

SOUTHERN INDIA & SRI LANKA

Including The Andaman Islands

15/21 NOVEMBER – 10 DECEMBER 2011

TOUR REPORT

LEADER: DAVE FARROW

This was the first Birdquest to combine Southern India with Sri Lanka, and it proved to be a winning combination, further enhanced by a six day pre-extension to the Andaman Islands. This allowed us to see a total of 394 species that included a fantastic variety of South Asian endemics. On the Andaman Islands we saw all 20 of the available endemics, we had stunning views of jay-walking Andaman Crake, plus Andaman Cuckoo-Dove, Andaman Serpent Eagle, Andaman Woodpigeons, a flock of 18 Andaman Treepies and a surprise Malayan Night Heron. In Tamil Nadu and Kerala we had memorable encounters with Painted Bush Quail, Red Spurfowl, White-bellied Minivet, White-bellied Treepie, Black-and-orange Flycatchers, Nilgiri Blue Robin, Kerala and Black-chinned Laughingthrushes, Nilgiri Pipit and Nilgiri Woodpigeon, finding all but a handful of the regional endemics despite struggling with heavy rain and a strike. In Sri Lanka we cleaned up all of the 35 known endemics, with the Red-faced Malkoha taking the longest to find, yet Ceylon Spurfowl and Ceylon Scaly Thrush both showed atypically well and we had great looks at Ceylon Whistling-thrush.

From the very first evening of the tour, the theme of nightbirds featured strongly. In total we recorded 15 species of Owl, with 23 individuals of 14 species seen, 15 of which were in daytime! In addition we saw five species of Nightjar, and three Ceylon Frogmouths. From the Andamans we had great encounters with Andaman and Hume's Hawk Owls, Andaman and Oriental Scops Owls, Andaman Barn Owl and Andaman Nightjar. In South India we saw Brown Fish Owls, Brown Hawk Owl, Spotted and Jungle Owlets, Jerdon's, Indian Jungle, Indian Little and Savanna Nightjars, and in Sri Lanka we saw the endemic Serendib Scops Owl at day-roost, Chestnut-backed Owlet, Brown Wood Owl, Indian Scops Owl, more Brown Fish Owls, and a final coup the shape of a Forest Eagle Owl, found on our last afternoon.

Those of us joining the pre-extension to the Andaman Islands gathered in Chennai ready for an onward connection to the islands. As is so often the case (- but perhaps not so early in the tour!) a sudden change to the plan was necessary, as Kingfisher Airlines cancelled their flight to Port Blair.

We switched to the Air India flight, the only one of the day, which was leaving at 4am! Having only just assembled as a group, we headed for the airport in the middle of the night, yet all went smoothly (despite the white-knuckle ride of flying through a thunderstorm over the Bay of Bengal!) and we arrived in the sunny Andaman Islands soon after dawn. We paused at our hotel to drop off luggage and began our quest for the endemics of the archipelago. We drove out to some of the recently created tidal habitats and superb shallow wetlands created by the 2004 tsunami, finding them full of shorebirds such as Long-toed Stint, Curlew Sandpipers, a write-in Oriental Pratincole, Yellow Bitterns, and our first endemics in the shape of a lovely Andaman White-headed Starling flock sat in a dead tree. Eventually our searching revealed a tight huddle of no less than 116 Andaman Teal, sat on little hummocks of mud in a brackish lagoon. We headed back to our well-appointed hotel, where lunches were taken on a terrace that overlooked the blue sea, and White-bellied Sea Eagles cruised low overhead. We headed for the forest to the aptly named Chiriyatappu (meaning 'bird place') to find more endemics, with Andaman Coucal, Andaman Drongo, Andaman Shama and Andaman Woodpecker all coming fairly quickly. Darkness falls early here, and we positioned ourselves in a suitable spot and soon heard an Andaman Nightjar that came and gave us a close flyby, then we were treated to ridiculously close views of a vocal Oriental Scops Owl of the local *modestus* race, followed soon after by a handsome Hume's Hawk Owl that posed at length. A splendid first day.

Our second morning began once more at Chiriyatappu, where we found the only Andaman Green Pigeon of the tour, more Andaman Woodpecker, Andaman Flowerpeckers, Large Cuckooshrike, Black Baza, and a mixed bird flock that eventually yielded 18 Andaman Treepies! We crept into the forest and found an Andaman Crake scuttling along on the forest floor, and once all had seen it we returned to the road. We were then treated to an amazing view of a pair, that came walking through the forest, up to the edge of the road, and then one of them decided to casually walk to the other side just four metres in front of us! Unbelievable! In the afternoon we headed to the nearby port and took the ferry across to Bamboo Flats and Mount Harriet. Here we enjoyed a nice view of an Andaman Serpent Eagle, and watching from the viewpoint on the summit we saw Brown-backed Needletails and a Japanese Sparrowhawk flew by. We hung around until it got dark, to try to find Andaman Scops Owl. Given my previous experiences with this little devil, it was rather a surprise to see one jump out the gloom almost immediately, and give us a nice close look. A gruff call nearby alerted us to an Andaman Hawk Owl, which was quickly found calling from the top of a small tree, remaining in view until we had our fill. Another great day!

We returned to Mount Harriet on the early ferry, when hundreds of White-bellied Swiftlets were leaving their roost from under the jetties. Predictably, our last remaining endemics were the harder ones to find, so we began at the edge of the forest where we found a lovely Andaman Cuckoo-Dove, and a bold Greater Racket-tailed Drongos sat on a wire eating a frog. Moving up the road, we found another Andaman Serpent Eagle and many Andaman Flowerpeckers, before the inevitable midday torpor crept in. However we saw more Andaman Woodpeckers, Common Hill Myna, a mixed flock with Ashy Minivet and Large Cuckooshrike, and a Two-barred Warbler eventually showed itself. We returned across the bay, and found a nice collection of shorebirds roosting on derelict boats that included some Terek Sandpipers, Greater and Lesser Sand Plovers and a Pacific Reef Egret. We headed once more to Chiriyatappu, collecting an impressive Stork-billed Kingfisher along the way, while in the forest we met a bird flock with many Andaman White-headed Starlings, Spot-breasted and Andaman Woodpeckers, and then our sharp-eyed guide spotted a striking Andaman Cuckooshrike. This was followed shortly thereafter by a pair of Andaman Wood pigeons, sitting calmly among the foliage and allowing us prolonged views. Wow! That evening we made an attempt to see the only endemic left for us - Andaman Barn Owl - but he wasn't showing today.

Further explorations took us to roadside wetlands where we found a Slaty-breasted Rail running about on the grass, and reaching a section of roadside forest near Ferrarganj we found two Andaman Serpent Eagles, another Andaman Cuckooshrike, and had good long looks at another Andaman Woodpigeon. In the afternoon we found another Andaman Serpent Eagle sat fearlessly at the roadside, and a Thick-billed Warbler popped into view briefly. Further attempts to see Andaman Barn Owl advanced a stage - we heard it call, but still couldn't see it!

In mangroves we enjoyed views of a vocal Mangrove Whistler, then back at Chiriyatappu we had a surprise brief view of a young Malayan Night Heron slinking away into the forest, which was quickly followed by an Orange-headed Thrush and some more excellent views of Andaman Crake. In the afternoon we checked some tidal areas and muddy margins, finding numerous shorebirds including some showy Pintail Snipe, Long-toed Stints, Oriental Pratincoles, Little and White-winged Tern, Grey-headed Lapwings, and Slaty-breasted Rail. We then returned to our hunt for Andaman Barn Owl, and soon after dusk we heard it scream. With a little more patience, we finally had a stunning view of him sat on a palm frond glaring at us, showing his ginger tones and spotted breast. Wonderful – finally the leader gets a lifer, and a superb view too!

Our final hours on the island took us back to the mudflats and marshy margins, and in crisp morning light we enjoyed flocks of Lesser Sand Plovers, Long-toed and Rufous-necked Stints, some Broad-billed Sandpipers, Curlew Sandpipers, Eurasian Curlew and Black-tailed Godwits, many Grey-headed Wagtails and an elusive Rusty-rumped Warbler. We then bade farewell to our able guide Vikram, and jetted back to the mainland, pausing in a very nice hotel in Chennai for a night.

We left early the following morning and flew to Coimbatore, and met up with our new group members and new local staff. We set off on the long drive to Mudumalai, pausing for a fine South Indian breakfast before heading up and over the Nilgiri Hills to our accommodation on the outskirts of Mudumalai National Park. Here we had additional local help who took us out into the surrounding scrub-jungle, and we enjoyed a very birdy afternoon with Yellow-wattled Lapwings, Jungle Bush Quail, Plum-headed Parakeets, a roosting Savanna Nightjar, Bonelli's Eagles, Malabar Lark and Tickell's Leaf Warbler, and as dusk fell we were treated to point-blank views of an Indian Jungle Nightjar, sat warming itself on a rock.

A full day in the surrounding scrub-jungle introduced us to Yellow-throated Sparrow, Malabar Parakeet, Indian Golden Oriole, White-cheeked and Brown-headed Barbet, Indian Scimitar Babbler, Crested Treeswifts, a shy Brown Fish Owl and a pair of rather fearless Spotted Owlets. Our local guide had assistants who were flanking us unseen, and an excited call led us to a gorgeous pair of White-bellied Minivets, moving quietly from bush to bush. Continuing into thicker bamboo-dominated jungle we found Yellow-browed Bulbul, Crested Serpent Eagle, Indian Blue Robin, Lesser Yellowthroat, Puff-throated Babbler, Brown-cheeked Fulvetta, Asian Paradise Flycatcher (white males with full tails) Brown-breasted and Tickell's Blue Flycatchers, Large-billed Leaf Warbler, Greenish and Bright-green Warblers, Indian Pygmy Woodpecker and a couple more Jungle Bush Quail. As dusk fell we continued our seemingly unstoppable run of nightbirds with an obliging Jerdon's Nightjar that perched up for us.

We made an early start in jeeps and drove up a tortuous mountain road ascending the flank of the Nilgiri Hills, in the gloom of the dawn seeing an Indian Elephant crashing into the undergrowth. We were early enough to see a pair of Painted Bush Quail feeding in an open patch on the steep hillside, the smart male showing off his red bill and white face – the first time I have ever had proper views of this species! Nearby we eventually got views of some very elusive Grey-headed Buleuls, plus our first Nilgiri Flycatcher, White-spotted Fantail, Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher, Dusky Crag Martin and

Nilgiri Flowerpecker. Returning to our lodgings, we found two Indian Pitta feeding at the bottom of the garden, more Asian Paradise Flycatchers and two Orange-headed Thrushes. Continuing on our journey towards Ooty, we paused in a patch of original forest and found some very smart and obliging Black-chinned Laughingthrushes, a Nilgiri Blue Robin that came very close once we had climbed inside the hedge, Western Crowned Warblers, Indian Yellow Tit, House Swallows and Crimson-backed Sunbirds.

In the cool temperatures of the Nilgiri Hills, we explored what is probably the scruffiest habitat of the trip. A pre-breakfast stroll around the car park of our Ooty hotel kicked things off with a pair of Indian Blackbirds, then our morning sortie in scrappy forest was successful in securing a trio of Black-and-orange Flycatchers, White-spotted Fantail, many Tickell's Leaf Warblers, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, Square-tailed Black Bulbul, Greater Flameback, Indian Blue Robins, and another Indian Blackbird. We headed for the highest peak in the Nilgiri Hills (2633m) in the afternoon, where among the crowds we found numerous tame Black-chinned Laughingthrushes, several Grey Junglefowl, and even saw a couple of Nilgiri Blue Robins and a Black-and-orange Flycatcher feeding close to the path where rubbish was strewn down-slope.

From here we travelled southwards, the long journey punctuated with a few nice birds such as Spot-billed Pelicans, Pallid Harrier, Oriental Honey Buzzard and a Shikra with a lizard. Crossing the crowded plains and its chaotic traffic, we climbed up to the calm jungles on the Anamalai hills. We crossed the state border from Tamil Nadu into Kerala where the forests of Top Slip and Parambikulam adjoin, to stay in a comfortable safari-style camp, however heavy rain meant birding was impossible. We ventured out on a minibus 'safari', seeing Little Swifts, Oriental Skylarks, Blue-tailed Bee-eaters, numerous Gaur and Chital, and after darkness had fallen we had a great look at a Brown Fish Owl perched on a branch by the roadside. As we went to bed, the rain hammering down on our tents signalled the arrival of a rather unwelcome tropical storm system.

