeological interest – un-restored ancient ruins of a huge temple complex, including a hospital, complete with stone beds, medicine preparation equipment and toilets!

We decided to delay our departure in the morning, in order to have a last look for Shaheen. Arrived back at the hotel to find... .no luggage.

30 January Awoke this morning to find the rock enveloped in low cloud, and another slight drizzle setting in. Nevertheless, after breakfast, Sunil drove us on a complete circuit of the rock, and we struck lucky near the main entrance to the winter palace area. A single raptor came fairly low across the road in front of the van, though by the time I'd got out, the bird was moving quickly away from us. It looked good to me, though my views weren't ideal. Sunil assured us that it was Shaheen, but... Anyway, it's my list, and it's on!

Leaving Sigiriya, we set off for our next destination, Kandy. Our route took us through the spice growing areas along route 9. We stopped at one of these spice gardens, where we were suckered into buying a series of cure-alls, but a pretty thorough massage, and excellent views of Southern Hill Myna made up for it.

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t was an eventful trip. We drove through a small town, which was clearing up after what must have been an horrendous flash flood from the night before. The river level had dropped by the time we arrived, but homes and shops were a foot deep in silt and mud (and probably worse), and the riverbanks were strewn with personal possessions. It's a little uncomfortable being a tourist in such a situation.

The volume of traffic increased dramatically as we approached Kandy, and I was relieved that it was Sunil who was driving, and not me. After a three week tour, I still don't understand all of the driving conventions of Sri Lanka, especially the use of

indicators! We made it the hotel unscathed, although we did see one pedestrian, an old man, felled by a truck. People were rushing to help.

The Queen's Hotel in Kandy is a beautiful hotel, if a little pretentious. As we pulled up at the hotel entrance, a uniformed doorman rushed to open the van doors for us, and asked for our luggage. I explained that our luggage was in the back of the van, and he insisted in taking it in for us. It was wonderful to see this guy escorting us through the marbled halls to the reception desk, carrying two Morrison's plastic carrier bags, which I'd found in my hand luggage, and into which we'd packed the clothes we had bought! He didn't bat an eyelid.

After settling in, Sunil took us to the Royal Botanical Gardens at Peradeniya – only a short drive from the hotel. The gardens were obviously a popular place for the local folk, and the birding was a little slow to start with.

The most obvious feature of the gardens was a huge colony of Flying Foxes, which started to stir as evening approached. These were both much larger and much noisier than I had anticipated. I missed a fly-past of the endemic Hanging-parrot, but as we tried to re-locate these, we found a magnificent Alexandrine Parakeet sat on a bare tree stump. Again, surprisingly large, heavy billed and long-tailed. We watched this until our attention was drawn towards a Black Eagle soaring high over the park.

We continued around the park, and found a small group of Parakeets in a palm tree, feeding on fruits. Sunil thought these were Layard's, but I couldn't be sure. Our views were brief and obstructed as the birds fed, and we could find no convincing feature for either Layard's or Rose-ringed. Bill colour was a non-descript grey, and the collars were ill-defined. Even the head colour was confusing, neither the bright green of Rose-ringed, of which we'd seen plenty, but neither the blue/grey I'd expected of Layard's. I guess we were looking at either juvenile or moulting birds – all pretty unsatisfactory. We decided to move on, but had barely gone ten paces when Sunil set up the scope and stood back in satisfaction. 'Look', he said. Sure enough, an unmistakable Layard's, just over the boundary fence. We saw several more after this of course, the first is always the hardest. I also caught up with Hanging-parrot, and, towards the end of our walk, Forest Wagtail and a pair of Scarlet Minivets.

We returned to the hotel very satisfied, but the day was to get much, much better. We washed some of our gear, and went down for a beer and then dinner. We were just about to have coffee, when a lad from the reception desk came to tell us we had a visitor! Intrigued, I went through, to be confronted by Sam and two bags! Baur's had achieved the impossible, and had managed to get our luggage out of India. As soon as it landed, they despatched Sam, and a driver to bring it directly to us. We really hadn't expected to see it again, and were already mentally preparing lists for the insurance claim!

I must stress again, that Baur's responsibility here was nil. The flight arrangements weren't part of the package, and as far as I was concerned, Baur's had no responsibility at all until they met us at Colombo. They simply assumed the task of re-uniting us with

our baggage as a part of their service to a customer, and I record here my appreciation for the efforts of the Baur team, and in particular of Perry Viswaligham. Thank you all!

31 January This was a relatively quiet day. An early morning trip to Udawatte Kele Sanctuary produced another brief glimpse of Brown Fish-owl, and a variety of flycatchers including Paradise, Asian Brown and Tickell's Blue. Also plenty of Forest Wagtails and Black Bulbuls, and a party of five Brown-capped Babblers foraging through the weeds at the side of a track.

We visited the Temple of the Tooth, which is situated across the road from the Queens hotel. The lake adjacent to the temple held the usual cormorants, pelicans, egrets and herons, but perhaps the most memorable thing about the area around the hotel was the number of Jungle Crows roosting in the trees around the lake, and the noise they make. We had superb views of Brown Wood-owl today, at a site known to Sunil!

01 February We left Kandy for our next destination -Nuwara Eliya. During the week before we left Britain, we had watched a documentary film featuring the elephant orphanage at Pinawele. Although not on our itinerary, we persuaded Sunil to drive via Pinawele so that we could have a look. We did the whole tourist bit – saw the baby elephants being fed, wandered around the sanctuary, and watched, while drinking coffee on a restaurant terrace, as the herd was taken down to the river to bathe. It really is worth a visit if you're that close. There was a good selection of birds around the sanctuary, especially Rollers and Bee-eaters.

Leaving Pinawele, we drove up to Nuwara Eliya. As our altitude increased, we found an enormous difference in temperature; Kandy had been oppressively hot, but we were now finding a distinct chill in the air. We drove through mile after mile of tea plantations – huge areas of mono-culture which weren't particularly good for birding, but were nonetheless fascinating to us, who'd never seen tea on this scale before. It seems that the estate workers each have a plot of land which they work for extra income, and one of the most striking aspects of the drive was the number of roadside stalls offering fresh vegetables. The vegetables seemed to be top quality, though we didn't buy anything. It was a new dimension though; we were expecting to see exotic fruits and so on, but not leeks and beetroots!

We eventually arrived, according to a welcome sign erected across the road, at 'The Salubrious Climes of Nuwara Eliya'! It really is a beautiful town, looking like a well-maintained park as we drove in. We were booked into The Rock Hotel, a small family run hotel on a hillside overlooking the town and its lake. We were prepared for the cold, with jumpers and fleeces with us, but not for the rain. As we settled into our room, the weather became more showery, not a good omen for our afternoon trip to the Victoria Gardens, but the rain had eased before we set off.

The Victoria Gardens don't cover a large area, indeed compared to the Botanical Gardens at Kandy, the park was quite small, it's also situated in the centre of town and seems to be a popular spot. We'd read good reports of birding in this park, but our initial impression wasn't optimistic. However, as we set off with Sunil, and soon saw our first new endemic – a small party of Yellow-eared Bulbuls. We soon added Ceylon White-eye and the local race of Great Tit. Our main target was Indian Blue

Robin, and as we walked out of cover into a lawned area with trees, I caught a glimpse of a bird flitting up into a tree. I shouted that I had found our Robin, but then lost it completely. As Sunil came across to us, I found the bird again – not a Robin at all, but a Kashmir Flycatcher, adult male. Obvious with hindsight I suppose. All Sri Lankan thrushes are skulking creatures, not given to perching in trees out of cover, but the colours looked right at first sight. This was the only sighting we had of this species – a real stunner.

At a quarter to five, no sooner and no later, we had an appointment with a clump of bamboo tucked away in the corner of the park beside a small stream. The weather had turned again, and it was now raining fairly steadily, so we were happy to squat amongst the bamboo and wait. In spite of the claims of the road sign earlier, we had discovered a distinctly un-salubrious part of Nuwera Eliya. The area was muddy, heavily littered, and uncomfortable – for us. The Ruddy-breasted Crake which walked through, seemed quite happy, and so did the Blue Robin which hopped across to see what we were up to! As well as these two delightful birds, we had poor views of a couple of Pied Thrushes sitting deeper in the bush. We waited for better views, but the birds had more patience in the rain than we did, so we beat a retreat, and bought a couple of waterproof jackets in preparation for tomorrow's trip to Horton Plains.