The rain continued throughout the night and all the next day. When it eased for an hour we were able to venture out close to camp, finding White-bellied Treepie, Malabar Woodshrike, Malabar Grey-headed Starling, Black Baza, Black-hooded Oriole, Lesser Yellownape, Black-rumped Flameback, Indian Pygmy and Rufous Woodpecker, before the rain returned. In the afternoon we braved the storm, heading into the evergreen forest of the Karian Shola, getting soaking wet and covered in leeches, but had the consolation of not one but two female Sri Lanka Frogmouths found for us by the local guide, looking as fed up and bedraggled as we were!

The rain eased somewhat the next morning, and the birds appeared early with a Brown Hawk Owl calling above our tents, and once light we saw the local *malabaricum* Jungle Owlet, our first Malabar Whistling-thrush and a pair of Heart-spotted Woodpeckers. We returned to the Karian Shola and found some fine Indian Rufous Babblers, a male Malabar Trogon, Malabar Grey Hornbill, a pair of White-bellied Woodpeckers, and a Flame-throated Bulbul. Another long journey beckoned, but much of it was through the wonderful scenery and large expanse of intact habitat of the Chinnor Wildlife Sanctuary. Some short stops along the way introduced us to our first Crested Hawk Eagles, and then we headed up into tea country. Arriving at our hotel we discovered that there was a transport strike the following day, which meant *no-one* would drive for fear of attack. This meant we could only explore on foot, but as luck would have it we were positioned in an excellent patch of habitat. The resort had a large garden at the edge of forest, and a cardamom plantation within some tall woodland.

Beginning our garden birding in a drizzly dawn, flowering trees were packed with Square-tailed Black Bultuls, our first Lesser Hill Mynas, Grey-fronted Green Pigeons, Jerdon's Leafbirds, and

tuneful Malabar Whistling-thrush. Following this we walked down the road, and were able to enjoy an almost traffic-free stroll along the forested highway, finding flocks of Malabar Barbets plus nice views of Indian Rufous Babblers and Tawny-bellied Babblers. Quiet piping calls led us to Rusty-tailed Flycatchers, an Indian Blue Robin showed briefly, and we were thrilled to find a pair of Red Spurfowl that lurked in a thicket. We also found Indian Yellow Tit, Asian Fairy Bluebird, Blue-headed Rock Thrush and a whole host of commoner species. In the quiet of the afternoon we enjoyed a sweaty hike up to some grassy slopes - good exercise but no new species!

We began early in preparation for a long day, delayed slightly by our bus getting stuck on the narrow lane from the hotel before we could continue on our way! No strikers to give us problems, we headed up to a high forested stretch of road where we found a pair of obliging Kerala Laughingthrushes, and a couple of Nilgiri Woodpigeon that put on a good show. We found a Painted Bush Quail running down the road, plus another calling from a grassy patch where to our delight a Nilgiri Pipit stepped into view. Pushing onwards, we paused along the east-facing slopes where we found a nice White-eyed Buzzard, then descended to the plains through noisy crowded towns, and on roadside floods we found numerous Egrets and Herons, Indian Spot-billed Duck, Garganey, Whiskered Tern, Asian Openbill, Indian Cormorant, Glossy Ibis and Purple Heron. We reached Madurai airport, bade farewell to our drivers and our guide 'S.K.', and took a short flight to Chennai for the night.

The next day we said goodbye to India and flew the short way southwards to Colombo in Sri Lanka. We were met by our new crew, and set off on the journey to Kitulgala. On arriving, our new birding guide 'Chammy' led us to a vantage point where in the late afternoon we saw our first Sri Lankan birds. Here we found Ceylon Swallow, Ceylon Small Barbet, Ceylon Hanging Parrots, Layard's Parakeet, Ceylon Rufous Babbler, Yellow-crowned Barbet, Black-headed Cuckooshrike, White-browed Fantail, and enjoyed a great show by two Indian Pitta calling and wagging their tails.

The following day we headed to the nearby riverbank in search of Chestnut-backed Owlet. He taunted us from across the river, calling at length until we finally picked him out sitting in the open. In the mosaic of plantations and gardens we found Ceylon Green Pigeon, Black-capped Bulbul, and a pair of Green-billed Coucal that showed well. We headed across the river on a hollowed-out log, and entered the forest. A Spot-winged Thrush gave us a good long look as he sang from a high perch, then we paused by a paddyfield while Chammy headed off into the forest to search for some un-named target. He returned after an hour, to lead us to where he had found a roosting Serendib Scops Owl, barely visible in some tall herbage just 1.5m off the ground. Having last visited this island before this recently discovered species was available, it was a very satisfying moment. We also saw Legge's Hawk Eagles and Dark-fronted Babblers, and crossing a suspension bridge into some mixed habitat we found Legge's Flowerpecker, numerous Lesser Hill-Mynas and Jerdon's Leafbirds.

An early walk before we left this enchanting place gave us great views of a pair of Brown-capped Babblers, and returning to our hotel we found a pair of Ceylon Grey Hornbills preening in a tree in the garden. We headed for Sinharaja, pausing en-route for a brace of Loten's Sunbirds, before reaching our understated little lodge in the afternoon rain. Once the rain abated we set out into nearby woods, finding a furtive pair of Green-billed Coucal, a Legge's Hawk Eagle with a bulging crop perched on the remains of some unidentifiable prey, and a troop of funambulist Purple-faced Leaf Monkeys nimbly crossing the road on a telephone wire.

We started our day at Sinharaja World Heritage Site with a quartet of handsome Ceylon Spurfowl that appeared in a small forest patch, even settling down to preen in the open undergrowth – unprecedented views for all the group of this notoriously difficult bird. We spent the day walking

through this marvellous forest, finding Ceylon Scimitar Babblers nest building, a busy group of Ashy-crowned Laughingthrushes, a brief Crimson-backed Flameback, many Brown-breasted Flycatchers, Spot-winged Ground Thrush, noisy Ceylon Crested Drongos and some Ceylon White-eyes, plus the Ceylon Junglefowls that were ridiculously tame and fed from our hands. The Ceylon Blue Magpies were not much shyer, and we had an extended session with four that seemed to favour hand-outs! We were also shown a roosting female Ceylon Frogmouth (our third on this trip) and in the afternoon we found another busy feeding flock with Lesser Yellownappe, the startling red-backed Black-rumped Flameback, more Ashy-crowned Laughingthrushes and lots of Ceylon Rufous Babblers.

A quieter day followed, but we found two White-faced Starlings perched up on a dead snag, plus Crested Goshawk, then in the forest we met Malabar Trogons, a female Crimson-backed Flameback, and some feeding flocks that were a mix of Ashy-crowned Laughingthrush, Ceylon Crested Drongos, Ceylon Scimitar Babblers and other already familiar species. The rain started in the afternoon, and we headed back down the impossible road to our lodgings. Still no Malkoha, but we couldn't give up yet.

For a third morning we bumped our way up the track, for a last chance at two species - Red-faced Malkoha and Ceylon Scaly Thrush. The morning began well with three Malabar Trogons in an impressively large feeding flock, but we had to continue searching, until eventually we located a Ceylon Scaly Thrush lurking in the darkest corners of a dark and tangled streambed. It sat preening, then walked out to feed, turning over the leaves as he did the typical 'bounce and shiver' feeding action. We scuttled back towards the entrance as the clock was running, only to be intercepted by our 'tracker' who had been searching elsewhere on our behalf, and who was waving vigorously and pointing excitedly to where he had found a party of Red-faced Malkoha! Sure enough, there it was, red face shining beacon-like out of a high tangle! Hurrah! Also here was a White-faced Starling that showed well, and the Ceylon Blue Magpies came see us off. We headed happily down the hill, set a course for our next destination and arrived at Uda Walawe in the late afternoon. We had time enough for some roadside birding, producing Jerdon's Bushlark, Ashy-crowned Sparrow Larks, Little Stint, Marsh Sandpipers, Painted and Woolly-necked Storks, and some distant Spot-billed Pelicans.

Early the next day we drove to Uda Walawe and loaded into jeeps for our morning safari around the grassy scrubland. The birding was busy, with Malabar Pied Hornbills, Jungle and Ashy Prinias, Tricoloured Munia, many Jerdon's Bushlark, and a good number of Blyth's Pipits. We also found Grey-bellied Cuckoo, Indian Pitta, Grey-headed Fish Eagles, and a much wanted Sirkeer Malkoha. The Elephants that this reserve is famous for were being a bit elusive; we saw just ten or so before it was time to return to our pleasant lakeside hotel, eat a quick lunch, peer at a pair of Indian Scops Owls in the garden, and then drive to our next destination, Bundala National Park. We reached there after a short drive, and found the endemic Ceylon Woodshrike in the parking area. We then set off once more in jeeps, seeing many wetland species around the ponds and lagoons such as Great and Indian Thick-knees, Yellow Bittern, Painted Storks, Eurasian Spoonbills, Black-headed Ibis, Purple and Striated Herons. We found Jacobin Cuckoo, Pintail Snipe, hordes of dull plumaged Rosy Starlings, Oriental Skylarks, Yellow-wattled Lapwings, and on salt pans that were teeming with birds we saw Small Pratincole, Lesser and Great Crested Terns, Caspian Terns, Lesser Sand Plovers, Ruddy Turnstones and Little Stints. As dusk fell, we found Indian Little Nightjar sat on the road and a Jerdon's Nightjar sailed overhead. We then continued to another well-appointed hotel, positioned among the lakes and paddies at Tissa.

A morning stroll along the edge of the freshwater 'tanks' revealed Black and Yellow Bitterns, Cotton Teal, Watercock, a large Muggger, and in nearby groves of coconut we tried unsuccessfully to find White-naped Woodpecker. Just as we had given up, we saw two fly over the road as we were waiting

to board our bus, and hurried back to the garden where they were excavating a nest hole, the female showing well as she peered down at us. We scuttled back for a late breakfast before continuing our journey up into the highlands. We paused by a dam on the way, seeing a horde of Indian Thick-knees plus some more Great Thick-knees, and Little Ringed Plovers performed aerial displays. A slow and winding journey up to higher altitudes was punctuated with a stop at a pocket of woodland by an old tea estate, where we were thrilled to find a smart Ceylon Woodpigeon and an exquisite roosting Brown Wood-owl. We reached Nuwara Eliya with time for a little birding, finding a smart male Kashmir Flycatcher, but the Whistling-thrush proved elusive.

An early start was needed to reach the Horton Plains for a dawn attempt to see Ceylon Whistling-thrush, however this morning they were not playing. Sri Lanka Bush Warbler, Yellow-eared Bulbul and Dusky-blue Flycatcher were welcome additions to our list, leaving one final endemic to get! An Oriental Honey Buzzard thrilled us as he did his wing-clapping display, and we also saw the Sri Lankan form of Indian Blackbird, Crested Goshawk, a very close Black Eagle, and then surprise, surprise, our wonderful guide Chaminda came running and waving - he had located a calling Ceylon Whistling-thrush! We gathered silently, and soon it popped into view – a demure but exciting female, calling loudly and fearlessly. We had done it – all 35 endemics seen! We returned to town, to visit Victoria Park where we saw a stunning male Pied Ground Thrush and another Kashmir Flycatcher, and in another forested corner a vocal Whistling-thrush taunted us in the gloom as darkness fell.

On our way out of town we flushed a few Pintail Snipe from a small marsh, and returned to Victoria Park where the Pied Ground Thrush appeared briefly, Kashmir Flycatchers performed, Yellow-eared Bulbuls gave a proper account of themselves and a pair of Forest Wagtails fed among the garden rubbish. Continuing on our journey to Kandy we paused for a Tea Factory visit, where Hill Swallows were nest-building inside and a Common Hawk Cuckoo showed outside. In the gardens of our jungle resort at Kandy were White-browed Fantails, Yellow-fronted Barbet, another Forest Wagtail, Velvet-fronted Nuthatches and a Lesser Yellownape, and we visited the well-preserved forest on the edge of town where we found a pair of Brown Fish Owls, Chestnut-headed Bee-eaters and a pair of Crimson backed Flamebacks. As dusk approached we heard the double hoot of a Forest Eagle Owl, and soon enough this incredible bird appeared, perched in a tall tree like some satanic teddy bear! A grand finale to a fantastic trip, and needless to say this was voted our 'Bird-of-the-trip'.

Our last day began with a stroll around the very birdy garden here, with Forest Wagtails, Brown-capped and Tawny-bellied Babblers, Indian Blue Robin and Common Hawk Cuckoo. After a leisurely breakfast we made our way downtown and joined the throngs for a visit to the Temple of the Tooth, and today being a Full Moon Holiday it was crammed with the faithful. We left this pleasant town and headed for the coast and the airport, with a final roadside stop producing a Black Bittern, some Tricoloured Munias and Blue-tailed Bee-eaters. And then it was all over – four weeks of fantastic birding came suddenly to an unwelcome end, as the time to return home arrived.

We had certainly been very fortunate on this wonderful trip around some of the best birding corners of South Asia, and were able to head homeward fully re-invigorated. This has to one of my favourite tours, and it is heartening to see it finally getting the popularity that it deserves, aided by some very skilled local bird guides who make the experience so much more enjoyable.

SYSTEMATIC LIST

Species which were heard but not seen are indicated by the symbol (H)

Species which were not personally recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (NL)

PODICIPEDIDAE

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*: Several on roadside tanks near Madurai, and also some on lakes at Bundala.

PELECANIDAE

Spot-billed Pelican *Pelecanus philippensis*: Seven flew low over the bus as we travelled near Coimbatore, another three were seen en route to Madurai, then several were seen at Uda Walawe and Bundala.

PHALACROCORACIDAE

Little Cormorant *Phalacrocorax niger*: A good number were seen around wetlands en route to Madurai, then they were widespread on a range of wetlands in Sri Lanka

Indian Shag *Phalacrocorax fuscicollis*: Our first were seen on roadside flashes near Madurai, then at Debera Wewa we saw an estimated 800 birds flying overhead in skeins.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*: A single was seen at Uda Walawe.

ANHINGIDAE

Oriental Darter *Anhinga melanogaster*: A gathering of these were seen on roadside flashes near Madurai, also seen at Uda Walawe.

ARDEIDAE

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*: Seen most commonly in the paddies and wetlands of Sri Lanka, also on the Andamans, and a few seen in southern India.

Pacific Reef Heron *Egretta sacra*: A few smart examples were seen along the shores of South Andaman.

Great Egret *Egretta alba*: Seen in good numbers on suitable wetlands at various points of the tour.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*: A handful were seen around Uda Walawe, Bundala and Tissa also near Madurai.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*: Our first was near Madurai, then we saw more in Sri Lanka, particularly at Debera Wewa.

Eastern Cattle Egret *Bubulcus coromandus*: Seen commonly in paddies and wetland in Sri Lanka and India, fewer on the better forested Andamans.

Intermediate Egret *Mesophoyx intermedia*: Regularly encountered wherever Egrets were checked, though few were seen on the Andamans.

Indian Pond Heron *Ardeola grayii*: Regularly seen in India, commonly in Sri Lanka.

Chinese Pond Heron *Ardeola bacchus*: A few of these were seen on wetlands on the Andamans, mostly identified as this species purely by range, although that is not foolproof as Indian Pond Herons have been recorded in Thailand!

Striated Heron *Butorides striata*: Seen on a few occasions on inter-tidal habitats on South Andaman, also two were seen at Bundala.

Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*: Four were seen near Madurai, another in the dark at Bundala.

Malayan Night-Heron *Gorsachius melalophus*: A big surprise to see an immature of this squat little Heron, scuttling away on the forest floor at Chiriyatappu on South Andaman, never to

reappear. A secretive species, apparently resident on the Nicobars, its winter range includes peninsula Malaysia and also Sri Lanka.

Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis*: Several birds were seen on our first day in the Andamans, in marshy areas where we searched for Andaman Teal, then on Sri Lanka we saw several at Debera Wewa and at Bundala.

Black Bittern *Dupetor flavicollis*: At least five were seen at Debera Wewa, some showing well. One was seen in roadside wetlands near Colombo airport, plus another in the garden of the Airport Garden Hotel.

CICONIIDAE

Painted Stork *Mycteria leucocephala*: Not uncommon around Bundala and Uda Walawe.

Asian Openbill *Anastomus oscitans*: Our first were seen near Madurai, then we saw several more on the Sri Lankan wetlands and paddies.

Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus*: At least four seen at Uda Walawe, and other quartet seen over open country en route to Bundala.

Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilos javanicus*: Just one seen, flying past while we were on our jeep safari around Uda Walawe.

THRESKIORNITHIDAE

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*: Five were seen flying about on roadside wetlands en-route to Madurai.

Black-headed Ibis *Threskiornis melanocephalus*: Our first was seen near Madurai, then more were seen at Bundala and Tissa.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*: Twenty of these old favourites seen on wetlands from Uda Walawe to Tissa.

ANATIDAE

Lesser Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna javanica*: At least 200 were on marshy areas on South Andaman, also seen in good number at Bundala and Tissa.

Cotton Teal *Nettapus coromandelianus*: Four were seen well at Debera Wewa, flying around in close pairs.

Indian Spot-billed Duck *Anas poecilorhyncha*: Three were seen on the roadside lake near Madurai.

Andaman Teal *Anas albogularis*: With an earlier than expected arrival on the Andamans we chose to hunt for these first, eventually finding a swarm of them sat on small hummocks near the roadside. We counted 116 birds. Only the second time that I have seen this species in seven visits, they are now not difficult to find, favouring the superb brackish and tidal habitats that have been created by the tsunami of 2004. Endemic to the Andaman Islands.

Garganey *Anas querquedula*: A few were seen near to Madurai, then more at Bundala National Park.

ACCIPITRIDAE

Black Baza *Aviceda leuphotes*: A perched bird at Chiriyatappu on South Andaman was something of a surprise, we had a nice look at this scarce visitor to the islands.

Oriental Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*: Seen fairly often, with our first in the rain en-route to Top Slip, then fairly frequently in Sri Lanka, especially at Sinharaja.

Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus*: Several singles seen along our route through Sri Lanka, with a few also seen in Tamil Nadu.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*: Few seen; in Chennai city, and on journeys through Tamil Nadu.

Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus*: A few were seen on the Andamans, some more in southern India, and then regularly in the south-east of Sri Lanka.

- White-bellied Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster*: The common 'seagull' on the Andamans, with as many as ten in a day. A delightful accompaniment to lunch on the terrace at the Bay Island Hotel! On Sri Lanka we also found them far inland, at Kitulgala, Uda Walawe and Kandy.
- Grey-headed Fish Eagle *Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus*: At least four individuals showed well at Uda Walawe.
- White-rumped Vulture *Gyps bengalensis*: A rare bird these days, we saw a flock of five cruising high over Mudumulai.
- Indian Vulture *Gyps indicus*: A single was with the above birds at Mudumulai.
- Crested Serpent Eagle *Spilornis cheela*: We saw this just three times while in Southern India, and on Sri Lanka we saw them almost daily, especially in the forested parts.
- Andaman Serpent Eagle *Spilornis elgini*: Not so difficult this year, we saw our first two on Mount Harriet, then saw an obliging and fearless example by the roadside at Chiriyatappu. Endemic to the Andaman Islands.
- Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*: An immature bird was seen well if a little distantly en-route to Top Slip.
- Crested Goshawk *Accipiter trivirgatus*: A perched bird was seen well in the scrappy forest at Ooty, then on Sri Lanka we found them at Sinharaja, Horton Plains and Kandy, with several seen doing their aerial display.
- Shikra *Accipiter badius*: A couple were seen in Tamil Nadu, and three or four more in Sri Lanka.
- Japanese Sparrowhawk *Accipiter gularis*: A couple of good examples were seen on South Andaman, at Chiriyatappu and Mt. Harriet.
- Besra Sparrowhawk *Accipiter virgatus*: A nice example perched up during a shower at Sinharaja.
- Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*: A couple were seen in Tamil Nadu.
- White-eyed Buzzard *Butastur teesa*: One was seen being mobbed by Kestrels along the Bodi Ghat as we travelled from Munnar
- Himalayan Buzzard *Buteo burmanicus*: Two seen on the Horton Plains were initially perplexing - using Rasmussen we identified them as 'Steppe' Buzzards *B. buteo vulpinus*, however in Robson's South-east Asia guide, it illustrates dark morph of Himalayan to be very similar to the birds we saw.
- Black Eagle *Ictinaetus malayensis*: Several sightings in both Southern India and Sri Lanka, usually on journeys through forested mountains.
- Bonelli's Eagle *Hieraaetus fasciatus*: A total of nine birds seen, mostly in Tamil Nadu.
- Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus*: A single was seen soaring with Vultures at Mudumulai, another sat in coconut palms at Debera Wewa.
- Changeable Hawk-Eagle *Spizaetus limnaetus*: A total of three birds were seen on South Andaman, including a very pallid immature bird.
- Crested Hawk-Eagle *Spizaetus cirrhatus*: We saw our first at Chinnor Wildlife Sanctuary after the rain, then another two in quick succession that included a real poser that was snacking on some hapless mammal. On Sri Lanka we saw a couple at Kitulgala, numerous examples at Uda Walawe, a couple more at Bundala and a single at Tissa. Endemic to Peninsular India and Sri Lanka.
- Legge's Hawk-Eagle *Spizaetus kelaarti*: A paper published in 2008 sets out why this is a good split from Mountain Hawk Eagle *S. nipalensis*. Photos acquired show what a big bill it has, suggested as an adaptation to eating more mammals than *nipalensis*. We had a good look at two that soared over the Kitulgala forest, then on our first evening at Sinharaja we found one perched with a stuffed and distended crop, hanging onto the remnants of a young monkey or similar. Endemic to Sri Lanka.

FALCONIDAE

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*: Regularly seen in open country in South India, plus a few more in Sri Lanka.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*: A couple were seen around Mudumulai, plus a rusty-bellied example of the *peregrinator* race seen at Nuwara Eliya.

PHASIANIDAE

Grey Francolin *Francolinus pondicerianus*: Heard at Mudumulai, and glimpsed at a roadside stop near Coimbatore.

Jungle Bush Quail *Perdica asiatica*: A bird flushed at Mudumulai was lured into view briefly, the next day two birds were similarly furtive but offered a brightly-coloured glimpse before choosing to flee the scene.

Painted Bush Quail *Perdica erythrorhyncha*: My first views of birds on the ground in seven trips here! Our first looks were soon after dawn on a high slope near Ooty, a pair feeding in an open grassy patch for a couple of minutes, then a single bird was seen on the road near Munnar as it scooted across to the verge and then briefly posed on top of a rock. Another was put to flight from some dense grassy clumps.

Ceylon Spurfowl *Galloperdix bicalcarata*: Another bird qualifying for 'best-views-ever' we saw a quartet of these noisy and notoriously shy birds at Sinharaja. They came trotting towards us, then stopped for a preen in the undergrowth for some minutes. You lucky lucky people! Endemic to Sri Lanka.

Red Spurfowl *Galloperdix spadicea*: A lucky find of a pair (along a strike-bound and therefore traffic-free roadside!) near our accommodation at Munnar was exciting, the only ones seen. Endemic to Peninsular India.

Grey Junglefowl *Gallus sonneratii*: Seen at Mudumulai, Ooty, at Parambikulam and en-route through Chinnor. Endemic to Peninsular India.

Ceylon Junglefowl *Gallus lafayetii*: Seen in a variety of habitats, and always easy to find at Sinharaja, particularly if you bring them food! Endemic to Sri Lanka.

Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus*: Numerous and confiding at Parambikulam, also seen more widely in lowland dry habitats in South India. Also rather numerous and showy at Uda Walawe and Bundala.

Barred Buttonquail *Turnix suscitator*: A couple seen at Bundala and Uda Walawe, with others heard there.

RALLIDAE

Andaman Crake *Rallina canningi*: An awesome encounter with these wonderful birds this year. Almost as soon as we commenced a dedicated search for them we saw one walking away in the forest. Pursuit rewarded us with some more views as it calmly fed on the forest floor like some mutant Pheasant, then once all had seen it we returned to the road where we could see a pair walking towards us inside the forest, finally deciding to cross the road just 4m in front us! What a thrill! We returned to the same spot on our last day and further views of these gorgeous birds.

Slaty-breasted Rail *Rallus striatus*: Some good looks at these on South Andaman this year, with at least four seen, one of which was feeding out in the open.

White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus*: Just a couple of singles seen until we got to Sri Lanka where they were fairly common.

Watercock *Gallicrex cinerea*: A single seen on our first morning on South Andaman, then another one stayed mostly hidden at Debera Wewa on Sri Lanka.