02 February We were up early for the trip to Horton Plains, very early. It's a fairly good drive, and you need to be at Arrenga Pond before first light in order to have any chance of finding Whistling Thrush. Sunil had no tape of this species, and the birds are apparently responsive to tapes. Up to this point, we had only used a tape-lure on one occasion, for our first Pitta at Sigiriya. In the event, the lack of a tape didn't matter. As we spread ourselves along the road, Sunil picked up the bird on call, and we got one brief view, and then a slightly longer view, and the blue wing patches as the bird flew. That was it. A nice tick, but it would have been nice to watch it for longer. As dawn broke, Sunil pointed out first one, and then two more, Ceylon Woodpigeons – another endemic.

Horton Plains was a different landscape to any we'd seen so far – long areas of rolling grassland, interspersed with small copses. As we drove further into the plains a couple of Sambhur walked out of the mist and across the road in front of us, quite unconcerned. The weather stayed overcast, with some rain, and pretty chilly. We saw a lot of raptors, but I was only able to identify Crested Honey-buzzard with any certainty. There was plenty of other interest – Pied Stonechat, Zitting Cisticola, more Woodpigeons, and, this time with a tape, Ceylon Bush-warbler, our third endemic of the day. Before we left the plains, we'd also seen our first, and only, Dull-blue Flycatcher, and a pair of Indian Scimitar-babblers.

Driving back from the plains, we had excellent views of a juvenile Mountain Hawk-eagle, feeding on the ground, and many sightings of the local Blackbird race – a very greyish looking race compared with ours. Finally, as we crossed a railway line, at a station, which Sunil told us was the highest in Sri Lanka, we stopped at a small village where Sunil had previously seen breeding Hill Swallow. After searching around the buildings, we eventually found a nest under construction, and a pair of Hill Swallows waiting for us to clear off so they could get on with it.

Birding around the hotel during the afternoon, I found Bythe's Reed-warbler, Grey Wagtail and a flock of fifteen or so Nutmeg Mannikins. We returned to Victoria Gardens in the late afternoon, and had even better views of the Crake and the Blue Robin, but no luck with Pied Thrush.

It maybe worth mentioning a couple of Sunil's strengths as a guide at this point. Firstly, he never gives up. As long and as often as you're prepared to try, Sunil will keep going. Secondly, Sunil isn't arrogant. He doesn't believe he knows it all, and is always willing to seek out and listen to local knowledge. Indeed, he sometimes seems to have a network of informers who can update his knowledge as soon as he arrives on site. This was no exception. A word with the park-keeper led to the development of a new plan – an early morning visit rather than an evening one, and a different clump of bushes.

03 February First thing this morning, a return to Victoria Gardens, and spectacular views of a male and a female Pied Thrush, firstly working along the muddy bank of a stream, and then moving up through the bushes on the far bank. A walk around the park produced our only Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher, more White-eyes, Great Tits, Yellow-eared Bulbul, and so on, but no Monarch Flycatcher, which was the only dip so far.

This was soon repaired with a trip to Hakgalla Botanical gardens, where Monarch was our first bird. It was here that we first made the distinction between Brown and Philippine Shrike, seeing both and being able to compare these. Sunil also thought he may have got a glimpse of Whistling Thrush, but after a search, we couldn't find the bird again.

We visited the Labookellie tea estate and factory during the afternoon, and saw Ceylon White-eyes at a nest in the car park, and Hill Swallows nesting under the eaves of the tea factory.

04 February The drive from Nuwera Eliya to Tissamaharama was the second longest drive of the trip, but passed quickly thanks partly to the stunning scenery as we left the highlands, and partly to the birding en-route. The weather improved as we left the highlands, becoming sunny and very warm, and we were looking forward to some more good birding at Tissa. We breakfasted at a roadside stall (our second breakfast of the day), enjoyed the warmth and anticipation, and admired a very beautiful landscape.

We saw a few soaring raptors, and stopped once for good views of Crested Serpent-eagle, but perhaps our luckiest find was just as we arrived in the low country. As we drove through a small village, Isabel noticed a raptor perched in clear view on a bare tree amongst some cultivated fields. Sunil and I both missed it, but after finding a place to turn, we went back for another look. The bird was still there, and I was able to get a good scope view. It took a while to work it out, but we finally identified it as Jerdon's Baza, definitely not on my expected list. The barring wasn't as well defined as my field guide suggested, but the crest and tail pattern were right.

We took route 5 to Tissa, but at some point, south of Kuda Oya Camp, we left the main road for a series of minor roads, which eventually brought us to Tissa. Sunil explained that this was his 'private birding road', and we had a marvellous couple of hours along

here. Pied and Lesser Cuckoo were two early ticks, and then a gorgeous male Pallid Harrier, casually quartering an area of scrub between the road and another huge tank. We also saw our first Greater Thick-knees here, two birds sitting in the shade of bushes, and a nesting colony of Baya Weavers. With a back up cast of Bee-eaters, Munias, Bulbuls and Sunbirds, as well as the usual Herons and Egrets and occasional Storks, the time seemed to fly by. As we drove along beside the irrigation ditches near to Tissa, we found our first Black Bittern of the trip, fishing in mid-stream, and completely out of cover.

Our hotel in Tissamaharama was the Priyankara, a modern, comfortable place. Once again, we settled in during the heat of the early afternoon, but later, Sunil and I went out birding again, while Isabel stayed at the hotel. Some wet paddy fields turned up waders such as Greenshank, Redshank, Wood and Common Sandpipers, and Pacific Golden Plover, but Sunil's real intention was to find us good views of Fish-owl. We'd had brief views of these at Anuradhapura, at Sigiriya and at Kandy, but still hadn't been able to study them.

Arriving at yet another tank, we parked up and walked around the embankment. The tank had very little open water, being overgrown with water lilies and supporting large numbers of Pheasant-tailed Jacanas and White-breasted Waterhen. The thin fringes of reeds alongside the road held both Black and Yellow Bitterns, and we saw both, mainly Black. Whiskered Terns were everywhere. Sunil's local network of informants seemed to have worked again, and we walked directly to a tree standing in the water of the tank, in which a Brown Fish-owl, the female I'm told, was sitting on her nest. The male was soon found, roosting nearby. We had wonderful views of both of these birds, though by the time I'd finished there was a fairly long queue of local folk wanting to have a look. This isn't unusual in Sri Lanka; often when standing back from a scope, there'll be a group of people hanging around, hoping to be invited to have a look for themselves. This is always good natured and friendly, and never a hassle.

Having seen the owls, Sunil then led me to a nearby coconut grove where White-naped Woodpeckers were known to have bred. The grove was simply a series of tower blocks for Rose-ringed parakeets, with almost every trunk containing a series of holes, each with its resident Parakeet. A woodpecker did fly past, but I missed initially. As we wandered through the grove searching, Sunil re-located the bird. In a tree containing at least four nesting holes, three were occupied by Parakeets, and one by the White-naped Woodpecker.

We watched this bird for perhaps 30 – 40 minutes, and during all that time the woodpecker was under continual assault by the parakeets. Landing on the trunk, normally below the woodpecker hole, one or two parakeets would cautiously approach the hole. The woodpecker, a male, would allow them to approach only so far before pushing its head out of the hole. This was normally enough to drive off the parakeets, though they were soon back. Those parakeets which didn't take flight at the first show were attacked, but only when they got sufficiently close for the attack to be made without the woodpecker having to leave the hole completely. Eventually, the male was relieved at the hole by the female flying in. She took over the defence role while the male flew off. We left the site with the battle still raging. It was difficult to see any other result than the eventual expulsion of the woodpeckers.

05 February A full day's safari into Yala National Park. A couple of points here. Firstly, Baur's vehicles can't be driven in the National Parks – you have to transfer to a four-wheel drive vehicle. These seem to be operated by individuals, not by the Park authorities, so a bit of negotiation may be required. On our inclusive tour, this wasn't a concern. Sunil made the arrangements, and we had the same vehicle and driver for this, and the next two days. Obviously, things work better if there is a rapport between your guide and the driver, and this was certainly the case with us. Secondly, in order to enter the Park, you're obliged to take a 'tracker' in with you. The hire of a tracker was also part of our inclusive tour, but trackers do seem to vary in their knowledge of birds. The guy we took with us wasn't a lot of help.

When we finally set off into the Park, soon after dawn, Isabel and I were accompanied by Sunil, the driver, and a tracker! The Park has strict rules governing where you can drive – only on established tracks; and where you can dismount from the vehicle – hardly anywhere! Perhaps the most disappointing aspect of the safari was that, in Yala, the truck must be covered. Our Landrover therefore, had to have its soft top on, although the sides were rolled up. Our views were pretty restricted and after a few hours of bouncing around, you really do feel the need for a stretch.