Grey-headed Swamphen *Porphyrio poliocephalus*: A good crowd of these were seen on roadside flashes on South Andaman, but not again till late in the tour at Bundala and Tissa.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*: A horde of these were seen at Sippighat in the Andamans, and singles only near Madurai and at Bundala.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*: A few were seen on roadside pools near Madurai.

JACANIDAE

Pheasant-tailed Jacana *Hydrophasianus chirurgus*: A single bird was seen on the Andamans, then we found some spectacular males in breeding plumage at Debera Wewa.

CHARADRIIDAE

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*: Rather commonly encountered around the wetlands of South Andaman, plus a few were seen at Bundala.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*: A handful were seen at Bundala.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*: Seen on two dates on South Andaman, and in Sri Lanka a couple of pairs seen near to Tissa seemed to be engaging in display flights.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*: Only seen at Bundala where there were several.

Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*: A nice close encounter with a flock of 60 at Sippighat on the Andamans, then on the Bundala salt pans there were 500+ roosting on the bunds.

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaulti*: Seen on several occasions on South Andaman.

Yellow-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus malabaricus*: A good number seen at Mudumulai, also a few seen in Sri Lanka at Uda Walawe and Bundala.

Grey-headed Lapwing *Vanellus cinereus*: A surprise find at Sippighat on South Andaman, we saw a flock of up to eight birds. A scarce visitor here.

Red-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus*: A small number of scattered sightings in India, then more numerous at Uda Walawe and Bundala.

SCOLOPACIDAE

Pintail Snipe *Gallinago stenura*: Seen in good numbers on several occasions on South Andaman, then a handful were seen at Bundala and around Lake Gregory.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*: A small number seen on South Andaman.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*: A handful were present on South Andaman, then at Bundala we saw flocks of several hundred.

Eurasian Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*: Fairly numerous on South Andaman.

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*: A couple at Sippighat, a couple more at Bundala.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*: Vocal and obvious on the tidal mud on South Andaman, also found in good numbers at Bundala.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*: Several seen on the mud at Sippighat, also found at Bundala.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*: A couple of small groups seen on South Andaman, and in good number on shallow pools at Uda Walawe and Bundala.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*: A single in a muddy pool at Uda Walawe was the only sighting.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*: Seen fairly commonly on the Andamans, a few seen near Madurai, several more noted around the Sri Lankan wetlands.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*: Some nice looks at nine of these sat on old boats in the harbour at Port Blair.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*: Found fairly commonly on the many wet areas of South Andaman, also regularly encountered on Sri Lanka.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*: Five at Bundala was our only sighting.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*: A single at Uda Walawe preceded a flock of 60+ at Bundala. There was a fair amount of assumption applied to the identification based on range – in Sri Lanka the following species is rare. We unwittingly saw a few of this species at Sippighat on South Andaman, identified retrospectively from photos.

Rufous-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis*: 80+ feeding on the mud at Sippighat, at the time presumed to be this species on range, but I have subsequently found that the Andamans lie in the wintering overlap zone between this and the previous species. Having taken several photos of the birds seen, I can say that they were mostly *ruficollis*, with a few *minuta* mixed in. Little Stint in winter plumage show distinctive dusky centres to the scapulars with a pale fringe that gives them a scaly appearance, a gentler head shape, and a finer tipped bill.

Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta*: Some good looks at numerous examples of these on South Andaman, we got quite close to them at Sippighat.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*: A good number of these in the shallows at Sippighat, also not uncommon at Bundala.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*: At least ten of these with the above at Sippighat on our last morning there, underlining what a brilliant place for waders it has become following the natural reclamations of the 2004 Tsunami.

RECURVIROSTRIDAE

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*: Plenty seen on the Sri Lankan wetlands.

BURRHINIDAE

Indian Stone-Curlew *Burhinus indicus*: Four examples of this split from Eurasian Thick-knee were seen at Bundala, then the next day we found 18 roosting under bushes by the dam near Tissa!

Great Thick-knee *Esacus recurvirostris*: Three seen at Bundala, and another four gave good close views by the dam near Tissa.

GLAREOLIDAE

Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum*: A write-in for the tour, we found three on our first morning at Ograbranj on South Andaman, then a total of 35 were counted at Sippighat.

Small Pratincole *Glareola lactea*: A couple of dozen birds were seen at Bundala salt pans, very cute and always a favourite!

LARIDAE

Brown-headed Gull *Larus brunnicephalus*: A single bird was seen at Bundala salt pans.

STERNIDAE

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*: Our first were at Uda Walawe, then a gathering of 60 or more were seen at Bundala salt pans.

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*: Three seen at Bundala salt pans.

Lesser Crested Tern *Thalasseus bengalensis*: At least ten with the massed ranks of Terns at Bundala salt pans.

Great Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii*: Six with the above flocks at Bundala salt pans.

Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*: A single was seen on South Andaman, while at Bundala salt pans there were 200+.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*: A handful were seen near Madurai, then on Sri Lanka they were in big numbers on the wetlands we visited, with 1000+ at Bundala salt pans.

White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*: A couple of birds were seen at Sippighat, a single near Madurai, then 300+ roosting on the Bundala salt pans.

COLUMBIDAE

Rock Pigeon *Columba livia*: Available.

- Nilgiri Woodpigeon *Columba elphinstonii*: A fortunate encounter with two birds in roadside forest near Munnar, never easy to find, and many thanks to S.K. for finding this bird! Endemic to the Western Ghats of Peninsula India.
- Ceylon Woodpigeon *Columba torringtoni*: We had a good look at two of these at the Surrey Estate near Welimada, then found another two birds lurking in stream-side trees near Nuwara Eliya. Endemic to Sri Lanka.
- Andaman Woodpigeon *Columba palumboides*: Often one of the harder endemics to find, we found two sitting peacefully in roadside trees at Chiriyatappu that allowed us prolonged views. Another was seen in flight near Sippighat, then a single posed nicely for us in the forest at Jirkatang.
- Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis*: Only seen on one morning, in the scrub jungle at Mudumalai.
- Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis*: Seen frequently and commonly in both South India and Sri Lanka.
- Red Collared Dove *Streptopelia tranquebarica*: Found rather commonly on South Andaman.
- Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*: A handful noted at Mudumalai, also en-route to Madurai.
- Andaman Cuckoo Dove *Macropygia rufipennis*: Another of the Andaman endemics that can be hard to find. We found only one of these ginger beasts on Mount Harriet, but he did pose for us in the open and at length.
- Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps indica*: Singles were regularly encountered on South Andaman, also at Mudumalai, Munnar, and then rather commonly on Sri Lanka.
- Orange-breasted Green-Pigeon *Treron bicinctus*: Some nice looks at these gaudy fellows at Uda Walawe where they proved to be rather common. A few more were noted at Bundala.
- Grey-fronted Green Pigeon *Treron affinis*: At least eight birds, seen only on the day we were strike-bound at our Munnar hotel (which rather fortunately was amply supplied with flowering and fruiting trees!) Endemic to Peninsular India, this species was formerly lumped with Pompadour Green Pigeon, Ceylon Green Pigeon and Andaman Green Pigeon as *T. pompadora*. Endemic to Peninsula India.
- Ceylon Green-Pigeon *Treron pompadora*: Some nice looks at these at Kitulgala, also found at Ratnaloka and near Sinharaja. Endemic to Sri Lanka.
- Andaman Green Pigeon *Treron chloropterus*: Rather surprisingly, we only saw one of these during our stay, a male that sat in a bare tree at Chiriyatappu. Endemic to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- Yellow-footed Green Pigeon *Treron phoenicoptera*: Seen in good numbers at Mudumulai on just one day.
- Green Imperial Pigeon *Ducula aenea*: Found commonly in the forests of South Andaman, two flew by at Chinnor, then we found them commonly in Sri Lanka except for in the highlands.

PSITTACIDAE

- Vernal Hanging Parrot *Loriculus vernalis*: Frequently encountered on South Andaman, also found at Mudumulai, Top Slip, and around our Munnar hotel.
- Ceylon Hanging-Parrot *Loriculus beryllinus*: Found commonly around the Sri Lankan forests. Endemic to Sri Lanka.
- Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria*: Seen fairly regularly around the forests of South Andaman, also at Kitulgala and in good number at Uda Walawe.
- Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*: First seen at our Chennai hotel, they were rather common around Uda Walawe, Bundala and Tissa.
- Plum-headed Parakeet *Psittacula cyanocephala*: A good number of these beauties seen at Mudumulai, with a few more seen at Chinnor and Kitulgala.

- Malabar Parakeet *Psittacula columboides*: We saw a few of these in the Mudumalai area, also at Parambikulam and around our Munnar hotel. Endemic to South India.
- Layard's Parakeet *Psittacula calthropae*: Not really the best-looking of the Sri Lankan endemics, we saw our first at Kitulgala on our first evening, and subsequently found more there and also at Sinharaja.
- Red-breasted Parakeet *Psittacula alexandri*: Not uncommon on the Andamans, with one large flock seen in rice fields.
- Long-tailed Parakeet *Psittacula longicauda*: Not many seen this year at all, but we had a good look at one perched at Chiriyatappu on South Andaman. The local race *tytleri* is a candidate for a future split.

CUCULIDAE

- Green-billed Coucal *Centropus chlororhynchos*: A nice encounter with a pair of these at Kitulgala, lurking in coconut palms. Another more furtive pair were seen near our lodgings at Sinharaja. Endemic to Sri Lanka.
- Greater Coucal *Centropus sinensis*: Often encountered in both southern India and Sri Lanka, the birds here show a striking blue gloss on the neck. The calls also differ somewhat from other populations of *sinensis*, all lending weight to the form concerned *C. [sinensis] parroti* being split as 'Southern Coucal', which is restricted to Sri Lanka and India south of the Gangetic plain.
- Andaman Coucal *Centropus andamanensis*: This was seen frequently on South Andaman, not so skulking and sometimes jay-walking down the roads! Endemic to the Andaman Islands.
- Sirkeer Malkoha *Taccocua leschenaultii*: A nice view of a pair that popped out of cover in the trees at Uda Walawe. A subcontinent endemic.
- Red-faced Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus pyrrhocephalus*: What a run around this gave us! Only ever seen at Sinharaja, we extended our two day stay there by a half-day as we had missed it. It wasn't until we were returning to the park entrance for the last time, when the local forest guide came running and led us to where four were feeding with a large mixed feeding flock. Great views of this fantastic bird ensued. Phew! Endemic to Sri Lanka.
- Blue-faced Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus viridirostris*: Two seen, both just fleeting views of a tail disappearing into dense foliage, at Top Slip and Chinnor. Endemic to Peninsular India and Sri Lanka.
- Jacobin Cuckoo *Clamator jacobinus*: One seen fleetingly at Mudumalai, then one showed very well at Bundala, flying back and forth by our jeeps.
- Asian Koel *Eudynamys scolopacea*: A small number seen on the Andamans and in South India, then more commonly in Sri Lanka.
- Violet Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx xanthorhynchus*: One was seen flying overhead calling at Chiriyatappu on South Andaman.
- Grey-bellied Cuckoo *Cacomantis passerinus*: Three were seen at Uda Walawe. A subcontinent endemic.
- Common Hawk-Cuckoo *Hierococcyx varius*: Heard at Munnar, then on Sri Lanka we had a good view of one at the Glenloch tea factory, and another during our final breakfast at Kandy.
- Indian Cuckoo *Cuculus micropterus*: Often heard singing in the South Andaman forests, then we saw a silent one at Sinharaja.

TYTONIDAE

- Common Barn-owl *Tyto alba* (H): An eerie screech was heard around our Jungle Hut cabins.
- Andaman Barn-owl *Tyto deroepstorffi*: The twentieth and final Andaman endemic that we saw, although it took three evenings to finally see it! We were taken to a site for it in Port Blair, but drew a blank on the first night. Our second attempt to see it was partly successful in

that we heard it, then on our final evening we heard it calling once again, and eventually managed to bring it in close, whereupon it sat on a palm leaf just a few metres in front of us so that we could see almost every feather! Having purposefully left my camera in the vehicle so as not to jinx the encounter, we came away with eyeball-searing views, but no pictures! A lifer for your leader, and endemic to the Andaman Islands.

STRIGIDAE

Serendib Scops-Owl *Otus thilohoffmanni*: Yet another lifer for the leader! My previous visit eight years ago coincided with the shenanigans of some groups being shown the bird covertly, and others not. This time we had Chammy, and after an hours pause in a rice paddy shelter at Kitulgala while he went off to locate it, he returned and led us too where he had found one roosting, no mean feat when one considers how well hidden it was! A beautiful bird indeed, and endemic to Sri Lanka.