Nevertheless, Yala was unmissable, and we had a great time. We were lucky enough to see a single Black-necked Stork, a bird that is apparently becoming very scarce in Sri Lanka. Pied Hornbills were stunning, and we saw several. Other highlights were Plaintive Cuckoo, Eurasian Spoonbill, Grey-headed Fish-eagle, White-bellied Sea-eagle, Junglefowl and Peafowl everywhere, and my only Indian Courser. The Grey-headed Fish-eagles gave great views, perched out on the bare branches of flooded trees. We also built up an impressive list of mammals, by the far the most exciting being a single adult bull elephant feeding about fifty yards back from the track. This was only the second time that Sunil had seen a wild tusker. There were plenty of wild boar, spotted deer, sambur and a couple of species of monkey, as well as crocodiles, monitor lizards, and turtles. We also saw civet cat, mongoose and hares.

During our stop for lunch, a picnic on the beach, we watched dolphins playing fairly close inshore. There were also very distant birds, possibly petrels of some kind, but too far off for me to make any identification possible.

06 February Another early morning start, in order to arrive at Bundala Bird Sanctuary before dawn, and transfer into the jeep again. This time the roof was off, and this made the whole experience so much better. Also, Sunil knew a tracker here who did know his stuff. We greeted dawn parked axle deep at the edge of a large pond, and surrounded by birdsong. Five Black-crowned Night-herons were roosting nearby, great squadrons of Flamingos flying across, and a constant movement of flocks of Garganey, fifty birds strong. Marsh Sandpipers, Greenshanks and Plovers were feeding behind us, Jacanas, Waterhen, Kingfishers and Stilts on the main pond, and birds in every bush. A Marsh Harrier and then a Shikra flew over, and it was difficult to know where to look first.

Bundala covers a large area, and includes a length of coastline. It was here that we tried for Ashy-crowned Sparrow Lark, but with no joy. This bird eluded us throughout the trip. We did however find more Thick-knees, both Greater and Stone Curlews, and

a large variety of waders and terns. Other highlights were further sightings of Blue-faced Malkhoa, and our first sighting of Sirkeer Malkhoa. Surprisingly, this one was tail-less!

The drive back to the hotel was hot, and we were fading fast. We made a couple of stops and found Pintail Snipe amongst others, but decided to take it easy during the heat of the afternoon. We did return later in the afternoon, to the tank area which Sunil and I visited on the 04th. Isabel was able to catch up on the Brown Fish-owl, still on the nest, and amazingly, the White-naped Woodpecker, where we watched the female still defending her nest hole against continual incursions by the parakeets!

In the evening we drove off to an area close to Ruhuna Wildlife Sanctuary. There was a military post near the Park entrance, and we chatted with the sentries for a while. One lad insisted on showing us his bullet wounds received in a fire fight in the north. Though not well reported here, I'm left with the impression from this conversation and others, that very few people have been left unaffected by this campaign, and it is obviously a serious drain on the country's resources. Having said that, I should emphasise that we never once felt threatened or at risk. The fighting is contained in the north, and apart from the risk of bomb attacks, a risk we all share nowadays, southern Sri Lanka seems a safe tourist destination.

As dusk fell, out came the cassette player, and within a couple of minutes, we'd seen Jerdon's Nightjar. Also feeding in the dusk were a number of Grey-rumped Tree-swifts, as utterly beautiful in flight as they are perched. Returning to the hotel, we saw both Indian and Jerdon's Nightjars on the track, mostly Indian, but even so, not in the numbers we had seen near Anuradhapura.

07 February We left Tissa in the morning to drive to Embilipitiya, and the magnificent Hotel Centuria, a wonderful place where our ground floor room included a balcony built over the lake. This was to be our base for our visit to Uda Welawe National Park. We drove back to the park after lunch, and again transferred to the jeep. Although not disappointing for birds, because of the time of day, we didn't see anything like the numbers of birds that we'd seen on the previous safaris. We saw Blue-faced and Sirkeer Malkhoas, Rain Quail, and large flocks of both Nutmeg and Black-headed Munias. We dipped however, on lesser Adjutant. They had been seen during the morning, but had left before we appeared.

The main attraction at Uda Welawe though, was wild elephant, and it didn't disappoint in this. During the afternoon we saw approximately thirty, mostly in twos, threes or fours, but with a few single animals as well. One memorable single was a young bull that wasn't at all pleased when our Landrover came across him feeding near the lagoon where we were looking for adjutant. His trumpeting, and general demeanour, was threatening. Apart from the noise, and the pawing of the ground, the way in which it was hauling great tussocks of grass from the ground, and hurling them over its shoulders, certainly intimidated Isabel and I. An open topped Landrover didn't seem a lot of protection, especially when it began to chase us. Sunil and the tracker weren't so easily taken in. As soon as the elephant began to run, they stopped the truck. This caused the elephant to stop. After a couple of repeats of this, it became clear that

although it wanted to chase us, the elephant had no plans to catch us! It was just a game of bluff, and honour was served when we left.

08 February We left the Centuria after breakfast for the drive to Sinharaja, and our introduction to Martin's Place. We had read trip reports that mentioned Martin's Place, but the real thing was nothing like we'd imagined.

The Sinharaja Rainforest Reserve is large area of jungle covered mountain, and although some of the tracks we walked offered fairly level ground, the lasting impression is one of a very hilly landscape. The road to the reserve stops at Sinharaja village, and it is here that the Park H.Q. is situated, and from here that you are assigned a tracker. The entrance to the area of the reserve we were interested in, is four or five kilometers from the village, up a dirt track, and I do mean up! At the far end of this track is the entrance to the reserve, and built on the side of a hill, Martin's Place.

It is possible to stay in hotels at Ratnapura, but for early morning birding, this would be an unacceptably long drive. Martin's Place is far and away the most convenient base for birding in Sinharaja. Martin is a retired reserve warden, with an encyclopaedic knowledge of the reserve and its wildlife. He lives in a small house with a wonderful view across a valley to the forest beyond. The house has a large, roofed balcony built on pillars from the hillside below. This isn't a hotel in any sense of the word that I understand. Martin has built two blocks of accommodation. One block consists of three double rooms, side by side, and the second block holds a series of bunks. The blocks are of concrete block construction, with no pretence at luxury – indeed, no pretence at comfort! The walls don't reach the roof, the doors still have the markings of the original packing cases from which they were built, and the windows are just holes in the wall with ill-fitting plank shutters.

Our room was furnished with two beds, both with mosquito nets, and three plank shelves. A toilet/shower was attached, but the whole unit was only the size of a cupboard, and you had to remove the toilet roll before showering! The sheets come pre-stained as part of the service! We could clearly hear everything that happened in the other rooms. No hot water of course, but Martin did have a generator, which he ran from 19:00 till 22:00 each night. This provided power for Martin's TV and enough to drive a couple of light bulbs.

Martin doesn't sell food, but part of his service is that he'll cook your food for you, so you need to arrive with sufficient food, tea, coffee, sugar, for your stay, as well as toilet roll, candles, and anything else you may need. Beer is a good idea. Watch where you store this lot though – we had rats in the room during the night on at least two of the three nights we stayed here. They didn't damage much though, just a hole in Isabel's luggage where she'd left a packet of peanuts, a chewed pair of shoes, and, for some reason, my walking socks!

My intention here isn't to put anybody off Martin's Place. On the contrary, I wouldn't have missed it for anything: but don't be under any illusions. On the plus side is the whole ambience of the place – very relaxed, and it's ideal situation. Martin is a friendly guy, easy to speak to, and full of local knowledge. He's got a habit of chewing nuts, and his reddened lips and teeth can be a bit of a shock at the first meeting.

Our tracker for next three days was Thandula Jayasathna, who was known to Sunil as an excellent bird guide. He proved to be exceptional, and under his guidance we had a terrific three days.

Our first walk into the forest saw us encounter one of Sinharaja's famous 'mixed flocks'. The first sign of this was a small party of Orange-billed Babblers, but these were quickly followed by White-faced Starling, Red-faced Malkoha, Velevet-fronted Nuthatch, Barbets, Woodpeckers, including Lesser Yellownape, Malabar Trogon and Bulbuls. We were seeing endemics faster than we could record them, but Thandular had barely started! By the time we finished that evening we had seen eleven endemics during the day, including Ceylon Magpie, Ceylon Myna and Ceylon Frogmouth! As well as all this we'd also had fantastic views of Chestnut-winged Cuckoo, and Indian Cuckoo.

The frogmouth required a night walk into the forest, and the bird was attracted in with a tape. We had excellent views of a male (according to the book, but see later). On the walk back, by torchlight, we came across a small snake on the track, which Sunil told us was dangerous, and to keep well back. I've no idea what it was, but as it slithered into the undergrowth at the side of the track, Thandulla pinched it's tail and held it there as he showed us the white spots along it's head. We felt we ought to look, but were happier when it went off. Later, a huge scorpion walked with us for a while – must have been six or seven inches at least, but not dangerous, only painful, according to the guides!

Earlier in the afternoon we had spoken to a gent taking photographs, and his wife, as we passed them on the track. We met this couple back at Martin's Place after our walk, and we ate together discussing the day. The gent was Dr. T. D. da Silva (he declined to give me his full name, saying that I'd only end up with a broken tongue if I tried to pronounce it!) He was spending the weekend photographing birds in preparation for his next volume of Sri Lankan birds. He was interested to hear of our sighting of Frogmouth, and went on to say that, in his opinion, the grey male / brown female is perhaps a bit simplistic, and not backed by any real evidence. He believes that this species maybe dimorphic, and that his own attempts to gather photographic evidence at Frogmouth nests haven't yet resolved the question.

We had talked until almost 'lights out', so we had a mad rush to get into bed before the generator went off. I didn't quite make it, and finished up undressing by candle light. As I crawled under the mosquito net, I picked up the torch to ensure that this was properly settled. It was at this point that I noticed a steady stream of blood oozing from my ankle. Next morning, the good doctor confirmed that the three wounds on my ankle were from leeches – I hadn't felt a thing, and thought I'd been adequately covered, but apparently the little buggers will work their way between layers of clothing – be warned!

09 February An early morning start to look for one of the more difficult endemics – Green-billed Coucal. Reports we had read suggested that this, and Spurfowl, were anything but certain. However, Thandula and Sunil seemed confident, and we set off back into the forest with our fingers crossed. It wasn't long before Thandula heard the call, and once again, the tape was used to attract the birds. The response wasn't long in coming, and Thandula announced that two birds were in the forest, directly in front

of us. These proved amazingly difficult to see however. We could hear the birds calling, and even hear them as they moved through the undergrowth, but at very best we could only catch the briefest of glimpses. This went on for about ten minutes, as we moved up and down the track, trying to find a view through the bushes. We saw enough to be sure they were Coucals, but got nowhere near a green bill. Eventually however, the birds both broke cover together and flew across the track at a height of about eight feet. Small Coucals, but still no view of the green bills. The birds quietened down after this, and we thought we'd lost them. However, as we spread out on the path, Sunil found one, and I the other, perched in separate trees, but both scopeable. With the scope set up, we all got excellent views of both birds, Green-bills and all. We eventually left, with one of the birds still sitting in view.

Continuing along the track, we saw many of the birds we had seen yesterday. Another lovely view of the huge Chestnut-winged Cuckoo, White-faced Starlings building a nest in a tree cavity (it was this nest site that had bought Dr. da Silva to Sinharaja), Spot-winged Thrush on the track, a couple of Ceylon Mynas perched on tree tops and Gold-fronted Leafbird. We then a mad couple of minutes as another mixed flock appeared, again preceded by a group of Orange-billed Babblers. The flock included Red-faced Malkhoa again, as well as White-bellied Drongos, and Dark-fronted Babbler. We also saw a small party of White-throated (Legge's) Flowerpeckers. Later, a more distant flock contained Malabar Trogon and Indian Scimitar-babbler.

We spent some time looking for Scaly Thrush, but were unlucky. We did see a group of five Ashy-headed Laughing-thrush however, and a couple of Ceylon Magpies near the research station.

We returned to Martin's Place for lunch, planning to have a lazy afternoon and go out again later. I wandered off after lunch, to have a look around, and almost missed Chestnut-backed Owlet. However, our tracker managed to track me down, and we legged it back to Martin's Place to find the bird still there, and showing well. A Black Eagle drifted low across Martin's Place as we sat and admired the view.

Late afternoon we left again to try a couple of sites for Scaly Thrush. Once again, these birds prefer deep cover, and after settling down in a clearing amongst damp undergrowth, we were rewarded with an Indian Blue-robin, which came in to bathe. This raised our hopes for a moment, but however often we looked at it, it remained a robin.

Beyond the research station, after crossing a small bridge, is another damp patch through which it's possible to walk. Thandula led us into here, and once again we settled down to wait. We apparently played the tape, but the call must be out of my restricted hearing range. The thrush heard it though, and was soon sitting in the bushes above us. The light was poor, but we were so close that there was no mistaking Scaly Thrush. After working our way back to the track, Thandula asked if I'd seen them both!!

This had been a fantastic day, with Thandula knocking off the target species one after another. The 'big one' however was still to come. We'd had Spurfowl call bought to our attention on a number of occasions, and one of the guests at Martin's Place, a

French lad named Marc and a non-birder, had seen one walk across the track in front of him. All the trip reports suggested Spurfowl was extremely difficult. We had met a group of birders at the Queens Hotel in Kandy, who were broadly following our route in the reverse direction. They had seen all of the endemics except Spurfowl! Thandula thought we stood a good chance however, especially if we got up early, and walked the four kilometres down the dirt track to the village, and met him at dawn. No problem!

10 February The walk down to Sinharaja village was wonderful. It was easy walking, (downhill all the way), a very pleasant temperature in the early morning, and absolutely beautiful views across the ranges of hills in front of us, with mist patches in the valleys lending an eerie quality to it all. The forest was waking up, with all the strange sounds that that entails, and, perhaps best of all, the anticipation of Spurfowl in the flesh! Thandula was there to meet us as arranged, and led us through the village and into the forest beyond. Before we left the road, we encountered a Slaty-legged Crake coming the other way before it saw us and scuttled off into the undergrowth.

We followed Thandula along a fairly good track until he called a halt, and suggested we stand off the track, in a little cover, but without being hidden. Once in position, Thandula checked that we both had a good view, and told us to watch a particular bend a little further up the track. Out came the cassette, and the call was met with an immediate response from directly opposite. We peered into the jungle, but could see nothing – just the odd shadow which suggested movement. The noise of the birds rose, then fell, then rose again, then fell again, and with it, our hopes of seeing Spurfowl. I ran the full gamut of emotions during the next twenty minutes; from a conviction that the birds would appear at any moment, to utter despair when the sounds seemed to be moving away. I glanced at our guides – they seemed to be taking the whole experience stoically, but then, they'd both seen Spurfowl before. As we stood quietly in the cover, a small group of girls walked up the track, laughing and chattering, and my heart sank. I looked at Isabel, and we both knew it was all over.

I was cursing myself for not insisting that we'd tried earlier – this was our last day, and there was little chance of repeating the attempt tomorrow. Even Marc, the non-birder, had seen one;

but we had dipped. I was still peering into the jungle, desperately trying to turn a shadow into a bird, when Thandula caught my arm. I turned to see him pointing to the bend in the track he had marked for us earlier. There was definite movement in the undergrowth on the far side of the track, and my heart rose again. Suddenly, bursting from cover, a female Spurfowl fluttered out of the forest, landed in the middle of the track, shook out her ruffled feathers, and then very deliberately walked across the track and into the forest. She was followed by a second female, and then a male, in all its glory. We didn't get long, perhaps less than ten seconds altogether, but superb views. We were ecstatic.

We returned to the village, and had a bit of breakfast, planning the rest of the day. We decided to have a look around the village in the hope of picking up the last of the endemics – Black-throated Munia. Thandula had seen these locally. After a delightful stroll around the paddy fields and paddocks around the village, we'd drawn a blank, and the realisation that we had a long, almost vertical walk back to Martin's Place, in

the full heat of the day determined us to start back. However, Thandula suggested a detour to a site where he knew Black-throated Munias were nesting. We went for it, and Thandula brought us into a small, cultivated valley, and to a lone tree near the track. We waited, and eventually we saw the Munias commuting to the tree. Unfortunately, these were Scaly-breasted, not Black-throated.

It's worth remembering that English isn't the native language of the guides, though they speak English very well. Remember also, that even in English, many species are known by a variety of names, and that in the case of Black-throated Munia, there doesn't seem to be any consensus on its status as a distinct species anyway. It's hardly surprising then, that sometimes communication with the guides falters. We didn't blame Thandula for the mistake at all, indeed, after the Spurfowl, he could do no wrong for us. Thandula though, felt that he'd let us down. We returned to Martin's Place after a long, hot climb, and collapsed, tired but happy. After lunch, Thandula offered a walk out to another site where he knew of Munias. We set off over a ridge, and came to small, cultivated area just outside of the reserve. Here there was a rice paddy, not yet harvested. A little searching soon revealed a small flock of Munias. This wasn't hopeful, since Harrison suggests that this species isn't gregarious. Nevertheless, once we'd got the scope set up, it was clear that there were at least some Black-throated here. There was a lot of traffic, with birds continually flitting from the rice stems to a roost in bushes out of view, so I didn't get good views of all the birds. All that I could see however, were Black-throated. An excellent day.