Andaman Scops Owl *Otus balli*: Unlike on my previous visits when these have been a real pain to see well, we saw one quickly and easily near the summit of Mount Harriet, probably soon after he had left his roost. We were able to study the subtleties of his plumage as he called from an exposed perch. Endemic to the Andaman Islands.

Oriental Scops Owl *Otus sunia*: A stunning encounter with a calling bird on our first evening on the Andamans, it was totally unconcerned by our close approach and stayed rooted to the branch. This Andaman race *modestus* has a slightly different call to the mainland birds, but otherwise seems completely similar. Also heard at Parambikulam.

Indian Scops Owl *Otus bakkamoena*: One of two calling birds at our Munnar hotel showed briefly in the pre-dawn as we hurried to leave, then in Sri Lanka we saw two roosting birds in a hotel car park!

Forest Eagle Owl *Bubo nipalensis*: The last addition to the tour list makes it to 'bird-of-the-trip'! After walking around the forest at Kandy, a deep double hoot alerted us to one of these. We tracked it down and had good views of this fantastic creature sat in a big tree in the half-light, looking like some satanic teddy-bear! Only the third one I have ever seen, and a write-in for the Sri Lanka part of the tour.

Brown Fish-Owl *Bubo zeylonensis*: We gradually acquired better views of five birds, with flighty birds seen at Mudumulai and Top Slip, a good view of one by torchlight at Parambikulam, then two roosting birds were watched at length in the forest at Kandy.

Brown Wood Owl *Strix leptogrammica*: One was heard calling in the middle of the night at our Munnar hotel, then on Sri Lanka Chammy took us to a roost site near Nuwara Eliya and we all had good looks at this lovely bird.

Jungle Owlet *Glaucidium radiatum*: A slightly wet example of the rusty-toned *malabaricum* race showed very well on our last morning at Parambikulam, then saw a greyish nominate individual at Uda Walawe.

Chestnut-backed Owlet *Glaucidium castanonotum*: After some persistence we eventually spotted one across the river at Kitulgala, calling often but totally uninterested in our side of the river! Others were heard there, and also from the Blue Magpie Lodge. Endemic to Sri Lanka.

Spotted Owlet *Athene brama*: Two birds seen on our first morning at Mudumulai were the only ones of the trip.

Brown Hawk-Owl *Ninox scutulata*: One calling in the pre-dawn above our camp at Parambikulam appeared for a viewing, then another was seen easily and clearly in our Munnar hotel garden.

Hume's Hawk-Owl *Ninox obscura*: Part of a very successful first day on South Andaman, we had a great look at a vocal example of this endemic Owl soon after nightfall at Chiriyatappu.

This species has a very similar call to Brown Hawk Owl of the mainland, but is distinctly chocolate brown overall with a pale barred vent. Endemic to the Andaman Islands.

Andaman Hawk-Owl *Ninox affinis*: Soon after seeing the Andaman Scops Owl on Mount Harriet, we heard a distant one of these and gave chase, and managed to get a good look as he called from an exposed branch. Endemic to the Andaman Islands.

PODARGIDAE

Ceylon Frogmouth *Batrachostomus moniliger*: Despite the continual rain at Parambikulam and Top Slip, we set out into the Karien Shola (with its scores of leeches underfoot) and were pleased to be shown not one but two separate roosting females, huddled against the ghastly weather. We were shown yet another day-roosting female at Sinharaja. Endemic to Peninsular India and Sri Lanka.

CAPRIMULGIDAE

Indian Jungle Nightjar *Caprimulgus indicus*: Having seen this species just once previously, (which was photographed and retro-identified following the split from Grey Nightjar *C. jotaka*) it was very satisfying to have superb views of a perched bird at Mudumulai, pinned to the spot with the beam of a torch. Endemic to the Subcontinent.

Jerdon's Nightjar *Caprimulgus atripennis*: Continuing the theme, we had a good long look at a calling bird spot-lit in tree at Mudumulai. Another was heard and seen flying back and forwards across the road at Bundala. Endemic to Peninsular India and Sri Lanka.

Andaman Nightjar *Caprimulgus andamanicus*: Our first evening on South Andaman began with a bird that started calling nearby in the gloom of dusk, and then came sailing in for a close look at us, offering a great view - only the second time we have seen this on this tour. A second bird was also heard there. Endemic to the Andaman Islands.

Indian Little Nightjar *Caprimulgus asiaticus*: We saw two in the road early one morning at Mudumulai, then at Bundala we had good looks at tarmac-hugging birds which also gave a vocal account of themselves.

Savanna Nightjar *Caprimulgus affinis*: We were shown a roosting bird at Mudumulai, blending in extremely well sat on a dark rock.

APODIDAE

White-bellied Swiftlet *Collocalia esculenta*: Common over the forests on South Andaman, we also witnessed large numbers leaving their roosts under the jetties by Chatham ferry station.

Indian Swiftlet *Aerodramus unicolor*: Commonly seen in southern India and in Sri Lanka. Endemic to Peninsular India and Sri Lanka.

Edible-nest Swiftlet *Aerodramus fuciphagus*: Small numbers were seen on several occasions on South Andaman, often over water.

Brown-throated Needletail *Hirundapus giganteus*: Frequently seen on South Andaman, and particularly enjoyable when shooting past the terrace at our well-appointed hotel at eye-watering speeds. A few were seen at Parambikulam, and also seen on occasion in Sri Lanka.

Asian Palm Swift *Cypsiurus balasiensis*: Small numbers were seen in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, and in Sri Lanka.

Alpine Swift *Apus melba*: Two were seen at Bundala.

Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus*: A single bird was seen on South Andaman on our first morning.

Little Swift *Apus affinis*: A few were seen in the rain at Parambikulam, then more were found around the Sri Lankan wetlands.

HEMIPROCNIDAE

Crested Treeswift *Hemiprocne coronata*: Some great looks at perched birds at Mudumalai where they were not uncommon, also seen at various points around Sri Lanka.

TROGONIDAE

Malabar Trogon *Harpactes fasciatus*: A splendid male thrilled us and took our mind off the rain at Top Slip, then at Sinharaja we saw up to four in a day. Endemic to Southern India and Sri Lanka.

ALCEDINIDAE

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*: Odd birds were noted on various wetlands.

Stork-billed Kingfisher *Pelargopsis capensis*: Amazingly, twelve individuals seen on the tour. There were lots on the Andamans, a single at Top Slip, and several seen in Sri Lanka.

White-throated Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis*: Seen almost daily, and quite numerous on Sri Lanka.

Black-capped Kingfisher *Halcyon pileata*: A single seen on the first morning in the Andamans was the only one of the tour.

Collared Kingfisher *Todiramphus chloris*: Regularly seen in typical coastal habitats on the Andamans.

Lesser Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis*: One seen en-route to Madurai, then a few were seen at Bundala and Tissa.

MEROPIDAE

Blue-bearded Bee-eater *Nyctyornis athertoni*: Great looks at one at Mudumalai, and we found a vocal pair at the roadside in Chinnor Wildlife Sanctuary.

Little Green Bee-eater *Merops orientalis*: A few noted at Mudumalai and at Chinnor, and also in the dry zone in Sri Lanka

Blue-tailed Bee-eater *Merops philippinus*: Seen on the Andamans, in South India, and fairly commonly in Sri Lanka with the biggest numbers present at Bundala.

Chestnut-headed Bee-eater *Merops leschenaulti*: A handful were seen at Mudumalai and Chinnor, several posed well on our first evening at Kitulgala, and also seen drinking in the lake at Udawattakele.

CORACIIDAE

Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis*: Seen regularly in South India in open country and often as we travelled, with a few also seen in Sri Lanka.

Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis*: At least four seen on South Andaman.

UPUPIDAE

Common Hoopoe *Upupa epops*: A couple at Mudumulai, one en-route from Ooty and another at Uda Walawe.

BUCEROTIDAE

Malabar Grey Hornbill *Ocyrceros griseus*: A pair at Jungle Hut showed well if briefly to some, then we all had good looks at some at Top Slip. Endemic to Southern India.

Ceylon Grey Hornbill *Ocyrceros gingalensis*: Two sat preening in the car park of our hotel at Kitulgala, and a single was at Sinharaja. Endemic to Sri Lanka.

Malabar Pied Hornbill *Anthracoceros coronatus*: At least four were seen at Uda Walawe, posing well in bare trees. Endemic to Southern India and Sri Lanka.

CAPITONIDAE

- Brown-headed Barbet *Megalaima zeylanica*: Two at Mudumalai were the only ones seen in India, then in Sri Lanka there were a lot more common. A subcontinent endemic.
- White-cheeked Barbet *Megalaima viridis*: Seen well at Mudumalai and around our Munnar hotel. Endemic to Peninsular India.
- Yellow-fronted Barbet *Megalaima flavifrons*: Our first were seen at Kitulgala soon after our arrival, with more of these handsome fellows encountered at Sinharaja, Welimada, and at Kandy.
- Malabar Barbet *Megalaima malabarica*: We caught up with these stunning little fellows at Munnar, where as the morning mist cleared we found flocks of 30 or more buzzing around the treetops. This species was formerly lumped with *M. rubricapilla* of Sri Lanka, the combination taking the name Crimson-fronted Barbet.
- Ceylon Small Barbet *Megalaima rubricapillus*: Several showed well on our first evening at Kitulgala, and also seen at Sinharaja. Endemic to Sri Lanka.
- Coppersmith Barbet *Megalaima haemacephala*: Odd singles seen in drier habitats, in Chennai, Mudumalai, and at Uda Walawe.

PICIDAE

- Indian Pygmy Woodpecker *Dendrocopus nanus*: A few singles of these midgets were seen at Mudumalai, Parambikulam and Kitulgala. A subcontinent endemic.
- Spot-breasted Pied Woodpecker *Dendrocopus analis*: Several sightings on South Andaman where they showed well. This was formerly lumped with Fulvous-breasted Pied Woodpecker *D. macei*, and Rasmussen hints that the Andaman race, *andamanensis*, may perhaps be better treated as a third species, endemic to the Andamans.
- Rufous Woodpecker *Micropternus brachyurus*: A pair were seen in a bird-flock at Parambikulam as the rain paused for a short time, then a distant single was seen at Kitulgala.
- White-bellied Woodpecker *Dryocopus javensis*: A fly-by was seen at Mudumalai, then we had some great views of two of these monsters in the Karien Shola at Top Slip.
- Andaman Woodpecker *Dryocopus hodgei*: This impressive beast was seen almost daily in the forests of South Andaman with as many as ten birds seen, and often heard calling and drumming loudly. Endemic to the Andaman Islands, and formerly treated as conspecific with White-bellied Woodpecker!
- Lesser Yellownape *Picus chlorolophus*: Singles were seen at Jungle Hut and Parambikulam, and at Sinharaja they formed a component of the bird-flocks there, with one or two seen in each feeding party. Also seen at Kandy.
- Streak-throated Woodpecker *Picus xanthopygaeus*: A male was seen in the scrub at Mudumalai.
- Black-rumped Flameback *Dinopium benghalense*: A few seen around Top Slip/ Parambikulam and Munnar, then in the Sri Lankan forests we found the rather startling red-backed *psarodes* race.
- Greater Flameback *Chrysocolaptes lucidus*: A couple of singles were seen, at Ooty and Munnar. The race *socialis*, endemic to the Western Ghats, is allegedly a candidate for a future split.
- Crimson-backed Flameback *Chrysocolaptes stricklandi*: Furtive birds were seen on three dates at Sinharaja, then we had more prolonged views of a pair at Kandy. Endemic to Sri Lanka, and split from the previous species.
- White-naped Flameback *Chrysocolaptes festivus*: After a pre-breakfast vigil at Tissa drew a blank, amazingly a pair flew over our heads while we were waiting for our bus on the nearby roadside, heading towards the hole they were excavating in a nearby coconut palm. We scuttled back to the coconut grove and had a great view of the female perched by the hole. A subcontinent endemic.
- Heart-spotted Woodpecker *Hemicircus canente*: A fortunate encounter at Parambikulam with a pair that flew into roadside trees as we were about to depart.