If you ever go to Sinharaja, and are looking for a tracker, I thoroughly recommend Thandula. Apart from his obvious expertise and knowledge of the birdlife in the reserve, he's also simply a nice guy.

11 February We left Martin's Place, and the Sinharaja forest with some relief, but also with some regret. As far as birding had been concerned, we'd had a fantastic three days. We'd also met some nice people, and, after getting over the initial shock, had enjoyed ourselves at Martin's Place. It was certainly one of the most memorable experiences of our trip.

We left Sinharaja for Kitulgala, another forest area which offered many of the species we'd already seen in Sinharaja. Kitulgala was the place where 'The Bridge Over the River Kwai' was filmed, though the only bridge now is a pedestrian suspension bridge crossing the river a little downstream from the Plantation Hotel, our base for the next couple of nights. Unlimited hot water, a shower cubicle large enough to hold a football team, and fresh, crisp bed linen, all helped to mark the difference. We took full advantage!

The birding now was much more relaxed. We'd seen all of the endemics, and although the birding was good, it didn't have the same urgency about it. The forest trail though offered a remarkably picturesque walk, but was steep in parts. We walked the trail twice, once in the early afternoon, and again in the evening. We hoped to get further views of Frogmouth during the evening. Having walked until the trail led out into paddy field, we waited here until dark before turning back to the frogmouth site.

It was as we left the paddy, that Sunil warned me not to stray around cultivated areas on my own – the local people apparently set 'guns' (I'm not sure what these guns are),

which are triggered by animals encroaching onto cultivated land. These could be dangerous if I blundered into them! Back in the forest, Sunil heard and then found a Chestnut-backed Owlet. Just like the one at Sinharaja, this bird sat boldly on a tree branch, out of cover. Unlike the Sinharaja bird, this individual defecated, missing us by inches!

Making our way to the Frogmouth site, we were disappointed to find that we had been beaten to the site by another group of birders, led by one of Sunil's colleagues, one Deepal Warakagoda. This group had a mass of high tech. listening equipment set up, and rather than hang around and be a nuisance, Sunil and I left for another site deeper into the forest. I later had cause to regret this! We heard, but never saw, Frogmouth, and arrived back at the hotel ready to climb into clean sheets.

12 February We took another walk into the forest, in the morning this time, and unexpectedly encountered a small party of Plum-headed Parakeets feeding on fruit. Any fruiting tree is worth a prolonged look, and we soon saw Grey Hornbill, Hanging-parrot, Orange, and Yellow-billed Babblers, Barbets, Minivets, and Bulbuls. We had good views of Spot-winged Thrush and Junglefowl in the forest, and at the end of the trail walked through the paddy field and into an area of pasture beyond. Here we saw a couple of Red-faced Malkohas, Racket-tailed and White-bellied Drongos, our only Thick-billed Flowerpecker of the trip, and an unidentified raptor that lifted tantalisingly above the tree line on a few occasions.

During the afternoon, while taking it easy in the hotel restaurant, we saw Large-billed Leaf-warbler, again, the only bird of this species for the trip. I spent a long-time watching Grey-rumped Treeswifts hunting over the river.

13 February It was time to head back to Colombo. We left Kitulgala, heading for Ingiriya, where we were to have a look at the forest, and then lunch, before going on to Colombo. The Ingiriya site was smaller than those forest sites we'd visited during the past week, but proved a fascinating stop. We walked the short trail, and saw Monarch, Tickell's, Asian Brown and Paradise Flycatchers. We also saw a pair of Rufous Woodpeckers, our first, but most memorably, superb views of both male and female Malabar Trogons.

We ate lunch at the Citizen's Rest hotel in Ingiriya. Sunil left us for a while as we tucked into our curry, but re-appeared later, soaking wet. 'Do you want to see Collared Scops-owl?' he asked. The birds were in a streamside bush, apparently a regular roosting spot, but the only possible way to get a view was to get into the stream, and wade around the bush in order to look back. Isabel wimped it, but I stripped off and followed Sunil. There were two birds, huddled together deep in the bush, awake and wary. This was another unexpected bonus, a bird I hadn't expected to see.

We moved on to Colombo after lunch, and after a nerve-wracking drive through the rush hour traffic, we arrived safely at the enormous TransAsia hotel. We spent the late afternoon in the pool, watching the poolside restaurant manager defending his territory against crows, with a lethal looking catapult. I'm happy to report that he never scored a hit! The pool area was being used to film scenes for a local 'soap',

14 February Our last day. Sunil picked us up early in order to visit the Bellanwila-Attidiya Sanctuary, on the outskirts of Colombo. Sanctuary is a bit of a misnomer, the place is a virtual landfill site, with rubbish strewn everywhere. Where the wetland hasn't been filled though, birdlife is prolific, and we saw all three species of Bittern in a short visit, as well as a single Chinese Pond-heron amongst the dozens of Indian Pond-herons. Also present were Grey and Purple Herons, Jacanas, Water-hens, and most of the wetland birds we'd come to expect. There were plenty of Reed-warblers in the adjacent grasses, but we could only find Blythe's.

I had earlier mentioned to Sunil that I'd like to visit Baur's office, and thank Perry for his efforts in retrieving our luggage. Sunil had passed on this message, but told us that Perry would come to meet us in the hotel. I was glad of the opportunity to meet Perry and the rest of the Baur's personnel, and to be able to thank them for an absolutely wonderful holiday. Since we seemed satisfied, Perry agreed to let us finally pay for the trip! I understand that Perry, at least, will be at this year's Birdfair.

15 February Sunil dropped us off at the airport, turning us over to Sam, who breezed us through the airport formalities. Our flight arrived, and left, on time, and we flew home via Male, Abu Dharbi and Amsterdam. In spite of a 45 min delay at Male, we never saw a single bird, and thus my Maldivian list remains at zero! My Sri Lanka list is 244 (including subspecies), and for nearly a fortnight I could claim to have seen all the endemics. Then, I received the following message, forwarded by Fatbirder:-

Hi all,

According to the Seattle Times/Reuters story in today's paper a new species of Otus was found last month by ornithologist Deepal Warakagoda. The bird has been photographed and confirmed by outside experts. The last new species discovered in Sri Lanka was the Ceylon Whistling-Thrush in 1868!

Sincerely

Ian 'Birdbooker' Paulsen - Bainbridge Is., WA, USA

What was Deepal doing in the Kitugala forest when we left him at the Frogmouth site? Was I that close? Again, it's my list, and my Scops owls are staying on!

Sri Lanka – Birds Seen

1. LITTLE GREBE, TACHYBAPTUS RUFICOLLIS RUFICOLLIS, Lowland tanks – 4 records
2. LITTLE CORMORANT, PHALOCROCORAX NIGER (PYGMAEUS), Common throughout
3. INDIAN CORMORANT, PHALOCROCORAX FUSCICOLLIS, Common around Tissa, seen elsewhere
4. ORIENTAL DARTER, ANHINGA MELANOGASTER, 1 at Yala, but not searched for

5. SPOT BILLED PELICAN, PELECANUS CRISPUS, Common – Tissa, Bundala, Yala
6. LITTLE EGRET, EGRETTA GARZETTA, Common everywhere
7. GREY HERON, ARDEA CINEREA CINEREA, Common in wetlands/tanks
8. PURPLE HERON, ARDEA PURPUREA MANILENSIS, As common as Grey
9. GREAT EGRET, EGRETTA ALBA MODESTA, Common throughout
10. INTERMEDIATE EGRET, EGRETTA INTEREDIA INTEREDIA, Recorded in Yala & Bundala, but not searched for elsewhere
11. CATTLE EGRET, BUBULCUS IBIS COROMANDUS, Very common throughout
12. INDIAN POND-HERON, ARDEOLA GRAYII, Very common throughout
13. CHINESE POND-HERON, ARDEOLA BACCHUS, 1 record from Bellanwila-Attidiya
14. GREEN HERON, BUTRIDES STRIATUS CHLORICEPS, 1 record from tank near Tissa
15. BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON, NYCTICORAX NYCTICORAX, Sigiriya, Bundala
16. YELLOW BITTERN, IXOBRYCHUS SINENSIS, Bundala, Tissa, Bellanwila
17. CINNAMON BITTERN, IXOBRYCHUS CINNAMOMEUS, 1 at Bellanwila
18. BLACK BITTERN, IXOBRYCHUS FLAVICOLLIS, Tissa, Bellanwila
19. PAINTED STORK, MYCTERIA LEUCOCEPHALA, Fairly common lowlands
20. ASIAN OPENBILL, ANASTOMUS OSCITANS, Fairly common lowlands
21. WOOLLY-NECKED STORK, CICONIA EPISCOPUS, 3 records – Sigiriya, Tissa, Yala
22. BLACK-NECKED STORK, EPHIPPIORHYNCHUS ASIATICUS, 1 bird only – Yala
23. BLACK-HEADED IBIS, THRESKIORNIS MELANCEPHALUS, More common in dry zone
24. EURASIAN SPOONBILL, PLATALEA LEUCORODIA, 1 record – Yala
25. GREATER FLAMINGO, PHOENICOPTERUS RUBER, Many birds seen, but only at Bundala
26. LESSER WHISTLING-DUCK, DENDROCYGNA JAVANICA, Anuradhapura, Sigiriya, Dry zone – mostly in trees!
27. COTTON PYGMY-GOOSE, NETTAPUS COROMANDELIANUS, 2 birds on tank near Tissa
28. NORTHERN PINTAIL, ANAS ACUTA ACUTA, Small flock at Yala
29. GARGANY, ANAS QUERQUEDULA, Bundala (I'm pretty sure we saw these at Yala, but no record!)
30. JERDON'S BAZA, AVICEDA JERDONI, Once between Nuwara Eliya & Tissa. Perhaps another at Yala
31. ORIENTAL (CRESTED) HONEY-BUZZARD, PERNIS PTILORHYNCHUS, Several Horton Plains, 1 at Kitulgala
32. BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE, ELANUS CAERULEUS, 1 Anuradhapura; 1 en route to Sigiriya
33. BRAHMINY KITE, HALIASTUR INDUS, Most common raptor away from the highlands
34. WHITE BELLIED SEA EAGLE, HIERAAETUS LEUCOGASTOR, 1 Sigiriya; 1 Bundala
35. GREY-HEADED FISH-EAGLE, ICHTHYOPHAGA ICHTHYAETUS, 3 Yala; 1 Bundala
36. CRESTED SERPENT-EAGLE, SPILORNIS CHEELA, Fairly common

37. WESTERN MARSH-HARRIER, *CIRCUS AERUGINOSUS*, 1 Bellanwila; 2 around canals north of Colombo
38. PALLID HARRIER, *CIRCUS MACROURUS*, 1 record – En route to Tissa
39. SHIKRA, *ACCIPITER BADIUS*, 6 records, mostly from dry zone
40. BESRA, *ACCIPITER VIRGATUS*, 1 Anuradhapura; 1 Hakgala Bot. Gardens
41. INDIAN BLACK EAGLE, *ICTINAETUS MALAYENSIS*, 1 Kandy Bot. Gardens; 2 Sinharaja
42. CHANGEABLE HAWK-EAGLE, *SPIZAETUS CIRRHATUS*, 3 Sigiriya; Bundala; Uda Welawe
43. MOUNTAIN HAWK-EAGLE, *SPIZAETUS NIPALENSIS*, 1 Near Horton Plains
44. SHAHEEN, *FALCO PEREGRINUS PEREGRINATOR*, Sigiriya
45. RAIN QUAIL, *COTURNIX COROMANDELICA*, Anuradhapura, Bundala, Uda Welawe
46. CEYLON SPURFOWL, *GALLOPERDIX BICALCARATA*, Sinharaja
47. CEYLON JUNGLEFOWL, *GALLUS LAFAYETII*, Fairly common Sigiriya, dry zone, Kitulgala
48. COMMON PEAFOWL, *PAVO CRISTATUS*, Anuradhapura; common Yala & Bundala
49. SLATY-LEGGED CRAKE, *RALLINA EURIZONOIDES*, Sinharaja
50. WHITE-BREASTED WATER-HEN, *AMAURORNIS PHOENICURUS*, Common
51. RUDDY-BREASTED CRAKE, *PORZANA FUSCA*, Seen on two days in Victoria Park, Kandy
52. PURPLE SWAMPHEN, *PORPHYRIO PORPHYRIO*, Fairly common
53. COMMON MOORHEN, *GALLINULA CHLOROPUS*, Less common, but not scarce
54. PHEASANT-TAILED JACANA, *HYDROPHASIANUS CHIRURGUS*, Common
55. BLACK-WINGED STILT, *HIMANTOPUS HIMANTOPUS CEYLONENSIS*, Anuradhapura, Yala, Bundala
56. EURASIAN THICK-KNEE, *BURHINUS OEDICNEMUS OEDICNEMUS*, Bundala
57. GREAT THICK-KNEE, *BURHINUS RECURVIROSTRIS*, 2 near Tissa, 6 Bundala
58. INDIAN COURSER, *CURSORIUS COROMANDELICUS*, 1 Yala
59. PACIFIC GOLDEN PLOVER, *PLUVIALIS FULVA*, Tissa, Yala, Bundala
60. GREY PLOVER, *PLUVIALIS SQUATAROLA*, Bundala
61. COMMON RINGED PLOVER, *CHARADRIUS HIATICULA HIATICULA*, Bundala
62. KENTISH PLOVER, *CHARADRIUS ALEXANDRINUS ALEXANDRINUS*, Yala, Bundala
63. LESSER SAND (MONGOLIAN) PLOVER, *CHARADRIUS MONGOLUS ?MONGOLUS?*, Yala, Bundala
64. GREATER SAND PLOVER, *CHARADRIUS LESCHENAULTII LESCHENAULTII*, Yala, Bundala
65. YELLOW-WATTLED LAPWING, *VANELLUS MALABARICUS*, Bundala
66. RED-WATTLED LAPWING, *VANELLUS INDICUS*, Common
67. PINTAIL SNIPE, *GALLINAGO STENURA*, Tissa, Bundala
68. BLACK-TAILED GODWIT, *LIMOSA LIMOSA*, Tissa, Bundala
69. EURASIAN CURLEW, *NUMENIUS ARQUATA ARQUATA*, Yala, Bundala, Colombo
70. SPOTTED REDSHANK, *TRINGA ERYTHROPUS*, Tissa
71. COMMON REDSHANK, *TRINGA TOTANUS TOTANUS*, Tissa, Bundala
72. MARSH SANDPIPER, *TRINGA STAGNATILIS*, Bundala
73. COMMON GREENSHANK, *TRINGA NEBULARIA*, Tissa, Yala, Bundala

74. GREEN SANDPIPER, TRINGA OCHROPUS, Bundala
75. WOOD SANDPIPER, TRINGA GLAREOLA, Anuradhapura, Tissa
76. COMMON SANDPIPER, TRINGA HYPOLEUCOS, Tissa, Yala, Bundula, Uda Welawe
77. RUDDY TURNSTONE, ARENARIA INTERPRES INTERPRES, Bundala
78. SANDERLING, CALIDRIS ALBA, Bundala
79. LITTLE STINT, CALIDRIS MINUTA, Bundala
80. BROWN-HEADED GULL, LARUS BRUNNICEPHALUS, Bundala
81. GULL-BILLED TERN, STERNA NILOTICA NILOTICA, Yala
82. CASPIAN TERN, STERNA CASPIA, Tissa, Bundala
83. GREAT CRESTED-TERN, STERNA BERGII CRISTATUS, Tissa
84. COMMON TERN, STERNA HIRUNDO HIRUNDO, Bundala
85. LITTLE TERN, STERNA ALBIFRONS ALBIFRONS, Tissa (could have been Saunders I suppose!)
86. WHISKERED TERN, CHLIDONIAS HYBRIDUS HYBRIDUS, Anuradhapura, Tissa, Yala, Bundula
87. ROCK DOVE, COLUMBA LIVIA, Fairly common
88. CEYLON WOOD-PIGEON, COLUMBA TORRINGTONI, Horton Plains
89. SPOTTED DOVE, STREPTOPELIA CHINENSIS, Everywhere
90. EMERALD DOVE, CHALCOPHAPS INDICA, Fairly common, mainly Sigiriya, Sinharaja, Kitulgala
91. ORANGE-BREASTED PIGEON, TRERON BICINTA, Yala, Bundala
92. POMPADOUR GREEN-PIGEON, TRERON POMPADORA, Sigiriya, Yala, Uda Welawe
93. GREEN IMPERIAL-PIGEON, DUCULA AENEA, Sigiriya, Yala, Sinharaja, Kitulgala
94. CEYLON HANGING-PARROT, LORICULUS BERYLLINUS, Kandy Bot. Gardens, Sinharaja, Kitulgala
95. ALEXANDRINE PARAKEET, PSITTACULA EUPATRIA, Kandy Bot. Gardens
96. RING NECKED (ROSE -RINGED) PARAKEET, PSITTACULA KRAMERI, Everywhere
97. BLOSSOM-HEADED PARAKEET, PSITTACULA ROSEATA, Kitulgala
98. LAYARD'S PARAKEET, PSITTACULA CALTHROPAE, Kandy Bot. Gardens was only sighting
99. PIED CUCKOO, CLAMATOR JACOBINUS, 1 Sigiriya, 1 Tissa
100. CHESTNUT-WINGED CUCKOO, CLAMATOR COROMANDUS, 2 records, both Sinharaja
101. INDIAN CUCKOO, CUCULUS MICROPTERUS, 2 records, both Sinharaja
102. LESSER CUCKOO, CUCULUS POLIOCEPHALUS, 1 Tissa, 1 Uda Welawe
103. PLAINTIVE CUCKOO, CACOMANTIS MERULINUS, Sigiriya, Yala, Bundala
104. DRONGO CUCKOO, SURNICULUS LUGUBRIS, 1 record only – Anuradhapura
105. ASAIN (COMMON) KOEL, EUDYNAMYS SCOLOPACEA, Fairly common
106. BLUE-FACED MALKOHA, PHAENICOPHAEUS VIRIDIROSTRIS, Anuradhapura, Sigiriya, Bundula, Uda Welawe
107. SIRKEER MALKOHA, PHAENICOPHAEUS LESCHENAULTII, Bundula, Uda Welawe
108. RED-FACED MALKOHA, PHAENICOPHAEUS PYRRHOCEPHALUS, Sinhararja, Kitulgala
109. GREATER COUCAL, CENTROPUS SINENSIS, Common