PITTIDAE

Indian Pitta *Pitta brachyura*: We had a good look at two feeding under the bamboo in the garden of Jungle Hut (and have the tick bites to prove it!) then in Sri Lanka they were heard frequently; two were lured out for a fight on our first evening at Kitulgala, then another two were seen at Uda Walawe, one of them posing well for photos.

ALAUDIDAE

Jerdon's Bushlark *Mirafra affinis*: We missed this in India, but we need not have worried as they were abundant in some corners of Uda Walawe, plus a handful more seen at Bundala. This is endemic to Peninsula India and Sri Lanka, and is split out of the Rufous-winged Bushlark complex.

Ashy-crowned Finch-Lark *Eremopterix grisea*: Rather plentiful in small flocks in dry open areas of Uda Walawe and Bundala.

Malabar Lark *Galerida malabarica*: Several were seen on a rocky hill at Mudumalai, at least one posing well. Endemic to Southern India.

Oriental Skylark *Alauda gulgula*: A pair were seen on the dam at Parambikulam, then we had some good looks at several birds at Bundala.

HIRUNDINIDAE

Dusky Crag Martin *Hirundo concolor*: A gathering of these were seen at Kalhatty, a single at Parambikulam, and a handful more around Munnar.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*: Seen in good numbers in open country throughout the tour.

House Swallow *Hirundo tahitica*: Regularly encountered on South Andaman where they are confined to the coast.

Hill Swallow *Hirundo domicola*: Several feeding over the tea at Naduvattam with more seen around Munnar, while in Sri Lanka they were also favouring tea estates, with nest building observed inside the Glenloch tea factory. Split from the above species, and endemic to Southern India and Sri Lanka.

Wire-tailed Swallow *Hirundo smithii*: Two were seen feeding over a stream at Mudumalai.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*: A small number were seen on South Andaman, more around Mudumalai and at Parambikulam dam, and a single was seen at Uda Walawe.

Ceylon Swallow *Hirundo hyperythra*: A lovely looking bird, we saw our first soon after arriving at Colombo airport, then more were noted around Kitulgala, a few at Sinharaja, also en-route to Uda Walawe.

MOTACILLIDAE

Forest Wagtail *Dendronanthus indicus*: A single bird was seen briefly at Chiriyatappu, then at Nuwara Eliya we enjoyed lengthy looks at two of these wobbly little critters. At our jungle resort at Kandy there were another two in the garden, cheekily feeding on patios! A migrant from north-east Asia.

White Wagtail *Motacilla (alba) alba*: Two seen at Uda Walawe.

White-browed Wagtail *Motacilla maderaspatensis*: Endemic to the Subcontinent, we found these smart birds in the garden of Jungle Hut, on the dam at Parambikulam, and also on roadsides near Madurai.

Grey-headed Wagtail *Motacilla [flava] thunbergi*: Quite a few seen on the Andamans and down south in Sri Lanka, always difficult to identify to race. This taxon seems to feature in both areas but some on the Andamans sounded rather like 'Eastern Yellow Wagtail' *M. tschutschensis*, with some obvious supercilia on grey heads suggesting *simillima* or similar.

- Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*: Seen throughout the tour, with notably good numbers at Mudumalai and Munnar.
- Paddyfield Pipit *Anthus rufulus*: A scattering of sightings in India, and many more in open country in Sri Lanka.
- Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii*: Some good close looks at some of 25+ birds seen at Uda Walawe, many of them quite vocal.
- Nilgiri Pipit *Anthus nilghiriensis*: We thought we had missed this one, with the transport strike dashing our hopes of ever reaching Eravikulam. Fortunately S.K. had a site up his sleeve that was on our route the following day, and we were thrilled to find an obliging example of this species idly walking around on some short grass. Endemic to the Western Ghats.

CAMPEPHAGIDAE

- Large Cuckooshrike *Coracina macei*: We saw a couple on the Andamans, a single at Mudumalai and a couple at Parambikulam. Rasmussen suggests that the nominate Peninsula race plus Sri Lankan *layardi* race may be a separate species to the Himalayan *nipalensis* and the Andaman *andamana* races.
- Andaman Cuckooshrike *Coracina dobsoni*: Often one of the harder birds to find, our sharp-eyed guide found a pair at Chiriyatappu that showed well, then another was found at Jirkatang. This split from Bar-bellied Cuckooshrike of South-east Asia is very strongly barred. Endemic to the Andaman Islands.
- Black-headed Cuckooshrike *Coracina melanoptera*: Rather elusive, we saw three at Mudumalai and another at Kitulgala.
- Ashy Minivet *Pericrocotus divaricatus*: A group of four in a mixed feeding party on Mt Harriet was a nice surprise.
- Small Minivet *Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*: Seen in tall evergreen forest on the Andamans, in dry scrub habitat in India, and in various habitats in Sri Lanka.
- White-bellied Minivet *Pericrocotus erythropygus*: One of the highlights of our stay at Mudumalai, thanks to the local guide we had a good look at a pair of this elusive and localised bird. An Indian endemic.
- Scarlet Minivet *Pericrocotus speciosus*: Common in the South Andaman forests, and it has to be said (again) that their vocalisations are very unlike the mainland Scarlet Minivets. I smell a split a-coming....
- Orange Minivet *Pericrocotus flammeus*: Regularly encountered in India and Sri Lanka, being rather common at Sinharaja. A split from Scarlet Minivet, this species is endemic to Peninsular India and Sri Lanka, and seems convincingly different on calls alone.
- Pied Flycatcher-shrike *Hemipus picatus*: A couple were seen in the Ooty area, also seen at Kitulgala, Sinharaja and Kandy.
- Malabar Woodshrike *Tephrodornis sylvicola*: We saw four in a mixed feeding flock at Parambikulam, a fortunate find when it stopped raining for an hour!
- Common Woodshrike *Tephrodornis pondicerianus*: A couple of pairs were seen in dry scrub jungle at Mudumulai.
- Ceylon Woodshrike *Tephrodornis affinis*: A pair of these showed well in the car-park at Bundala. Endemic to Sri Lanka, this is a fairly recent split from Common Woodshrike *T. pondicerianus*.

MONARCHIDAE

- Asian Paradise-Flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi*: Several examples seen at Mudumalai where white males with full tails graced the garden of Jungle Hut. Also seen at Parambikulam, and fairly commonly in Sri Lanka.
- Black-naped Blue Monarch *Hypothymis azurea*: A few singles seen on South Andaman, at Mudumulai, and in the Sri Lankan forests.

PACHYCEPHALIDAE

Mangrove Whistler *Pachycephala grisola*: An inquisitive fellow came to check us out in the mangroves on South Andaman, allowing some nice views even if he isn't much to look at!

RHIPIDURIDAE

White-browed Fantail *Rhipidura aureola*: A few seen in the dry scrubby habitat at Mudumulai, plus a handful more in Sri Lanka.

White-spotted Fantail *Rhipidura albogularis*: A small number encountered in the Ooty area. Endemic to Peninsular India, this species hybridises with White-throated Fantail *R. albicollis* in the north-east of its range and is often lumped with it.

PYCNONOTIDAE

Grey-headed Bulbul *Pycnonotus priocephalus*: A real sneak that took a couple of hours to get a look at near Mudumulai. Their calls could be heard coming intermittently from a tangled hillside before we eventually saw the three birds present. Endemic to the Western Ghats.

Andaman Bulbul *Pycnonotus fuscoflavescens*: Seen often in the forests of South Andaman, offering good views despite usually staying inside the bushes. A handsome bird that is a recent split from Black-headed Bulbul *P. atriceps*. Endemic to the Andaman Islands.

Flame-throated Bulbul *Pycnonotus gularis*: A single in the clearing at Top Slip was the only one of the tour, the weather obviously keeping their heads down. Split from Black-crested Bulbul *P. melanicterus*, and endemic to the Western Ghats.

Black-capped Bulbul *Pycnonotus melanicterus*: A few of these seen at Kitulgala and Sinharaja, but never common. Endemic to the Sri Lanka, and split from Black-crested Bulbul *P. melanicterus*.

Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus*: Seen daily on the Andamans and in India (except for at Parambikulam in the rain.)

Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer*: Common in drier, more open habitats but absent on the Andamans.

Yellow-eared Bulbul *Pycnonotus penicillatus*: One of the last Sri Lankan endemics to submit to our gaze, we found these handsome birds in the highlands only. Endemic to the Sri Lanka.

White-browed Bulbul *Pycnonotus luteolus*: Seeing this became something of a struggle, with some heard in India remaining unseen. On Sri Lanka we managed to see some at Uda Walawe, and also at the dam near Tissa. Endemic to Southern India and Sri Lanka.

Yellow-browed Bulbul *Iole indica*: First encountered near the Jungle Hut, we also found them at Parambikulam/Top Slip, Munnar, and then fairly commonly in the Sri Lankan forests. Endemic to Southern India and Sri Lanka.

Square-tailed Black Bulbul *Hypsipetes ganeesa*: Our first appeared at Ooty, then they were abundant around our Munnar hotel. More were seen in the Sri Lankan forests where there was a noticeable difference in voice compared with the South Indian birds. This is a split by Rasmussen, and is endemic to Sri Lanka and Peninsula India, but the Sri Lankan *humii* may yet qualify for specific status.

AEGITHINIDAE

Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia*: A small number seen at Mudumalai and also at Parambikulam, then more regularly in Sri Lanka. All referred to the race *multicolor* that shows a black crown and mantle in the males.

CHLOROPSEIDAE

Gold-fronted Leafbird *Chloropsis aurifrons*: A few at Mudumalai, around our hotel at Munnar and also at Kitulgala.

Jerdon's Leafbird *Chloropsis jerdoni*: A small number seen, at Parambikulam, Munnar and at Kitulgala. Formerly lumped with Blue-winged Leafbird *C. cochinchinensis*, Jerdon's lacks blue in the wing, and is endemic to Peninsula India and Sri Lanka.

LANIIDAE

Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*: Found very commonly on the Andamans, with many of the grey-crowned *lucionensis* race noted. A small number were seen in South India, and odd singles seen in Sri Lanka, particularly in Victoria Park!

Bay-backed Shrike *Lanius vittatus*: A fair number seen in the dry scrub jungle at Mudumalai, the only place we recorded it.

Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach*: A few birds seen in open country in South India, such as at Mudumalai and around tea plantations.

TURDIDAE

Pied Ground-Thrush *Zoothera wardii*: A gorgeous male showed very well in Victoria Park. This subcontinent endemic that breeds in the Himalayas is a hard bird to see outside of its wintering grounds in Sri Lanka.

Orange-headed Thrush *Zoothera citrina*: One of the *andamanensis* race was seen at Chiriyatappu on South Andaman, then we found two in the garden of Jungle Hut of the white-faced peninsula race *cyanotis*, followed by another three in the Karien Shola at Top Slip.

Spot-winged Ground-Thrush *Zoothera spiloptera*: Apart from a glimpse in the hotel car park, our first encounter with this handsome fellow was in the Kitulgala forests. We subsequently had several more views at Sinharaja, and also heard it on the Horton Plains at dawn (no, it wasn't Chammy's ringtone that time!) Endemic to Sri Lanka.

Ceylon Scaly Thrush *Zoothera imbricata*: One of the most difficult birds to find on Sri Lanka due to its skulking nature, we enjoyed a great close look at a furtive bird preening and feeding on a stream bed at Sinharaja. Endemic to Sri Lanka.

Indian Blackbird *Turdus simillimus*: Our first were on the lawn of our Ooty hotel, with others seen nearby on Dodabetta peak, then at Munnar we saw at least six, feeding in flowering and fruiting trees around our hotel. At Ooty they are of the nominate race, and at Munnar they are of the *bourdilloni* race. In Sri Lanka we saw some of the *kinnisii* race emerging at dawn on the Horton Plains. A split from Common Blackbird, this species is endemic to Peninsular India and Sri Lanka, with the Sri Lankan form probably best regarded as a distinct species.

Ceylon Whistling-thrush *Myophonus blighi*: After a solo sighting of this crepuscular skulker on our first evening at Nuwara Eliya, we made an early morning trip to Horton Plains National Park yet dipped on the hoped-for dawn appearance. Chammy then located a strongly calling bird at mid-morning, and before long we were all getting great views of a female. Another female was glimpsed in the gloom of dusk later that day. This represented our final Sri Lankan endemic for the full set!

Malabar Whistling-thrush *Myophonus horsfieldii*: Our first was seen briefly near Mudumalai, then at Parambikulam we finally found the songster that had been taunting us in the rain, and he presented himself for good views. At Munnar they were fairly common and fearless, with several seen around our hotel. Endemic to Peninsular India.