110. GREEN-BILLED COUCAL, *CENTROPUS CHLORORHYNCHUS*, Sinharaja
111. ORIENTAL SCOPS-OWL, *OTUS SUNIA LEGGEI*, Heard near Sigiriya, seen only as brief flight view
112. COLLARED SCOPS-OWL, *OTUS BAKKAMOENA*, 2 birds Ingiriya
113. BROWN FISH-OWL, *KETUPA ZEYLONENSIS*, Anuradhapura, Sigiriya, Kandy, Tissa
114. BROWN WOOD-OWL, *STRIX LEPTOGRAMMICA*, Kandy
115. CHESTNUT-BACKED OWLET, *GLAUCIDIUM CASTANONOTUM*, Sinharaja, Kitulgala
116. CEYLON FROGMOUTH, *BATRACHOSTOMUS MONILIGER*, Sinharaja, heard at Kitulgala
117. JERDON'S NIGHTJAR, *CAPRIMULGUS ATRIPENNIS*, Ruhuna Sanctuary. 2 flight views, + 1 on track
118. INDIAN NIGHTJAR, *CAPRIMULGUS ASIATICUS*, Anuradhapura (many), Ruhuna (approx. 5)
119. GREY-RUMPED TREESWIFT, *HEMIPROCNE LONGIPENNIS*, 1 perched at Sigiriya, in flight Ruhuna, Uda Welawe, Kitulgala
120. INDIAN SWIFTLET, *COLLOCALIA UNICOLOR*, Sigiriya, Kitulgala
121. ASIAN PALM SWIFT, *CYPSIRIUS BALASIENSIS (PARVUS)*, Widespread, commonest swift.
122. LITTLE SWIFT, *APUS AFFINIS*, Sigiriya, Bundala, Kitulgala
123. MALABAR TROGON, *HARPACTES FASCIATUS*, Sinharaja, Ingiriya
124. COMMON (LITTLE BLUE) KINGFISHER, *ALCEDO ATTHIS TAPROBANA*, Common
125. STORK-BILLED KINGFISHER, *PELARGOPSIS CAPENSIS CAPENSIS*, Common
126. WHITE-BREASTED (SMYRNA) KINGFISHER, *HALCYON SMYRNENSIS FUSCA*, Very, very common
127. PIED KINGFISHER, *CERYLE RUDIS LEUCOMELANDURA*, Anuradhapura, Yala, Bundala
128. LITTLE GREEN BEE-EATER, *MEROPS ORIENTALIS ORIENTALIS*, Fairly common, seen most days.
129. BLUE-TAILED BEE-EATER, *MEROPS SUPERCILIOSUS PHILIPPINUS*, Probably the most common bee-eater
130. CHESTNUT-HEADED BEE-EATER, *MEROPS LESCHENAULTI LESCHENAULTI*, Least common bee-eater – Pinawele, Bundala
131. INDIAN ROLLER, *CORACIUS BENGHALENSIS*, Widespread
132. EUROPEAN HOOPOE, *UPUPA EPOPS*, Sigiriya, Yala, Bundala
133. CEYLON GREY HORNBILL, *OCYCEROS GINGALENSIS*, Anuradhapura, Sigiriya, Kitulgala
134. MALABAR PIED-HORNBILL, *ANTHRACOCEROS CORONATUS*, 3 or 4 sightings, all at Yala
135. BROWN-HEADED BARBET, *MEGALAIMA ZEYLANICA*, Sigiriya, Bundala, Kitulgala
136. YELLOW-FRONTED BARBET, *MEGALAIMA FLAVIFRONS*, Anuradhapura, Sinharaja,
137. CRIMSON-FRONTED BARBET, *MEGALAIMA RUBRICAPILLA*, Anuradhapura, Sigiriya, Tissa, Sinharaja
138. COPPERSMITH BARBET, *MEGALAIMA HAEMACEPHLA*, 2 sightings at Sigiriya

139. BROWN-CAPPED (PYGMY) WOODPECKER, DENDROPICOS MOLUCCENSIS GYMNOPTALMUS, Sigiriya
140. YELLOW-CROWNED WOODPECKER, DENDROCOPOS MAHRATTENSIS MAHRATTENSIS, Yala
141. RUFOUS WOODPECKER, CELEUS BRACHYURUS JERDONII, One sighting of a pair at Ingiriya
142. LESSER YELLOWNAPE, PICUS CHLOROLOPHUS WELLSI, Sinharaja
143. RED-BACKED WOODPECKER, DINOPIUM BENGHALENSE PSARODES, Pinawele, Uda Welawe, Kitulgala
144. GREATER FLAMEBACK, CHRYSOCOLAPTES LUCIDUS STRICKLANDI, Sigiriya,
145. WHITE-NAPED WOODPECKER, CHRYSOCOLAPTES FESTIVUS TANTUS, Pair defending nest hole near Tissa
146. INDIAN PITTA, PITTA BRACHYURA, Sigiriya
147. RUFOUS-WINGED BUSHLARK, MIRAFRA ASSAMICA, Widespread
148. ORIENTAL SKYLARK, ALAUDA GULGULA, Bundala
149. BARN SWALLOW, HIRUNDO RUSTICA, Very common
150. TYTLER'S SWALLOW, HIRUNDO RUSTICA TYTLERI, 1 sighting at a roadside stop between Sigiriya & Kandy
151. HILL SWALLOW, HIRUNDO DOMICOLA, Near Horton Plains, Labookellie Tea factory (both nest sites)
152. RED-RUMPED SWALLOW, HIRUNDO DAURICA, Yala
153. SRI LANKA RED-RUMPED SWALLOW, HIRUNDO DAURICA HYPERTHRA, Anuradhapura
154. RICHARD'S PIPIT, ANTHUS RICHARDI (NOVAESEELANDIAE), Bundala
155. ORIENTAL (PADDYFIELD) PIPIT, ANTHUS RUFULUS (RICHARDI), Fairly common
156. FOREST WAGTAIL, DENDRONANTHUS INDICUS, Kandy, Sinharaja
157. GREY WAGTAIL, MOTACILLA CINERIA, Nuwera Eliya, Kitulgala
158. BLACK-HEADED CUCKOO-SHRIKE, CORACINA METANOPTERA, Sigiriya, Uda Welawe
159. SMALL MINIVET, PERICROCOTUS CINNAMOMEOS, Bundala
160. SCARLET MINIVET, PERICROCOTUS FLAMMEUS, Anuradhapura, Kandy, Tissa, Uda Welawe
161. BAR-WINGED FLYCATCHER-SHRIKE, HEMIPUS PICATUS, Sigiriya, Sinharaja
162. BLACK-CRESTED BULBUL, PYCNONOTUS MELANICTERUS, Sigiriya, Sinharaja, Kitulgala
163. RED-VENTED BULBUL, PYCNONOTUS CAFER, Very common
164. YELLOW-EARED BULBUL, PYCNONTUS PENICILLATUS, Kandy
165. WHITE-BROWED BULBUL, PYCNONTUS LUTEOLUS, Fairly common
166. YELLOW-BROWED BULBUL, IOLE INDICUS, Sinharaja, Kitulgala
167. BLACK BULBUL, HYPSPETES LEUCOCEPHALUS (MADAGASCARIENSIS), Kandy, Sinharaja, Kitulgala
168. COMMON IORA, AEGITHINA TIPHIA, Fairly common
169. BLUE-WINGED (JERDON'S) LEAFBIRD, CHLOROPSIS COCHINCHINENSIS, Anuradhapura, Sigiriya
170. GOLDEN-FRONTED LEAFBIRD, CHLOROPSIS AURIFRONS, Sinharaja, Kitulgala
171. INDIAN BLUE ROBIN, LUSCINIA BRUNNEA, Nuwera Eliya, Sinharaja

172. ORIENTAL MAGPIE-ROBIN, *COPSYCHUS SAULARIS*, Common
173. WHITE-RUMPED SHAMA, *COPSYCHUS MALABARICUS*, Sigiriya
174. PIED BUSHCHAT (PIED STONECHAT), *SAXICOLA CAPRATA*, Horton Plains, Nuwara Eliya, Bundala
175. BLACK-BACKED ROBIN, *SAXICOLOIDES FULICATA LEUCOPTERA*, Common
176. BLUE ROCK-THRUSH, *MONTICOLA SOLITARIUS*, Sigiriya Rock Fortress – 1202 steps up!
177. CEYLON WHISTLING-THRUSH, *MYOPHONUS BLIGHI*, Horton Plains
178. PIED THRUSH, *ZOOTHERA WARDII*, Victoria Gardens in Nuwera Eliya
179. ORANGE-HEADED THRUSH, *ZOOTHERA CITRINA*, Single sighting at Sigiriya
180. SPOT-WINGED THRUSH, *ZOOTHERA SPILOPTERA*, Sinharaja, Kitulgala
181. SCALY (WHITE'S) THRUSH, *ZOOTHERA DAUMA IMBRICATA*, Sinharaja
182. EURASIAN BLACKBIRD, *TURDUS MERULA KINNISII*, En route from Horton Plains to Kandy
183. CEYLON BUSH-WARBLER, *BRADYPTERUS PALLISERI*, Horton Plains
184. FAN TAILED WARBLER (*ZITTING CISTICOLA*), *CISTICOLA JUNCIDIS*, Horton Plains
185. GREY-BREASTED PRINIA, *PRINIA HODGSONII*, Near Uda Welawe
186. JUNGLE PRINIA, *PRINIA SYLVATICA*, Bundala
187. ASHY PRINIA, *PRINIA SOCIALIS*, Anuradhapura, Kandy, Horton Plains, Yala
188. PLAIN PRINIA (BROWN WREN-WARBLER), *PRINIA INORNATA (SUBFLAVA)*, Common
189. BLYTH'S REED-WARBLER, *ACROCEPHALUS DUMETORUM*, Nuwara Eliya, Bellanwila
190. BOOTED WARBLER, *HIPPOLAIS CALIGATA CALIGATA*, Sigiriya
191. SYKES' WARBLER, *HIPPOLAIS CALIGATA RAMA*, Embilipiya,
192. COMMON TAILORBIRD, *ORTHOTOMUS SUTORIUS*, Anuradhapura
193. GREEN WARBLER, *PHYLLOSCOPUS NITIDUS*, Uda Welawe
194. LARGE-BILLED LEAF-WARBLER, *PHYLLOSCOPUS MAGNIROSTRIS*, Kitulgala
195. ASIAN BROWN FLYCATCHER, *MUSCICAPA DAUURICA*, Kandy, Kitulgala, Ingiriya
196. DULL-BLUE FLYCATCHER, *EUMYIAS SORDIDA*, Horton Plains
197. KASHMIR FLYCATCHER, *FICEDULA SUBRUBRA*, Victoria Gardens in Nuwera Eliya
198. TICKELL'S BLUE-FLYCATCHER, *CYORNIS TICKELLIAE*, Kandy, Sinharaja, Kitulgala
199. GREY-HEADED CANARY-FLYCATCHER, *CULICICAPA CEYLONENSIS*, Victoria Gardens in Nuwera Eliya
200. WHITE-BROWED FANTAIL, *RHIPIDURA AUREOLA*, Sigiriya, Tissa
201. BLACK-NAPED MONARCH, *HYPOTHYMIS AZUREA*, Hakgala, Sinharaja, Kitulgala
202. INDIAN PARADISE-FLYCATCHER, *TERPSIPHONE PARADISI PARADISI*, White males at Sigiriya, Yala, Sinharaja
203. SRI LANKAN PARADISE-FLYCATCHER, *TERPSIPHONE PARADISI CEYLONENSIS*, Brown males at Anuradhapura, Sigiriya, Kitulgala
204. ASHY-HEADED LAUGHINGTHRUSH, *GARRULAX CINEREIFRONS*, Twice at Sinharaja, both times in groups of five or six

205. BROWN-CAPPED BABBLER, PELLORNEUM FUSCOCAPILLUM, Sigiriya, Kandy, Sinharaja
206. INDIAN SCIMITAR-BABBLER, POMATORHINUS HORSFIELDII, Horton Plains, Sinharaja
207. TAWNY-BELLIED BABBLER, DUMETIA HYPERYTHRA, Anuradhapura, Yala
208. DARK-FRONTED BABBLER, RHOPOCICHLA ATRICEPS, Sigiriya, Sinharaja, Kitulgala
209. ORANGE-BILLED BABBLER, TURDOIDES RUFESCENS, Sinharaja, Kitulgala
210. YELLOW-BILLED BABBLER, TURDOIDES AFFINUS, Common
211. GREAT TIT, PARUS MAJOR MAHRATTARUM, Nuwera Eliya
212. VELVET-FRONTED NUTHATCH, SITTA FRONTALIS, Sinharaja (incl. two nest building at Park HQ in village)
213. PURPLE-RUMPED SUNBIRD, NECTARINA ZEYLONICA, Common
214. PURPLE SUNBIRD, NECTARINA ASIATICA, Common
215. LONG-BILLED SUNBIRD, CINNYRIS LOTENIUS, Common
216. THICK-BILLED FLOWERPECKER, DICAUEUM AGILE, Kitulgala
217. WHITE-THROATED (LEGGÉ'S) FLOWERPECKER, DICAUEUM VINCENS, Sinharaja
218. PALE-BILLED (TICKELL'S) FLOWERPECKER, DICAUEUM ERYTHRORHYNCHOS, Common
219. CEYLON WHITE-EYE, ZOSTEROPS CEYLONENSIS, Nuwera Eliya
220. ORIENTAL WHITE-EYE, ZOSTEROPS PALPEBROSUS, Kitulgala
221. BLACK-HOODED ORIOLE, ORIOLUS XANTHORNUS, Common
222. BROWN SHRIKE, LANIUS CRISTATUS, Common
223. PHILLIPINE SHRIKE, LANIUS CRISTATUS LUCIONENSIS, Common
224. BLACK-DRONGO, DICRURUS MACROCERCUS, Anuradhapura
225. WHITE-BELLIED DRONGO, DICRURUS CAERULESCENS INSULARIS, Common
226. WHITE-VENTED DRONGO, DICRURUS CAERULESCENS LEUCOPYGIALIS, One seen at roadside stop between Anuradhapura & Sigiriya
227. RACKET-TAILED DRONGO, DICRURUS PARADISEUS CEYLONICUS, Kitulgala, Ingiriya
228. CRESTED DRONGO, DICRURUS PARADISEUS LOPHORHINUS, Sinharaja
229. CEYLON MAGPIE, UROCISSA ORNATA, Sinharaja
230. HOUSE CROW, CORVUS SPLENDENS, Common
231. LARGE-BILLED CROW, CORVUS MACRORHYNCHOS, Common
232. ASHY WOODSWALLOW, ARTAMUS FUSCUS, Tissa, Bundala
233. WHITE-FACED STARLING, STURNUS SENEX, Sinharaja
234. BRAHMINY (BLACK-HEADED) STARLING, STURNUS PAGODARUM, Yala, Bundala, Bellanwila
235. ROSE-COLOURED STARLING, STURNUS ROSEUS, Anuradhapura, Bellanwila
236. COMMON MYNA, ACRIDOTHERES TRISTIS, Very common
237. CEYLON MYNA, GRACULA PTILOGENES, Sinharaja
238. SOUTHERN HILL MYNA, GRACULA INDICA, Spice gardens between Sigiriya & Kandy
239. HOUSE SPARROW, PASSER DOMESTICUS, Common around towns and villages
240. BAYA WEAVER, PLOCEUS PHILIPPINUS, Tissa
241. WHITE-RUMPED MUNIA, LONCHURA STRIATA, Fairly common

242. BLACK-THROATED MUNIA, LONCHURA KELAARTI KELAARTI, Sinharaja
243. SCALY-BREASTED (NUTMEG) MUNIA, LONCHURA PUNCTULATA,
Common
244. BLACK-HEADED MUNIA, LONCHURA MALACCA, Yala, Bundala, Tissa