MUSCICAPIDAE

- Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica*: A few singles were seen in Sri Lanka, one at Parambikulam, while in the forests of the Andamans they were rather more noticeable.
- Rusty-tailed Flycatcher *Muscicapa ruficauda*: A nice surprise to find several of these within walking distance of our Munnar Hotel. Another winter visitor from the Western Himalayas.
- Brown-breasted Flycatcher *Muscicapa muttui*: A winter visitor from North-east India and China, I always find their understated plumage pleasing to look at. A single bird was seen in a gully at Mudumalai, and in Sri Lanka they were seen at Kitulgala, and also at Sinharaja where they were rather common.
- Red-throated Flycatcher *Ficedula albicilla*: A single was seen on South Andaman, and a couple at Mudumalai.
- Kashmir Flycatcher *Ficedula subrubra*: A rare winter visitor from the Western Himalayas, we saw a total of three around Nuwara Eliya with some good looks at striking males in Victoria Park.
- Black-and-orange Flycatcher *Ficedula nigrorufa*: Always a favourite, we had great views of four of these little gems at Ooty, quite confiding as they zipped about low in the undergrowth. Endemic to the Western Ghats.
- Dusky Blue Flycatcher *Eumyias sordidus*: Another understated fellow, we enjoyed a nice look at a male singing from an exposed perch on the Horton Plains. Endemic to Sri Lanka.
- Nilgiri Flycatcher *Eumyias albicaudata*: After brief encounters with birds in the Ooty area, we saw several splendid examples on our last morning near Munnar. Endemic to the Western Ghats.
- Tickell's Blue Flycatcher *Cyornis tickelliae*: Several seen in bamboo-rich forest at Mudumalai, then several more in the forests of Sri Lanka
- Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher *Culicicapa ceylonensis*: Several encountered in the Ooty area, also at Munnar and in the highlands of Sri Lanka.
- Blue-headed Rock Thrush *Monticola cinclorhynchus*: A couple were seen between Mudumalai and Ooty, and at our Munnar hotel two males showed very well. Another winter visitor from the Himalayas.
- Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius*: A single sighting, near Ooty.
- Indian Blue Robin *Luscinia brunnea*: First encountered at Mudumalai and Ooty, also seen near our Munnar hotel, at Sinharaja, and around Nuwara Eliya. They were frequently heard blasting out their sweet song from dense thickets. A winter visitor from the Himalayas.
- Oriental Magpie-Robin *Copsychus saularis*: Frequently encountered throughout.
- White-rumped Shama *Copsychus malabaricus*: A few seen, at Mudumalai, Uda Walawe and Kandy.
- Andaman Shama *Copsychus albiventris*: Several sightings on the Andamans with plenty more heard, our first was a very obliging one that came and perched on a wire over our heads. A split from White-rumped Shama, and endemic to the Andaman Islands.
- Indian Black Robin *Saxicoloides fulicata*: Not uncommon in dry, scrubby habitat around Mudumalai, and also at Uda Walawe and Bundala.
- White-bellied Blue Robin *Myiomela albiventris* (H): One bird that we missed due to the iniquities of a transport strike. As we left the Munnar area, one was heard to sing briefly from a dense roadside thicket, but it couldn't be persuaded to play along. Like the Nilgiri Blue Robin, it was formerly considered a Shortwing and placed in the genus *Brachypteryx*, and both forms were combined into one species; White-bellied Shortwing *B. major*. Both birds are highly localised Western Ghats endemics.
- Nilgiri Blue Robin *Myiomela major*: Unlike on the previous tour when it took a whole day of searching, we found our first one before we even reached Ooty, and enjoyed point-blank views once we had crawled inside the bushes. Another three were seen around Ooty, even around the rubbish at Dodabetta peak. A Western Ghats endemic.

Pied Bushchat *Saxicola caprata*: Often seen around higher altitude open country such as around the tea estates at Ooty and Munnar, and likewise on Sri Lanka around Nuwara Eliya.

TIMALIIDAE

Ashy-headed Laughingthrush *Garrulax cinereifrons*: We saw this well and often at Sinharaja, with more than ten in a day as we scoured the mixed feeding parties that they were always a part of. Endemic to Sri Lanka.

Kerala Laughingthrush *Trochaloxyron fairbanki*: Another bird we feared we had missed at Munnar, however as we left the area we found at least four in roadside forest, fairly confident and very smart. Endemic to the Western Ghats.

Black-chinned Laughingthrush *Trochaloxyron cachinnans*: As many as four of these showed well at Naduvattam, then around Ooty we saw at least ten including some ridiculously tame ones at Dodabetta peak, where they hopped about at the side of the busy path. Endemic to the Western Ghats.

Puff-throated Babbler *Pellorneum ruficeps*: Some good looks at three or more at Mudumalai.

Brown-capped Babbler *Pellorneum fuscicapillus*: We had very close looks at a pair in a tea garden at Kitulgala, and at Sinharaja we saw a couple quietly feeding on the forest floor. At our Kandy hotel there were a pair in the garden and another pair just outside. Endemic to Sri Lanka.

Indian Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus horsfieldii*: We found our first at Mudumalai, and also saw them well at Naduvattam and in the garden of our Munnar hotel. Endemic to Peninsular India.

Ceylon Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus melanurus*: Not dissimilar to the above species, and only fairly recently split from it on the basis of plumage, calls and proportional differences. We saw them fairly regularly at Sinharaja, with some good views acquired. Endemic to Sri Lanka.

Tawny-bellied Babbler *Dumetia hyperythra*: An obliging little flock was found in the herbage near our Munnar hotel, where we were ironically blessed by lack of traffic! Two were seen at Uda Walawe and another duo by our Kandy hotel. Endemic to India and Sri Lanka.

Dark-fronted Babbler *Rhopocichla atriceps*: We missed this in South India, but they proved to be pleasingly common in the forests of Kitulgala and Sinharaja. Also seen at Kandy. Endemic to Southern India and Sri Lanka.

Yellow-eyed Babbler *Chrysomma sinense*: Two were seen on our first evening at Mudumalai, then some more were seen in the grass at Uda Walawe.

Large Grey Babbler *Turdoides malcolmi*: A write-in for this tour, we found a trio hopping on the open roadside as we travelled from Top Slip.

Indian Rufous Babbler *Turdoides subrufa*: A pair showed fairly well in a bamboo clump at Top Slip, then on quiet roadsides near our Munnar hotel we saw another three or more. Endemic to Southern India.

Jungle Babbler *Turdoides striata*: Seen in chatty groups near Ooty and in the Parambikulam area.

Ceylon Rufous Babbler *Turdoides rufescens*: Seen in good numbers around Kitulgala and Sinharaja. I prefer the 'old' name of Orange-billed Babbler. Endemic to Sri Lanka.

Yellow-billed Babbler *Turdoides affinis*: A charming and regular feature of dry country such as Mudumalai, also not uncommon in Sri Lanka where it could be found in a wider range of habitats. Endemic to Southern India and Sri Lanka.

Brown-cheeked Fulvetta *Alcippe poioicephala*: Small numbers of these drab birds were seen at Mudumalai, Naduvattam, Parambikulam and Munnar.

CISTICOLIDAE

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*: A few were seen at Uda Walawe, and also noted at Tissa and at Horton Plains.

Grey-breasted Prinia *Prinia hodgsonii*: A small number seen, in dry grassy habitat near Munnar and at Uda Walawe.

Ashy Prinia *Prinia socialis*: Perhaps the showiest of the Prinias on our tour, we found them near Ooty, at Uda Walawe, and in parks and gardens at Nuwara Eliya. A subcontinent endemic.

Jungle Prinia *Prinia sylvatica*: Two songsters were enjoyed at Uda Walawe, even if they're not much to look at! A subcontinent endemic.

Plain Prinia *Prinia inornata*: Seen on grassy slopes near Munnar, then commonly in the dry zone of Sri Lanka.

Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius*: A handful encountered on our trip, at Mudumalai, Munnar, Kitulgala and Nuwara Eliya, often in gardens.

SYLVIIDAE

Sri Lanka Bush-warbler *Elaphrornis palliseri*: Just two singles were seen; one showed well at the roadside at Horton Plains, and another was glimpsed near Nuwara Eliya. Endemic to Sri Lanka. (There seems to be a lack of consistency with the naming in Rasmussen, all the other endemics names have changed 'Sri Lanka' back to 'Ceylon', except for this one.)

Rusty-rumped Warbler *Locustella certhiola*: Heard at Chiriyatappu on South Andaman, glimpsed at Sippighat, and also at Nuwara Eliya.

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*: Found rather commonly in South India, giving its harsh 'taks' and grating scolds from the undergrowth, with a small number also seen in Sri Lanka.

Oriental Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus orientalis*: A small number were seen on the South Andaman wetlands.

Indian Reed-Warbler *Acrocephalus brunnescens* (NL): One seen at Bundala.

Thick-billed Warbler *Acrocephalus aedon*: A rather vocal example was seen briefly on two evenings at Chiriyatappu on South Andaman.

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*: Seen regularly around the South Andaman wetlands.

Tickell's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus affinis*: First encountered at Mudumalai, we saw many in mixed feeding flocks in the non-native trees at Ooty. A winter visitor from the Himalayas.

Yellow-browed Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*: Two singles encountered, one at Chiriyatappu on the Andamans and another at Ooty.

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*: Seen fairly commonly from Mudumalai to Munnar, their explosive call always preceding them. Absent in Sri Lanka.

Bright Green Warbler *Phylloscopus nitidus*: Less noticeable than the above, we found them at Mudumalai and Munnar, then in Sri Lanka they were heard throughout and seen occasionally, the commonest Warbler in the forests.

Two-barred Warbler *Phylloscopus plumbeitarsus*: Heard on several occasions on South Andaman, with one seen at Mt Harriet.

Large-billed Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus magnirostris*: A few seen in South India at Mudumalai, with many more heard. We also saw them in Sri Lanka at Kitulgala, Sinharaja and Horton Plains.

Western Crowned Warbler *Phylloscopus occipitalis*: Only seen at Naduvattam where we found two with a mixed feeding flock. A winter visitor from the Western Himalayas.

Hume's Whitethroat *Sylvia althaea*: A total of three seen in the dry scrub at Mudumalai.

PARIDAE

Indian Yellow Tit *Parus aplonotus*: A female was seen at Naduvattam, then we had better looks at some nice examples around Munnar. This is a recent split from Black-lored Tit *P. xanthogenys*.

Grey Tit *Parus cinereus*: Regularly encountered in South India, plus a handful seen in Sri Lanka.

SITTIDAE

Indian Nuthatch *Sitta castanea*: A couple were seen well in the dry scrub jungle of Mudumulai, the richly coloured male standing out in particular. This Peninsular endemic is split from Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch *S. cinnamoventris*.

Velvet-fronted Nuthatch *Sitta frontalis*: Rather commonly encountered in South India, with good numbers at Ooty, Parambikulam and Munnar. In Sri Lanka we saw a few singles at Sinharaja and Nuwara Eliya, and a few in the garden of our Kandy hotel.

DICAEIDAE

Thick-billed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum agile*: One near Ooty was the only sighting.

Legge's Flowerpecker *Dicaeum vincens*: A single at Kitulgala, and then nice views of several at Sinharaja. Endemic to Sri Lanka.

Pale-billed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum erythrorhynchos*: A few were seen around Jungle Hut and in Chinnor Wildlife Sanctuary, then in Sri Lanka they were rather common in the forests and gardens. Endemic to the Indian Subcontinent.

Nilgiri Flowerpecker *Dicaeum concolor*: Three were seen near Ooty, and then not again till Munnar. Endemic to the Western Ghats, this is split from Plain Flowerpecker *D. minullum* of North-East India and South-East Asia.

Andaman Flowerpecker *Dicaeum virescens*: Seen regularly in the forests of South Andaman, with numerous birds at the top of Mount Harriet. Like Nilgiri Flowerpecker, a split from the Plain Flowerpecker complex. Endemic to the Andaman Islands.

NECTARINIIDAE

Purple-rumped Sunbird *Leptocoma zeylonica*: Seen commonly in the Mudumalai area, and also in Sri Lanka in gardens and 'forest edge' habitats. Endemic to the Indian Subcontinent.

Small Sunbird *Leptocoma minima*: Three at Naduvattam were our first, then we found several in the garden of our hotel at Munnar. Endemic to the Western Ghats.

Olive-backed Sunbird *Cinnyris jugularis*: A small number were seen on South Andaman.

Purple Sunbird *Cinnyris asiaticus*: Regularly seen in drier habitats such as Mudumalai, and the dry zone in Sri Lanka.

Loten's Sunbird *Cinnyris lotenius*: Our first were in the garden of the Ratnaloka Inn en-route to Sinharaja, others were seen at the Surrey Estate, in Victoria Park, and at Kandy. Endemic to Southern India and Sri Lanka.

ZOSTEROPIDAE

Ceylon White-eye *Zosterops ceylonensis*: Our first appeared in mixed feeding flocks at Sinharaja, then on the Horton Plains we found them to be rather common. Endemic to Sri Lanka.

Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus*: A single seen on South Andaman, plenty in South India, and a scattering of encounters in Sri Lanka.

ESTRILDIDAE

White-rumped Munia *Lonchura striata*: Seen fairly frequently on South Andaman, also noted at Mudumulai, Kitulgala and Sinharaja.

- Rufous-bellied Munia *Lonchura jerdoni*: Two were seen in tall grass near Munnar. This is endemic to the Western Ghats, although lumped with the following species by Rasmussen.
- Black-throated Munia *Lonchura kelaarti*: One sat up for us by our Sinharaja hotel, and three were seen around Gregory Lake at Nuwara Eliya. A Sri Lankan endemic, although Rasmussen lumps it with the previous species.
- Scaly-breasted Munia *Lonchura punctulata*: A few at Mudumalai and more near Madurai, while in Sri Lanka they were in good numbers at Uda Walawe and other sites.
- Tricoloured Munia *Lonchura malacca*: Plenty of these zipping about in small flocks at Uda Walawe, also at Debera Wewa. A subcontinent endemic.

PASSERIDAE

- House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*: Available in typical habitats on the Andamans, in South India and Sri Lanka.
- Yellow-throated Sparrow *Petronia xanthocollis*: A small number were seen in the scrub jungle at Mudumalai.

PLOCEIDAE

- Baya Weaver *Ploceus philippinus*: Poor views of a couple in flight near Tissa.

STURNIDAE

- White-faced Starling *Sturnia albofrontata*: Not the easiest bird to find, we found one perched up in the early morning at Sinharaja, then at the eleventh hour we saw a couple with the Red-faced Malkoha party. Endemic to Sri Lanka.
- Grey-headed Starling *Sturnus malabarica*: A single bird was seen at Jungle Hut.
- Malabar White-headed Starling *Sturnus blythii*: A small party was seen at Parambikulam in the short period that the rain stopped. This is split from Grey-headed Starling *S. malabarica*, and is endemic to the Western Ghats.
- Andaman White-headed Starling *Sturnus erythropygius*: Our first endemic of the Andamans, found as we searched for Andaman Teal. We saw plenty in the forests during our stay, often in large mixed flocks. A very attractive fellow, endemic to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- Brahminy Starling *Sturnus pagodarum*: Only seen at Mudumalai where they were numerous. A subcontinent endemic.
- Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus*: Our first were in flocks at a roadside stop near Coimbatore, more were seen near Madurai, at Uda Walawe and Bundala. Rather a shame their winter colours are so drab!
- Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis*: Recorded throughout the tour.
- Jungle Myna *Acridotheres fuscus*: Not uncommon in open country from Mudumalai to Top Slip.
- Ceylon Hill-Myna *Gracula ptilogenys*: Only encountered at Sinharaja where we saw it on two days. Endemic to Sri Lanka.
- Common Hill Myna *Gracula religiosa*: On South Andaman we found some small groups, at Jirkatang and on Mount Harriet.
- Lesser Hill Myna *Gracula indica*: First encountered in the garden of our Munnar hotel, then found in good voice and good numbers at Kitulgala, and at Kandy where they also favoured the hotel garden. Endemic to the Western Ghats and Sri Lanka.

ORIOLIDAE

- Indian Golden Oriole *Oriolus kundoo*: Odd birds seen at Mudumalai, Parambikulam and Munnar, this is a split from Eurasian Golden Oriole.

Black-naped Oriole *Oriolus chinensis*: Rather commonly encountered in the South Andaman forests where the local race *andamanensis* has a different call and is probably a good candidate for a split.

Black-hooded Oriole *Oriolus xanthornus*: Odd birds seen at Mudumalai and Parambikulam, then fairly regularly in Sri Lanka.

IRENIDAE

Asian Fairy-Bluebird *Irena puella*: Scattered sightings of ones and twos on South Andaman, at Mudumalai and Munnar.

DICRURIDAE

Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocercus*: A feature of open country in South India, plus a few seen on South Andaman.

Ashy Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus*: A small number encountered at Mudumalai, Ooty and Munnar.

White-bellied Drongo *Dicrurus caeruleus*: Seen in the dry forest and scrub at Mudumalai, and in Sri Lanka where it occupies a wider range of habitats and was seen frequently. A subcontinent endemic.

Bronzed Drongo *Dicrurus aeneus*: A small number seen at Mudumalai and Parambikulam.

Andaman Drongo *Dicrurus andamanensis*: A common and noisy feature of the forests of South Andaman. Endemic to the Andaman Islands.

Greater Racket-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus paradiseus*: On the Andamans we saw many of these splendid fellows, including one eating a frog while sat on a wire. More were seen at Parambikulam and Munnar.

Ceylon Crested Drongo *Dicrurus lophorinus*: A key vocal component of the feeding flocks at Sinharaja, we saw them often as we searched for Malkohas! Endemic to Sri Lanka.

ARTAMIDAE

Ashy Woodswallow *Artamus fuscus*: A trio sat on some wires near Coimbatore, and a couple of singles were seen in Sri Lanka.

CORVIDAE

Ceylon Blue Magpie *Urocissa ornata*: Not as skulking as expected! We had a great encounter with a couple of habituated pairs at Sinharaja that came to feed on our breakfast surplus! A very attractive bird, endemic to Sri Lanka.

Rufous Treepie *Dendrocitta vagabunda*: A few examples were seen between Mudumalai and Munnar.

White-bellied Treepie *Dendrocitta leucogastra*: It was great to see these gorgeous creatures emerge from the rain-soaked forests at Parambikulam. Endemic to the Western Ghats.

Andaman Treepie *Dendrocitta bayleyi*: Often a rather tough one to find, we found a flock of 18 in the forest at Chiriyatappu, then a handful more were seen at Jirkatang. Endemic to the Andaman Islands.

House Crow *Corvus splendens*: Commonly available in India especially around the Tamil Nadu towns. Also seen in smaller numbers in Sri Lanka and the Andamans.

Eastern Jungle Crow *Corvus leuillantii*: Only seen on the Andamans where they are of the *andamanensis* race. As with Indian Jungle Crow, it is a product of the break-up of Large-billed Crow *C. macrorhynchos*.

Indian Jungle Crow *Corvus culminatus*: Fairly common throughout Kerala and Tamil Nadu, and also on Sri Lanka.

MAMMALS

- : Several seen at Mudumulai, more at Uda Walawe and Bundala, and also en-route to Horton Plains.
- Indian Giant Squirrel *Ratufa indica*: This handsome creature was seen and heard at Mudumalai, Ooty and Parambikulam, often referred to as 'Malabar Giant Squirrel'.
- Sri Lankan Giant Squirrel *Ratufa macroura*: Two forms of this was seen; a dark backed form in the wet zone seen at Kitulgala and Sinharaja, and a grey backed form seen at very close range at Uda Walawe.
- Layard's Palm Squirrel *Funambulus layardi*: A single identified at Sinharaja.
- Indian Palm Squirrel *Funambulus palmarum*: A few seen in Tamil Nadu and Kerala, and more regularly in Sri Lanka.
- Northern Palm Squirrel *Funambulus pennantii*: At least three seen on South Andaman, where the species is introduced.
- Dusky Palm Squirrel *Funambulus sublineatus*: Seen at Parambikulam and Munnar, and also in Victoria Park at Nuwara Eliya. Restricted to Sri Lanka and the Western Ghats.
- Small Indian Civet *Viverricula indica*: One ran across the road en-route to Horton Plains.
- Short-tailed Mongoose *Herpestes brachyurus*: This species includes the sometimes separated 'Indian Ruddy Mongoose' that we saw at the Blue Magpie Lodge at Sinharaja.
- Indian Grey Mongoose *Herpestes edwardsii*: A couple were seen at Mudumalai, and also on Sri Lanka near Uda Walawe and en-route to Colombo.
- Golden Jackal *Canis aureus* (NL): One seen at Bundala.
- Indian Flying Fox *Pteropus giganteus*: A large roost of 2000+ was seen en-route to Uda Walawe, with some more seen at Tissa.
- Southern Plains Grey Langur *Semnopithecus dussumieri*: Some noisy gangs at Mudumalai that were mobbing a Tiger that moved unseen through the scrub! Also seen in Chinnor W. S.
- Tufted Grey Langur *Semnopithecus priam*: A large number of these loitering around the place at Bundala.
- Purple-faced Leaf Monkey *Trachypithecus vetulus*: Endemic to Sri Lanka, we found them fairly commonly at Kitulgala and Sinharaja.
- Nilgiri Langur *Trachypithecus johnii*: Some superb encounters at Parambikulam and also seen near Ooty, they have one of the finest hooting calls.
- Toque Macaque *Macaca sinica*: Another Sri Lankan endemic, seen regularly.
- Bonnet Macaque *Macaca radiata*: Often seen in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Not a favourite!
- Eurasian Wild Boar *Sus scrofa*: Particularly tame around the tents at Parambikulam, also seen at Mudumulai and Bundala.
- Sambar *Cervus unicolor*: A single at Mudumalai, more at Parambikulam, and a few at Horton Plains.
- Chital *Axis axis*: Rather common at Mudumulai, even inside the Jungle Hut garden, and in good number at Parambikulam. A few also seen at Uda Walawe and Bundala.
- Gaur *Bos gaurus*: Great views of plenty of these fine beasts at Parambikulam.
- Asian Elephant *Elephas maximus*: A single animal at the roadside at Mudumalai, then six or more seen more distantly at Chinnor W.S. We also saw a couple of family parties in Uda Walawe, but most of them seemed to be hiding!

REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

in no particular order

Indian Rock Python *Python molurus*: An injured specimen at Uda Walawe.

Sri Lanka Keelback Water Snake *Xenochrophis asperrimus*: Seen daily at Sinharaja where a pair lurked by a pool, and we were able to observe one catch a fish!

Black-spined Snake *Haplocercus ceylonensis*: A youngster found at Sinharaja.

Mugger *Crocodylus palustris*: Six or more seen at Bundala.

Water Monitor *Varanus salvator*: Frequent sightings in Sri Lanka.

Indian Land Monitor *Varanus benghalensis*: A few seen in both India and Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka Kangaroo Lizard *Otocryptis wiegmanni*: Often encountered at Sinharaja.

Star Tortoise *Geolchelone elegans*: A single on the track at Bundala.

Flapshell Turtle *Lissemys punctata*: Seen at Tissa and at Kandy forest.

Birdquest Southern India & Sri Lanka 2011

Andamans pre-tour extension



Andaman Teal



Andaman Woodpecker



Andaman Serpent Eagle



Andaman Serpent Eagle



Oriental Scops Owl



Andaman Cuckoo-Dove



Andaman Bulbul



Long-tailed Parakeet



Andaman Woodpigeon



Andaman Woodpigeon



Black Baza



Curlew Sandpipers & Buffalo

South India: Tamil Nadu & Kerala



Crested Treeswift



Blue-bearded Bee-eater



Spotted Owlet



White-bellied Minivet



Jerdon's Nightjar



Savanna Nightjar



Indian Jungle Nightjar



Ceylon Frogmouth



Jungle Myna



Crested Hawk Eagle



Black-chinned Laughingthrush



Jungle Owlet

Sri Lanka



Chestnut-backed Owlet



Ceylon Grey Hornbill



Spot-winged Ground Thrush



Serendib Scops Owl



Ceylon Frogmouth



Legge's Hawk Eagle



Malabar Pied Hornbill



Indian Pitta



Indian Peafowl



Yellow-wattled Lapwing



Brown Wood Owl



Dusky-blue Flycatcher



Pied Ground Thrush



Brown Shrike



Brown Fish Owl



Forest Eagle Owl: photo by Frank Hummel



Sri Lanka Keelback Water Snake



Birding in style, Kitulgala