

Sri Lanka: 6–14 August 2005

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This is a brief account of a family holiday in Sri Lanka from 6–14.viii.2005. The trip was pre-booked with Jetwing Eco Holidays on the Internet and Ajanthan Shantiratnam expertly took care of all arrangements relating to accommodation, transport, food and guiding.

The primary purpose of our trip was to see as many of the endemic birds as possible while taking in some of the ancient Buddhist culture and the beautiful Sri Lankan countryside.

We recorded 146 birds, 15 mammals, 10 reptiles and amphibians, 25 butterflies and an arachnid in nine days. (To maintain flow of text, scientific names are only in the appended tables.) Highlights included Red-faced Malkoha, Sri Lanka Blue Magpie, Sri Lanka Starling, Ashy-headed Laughingthrush, Sri Lanka Whistling-Thrush and the endemic rhino-horned and kangaroo lizards. We were able to see 30 out of the 33 Sri Lankan endemics (based on Pamela Rasmussen's new taxonomy) missing out on Serendib Scops-Owl *Otus thilohoffmanni* and Sri Lanka Scaly Thrush *Zoothera imbricata* and only hearing Sri Lanka Spurfowl *Galloperdix bicalcarata*.

Guide

Our guide was Lester Perera, one of Sri Lanka's top birders and her leading bird artist. Lester proved to be a superb birder and a fine all-round naturalist. He was great at birdcalls and knew several good sites for all the endemics.

Itinerary

- 5.viii.2005: Chennai–Colombo by Sri Lankan Airlines. Overnight at Tamarind Tree Hotel, Negombo.
- 6.viii.2005: Negombo–Sinharaja by way of Ratnapura. Overnight at Martins Lodge.
- 7.viii.2005: Sinharaja. Overnight at Martins Lodge.
- 8.viii.2005: Sinharaja–Kitulgala. Overnight at Kitulgala Forest Rest House.
- 9.viii.2005: Kitulgala–Nuwara Eliya. Overnight at St. Andrews Hotel, Nuwara Eliya.
- 10.vii.2005: Nuwara Eliya–Horton Plains–Kandy. Overnight at Hilltop Hotel, Kandy.
- 11.viii.2005: Kandy–Sigiriya. Overnight at 'The Teak Forest', Sigiriya
- 12.viii.2005: Sigiriya–Polonnaruwa–Dambulla. Overnight at 'The Teak Forest'.
- 13.viii.2005: Sigiriya–Pinnewala–Colombo. Overnight at Taj Samudra.
- 14.viii.2005: Colombo–Chennai by Sri Lankan Airlines.

Journal

Day one (6.viii.2005)

Arrived Katunayake at 00:20 hrs. Met by Lester Perera and Kalaivanan who was to be our driver for the trip. Transferred to Tamarind Tree Hotel, Negombo, for a few hours rest.

Awoke to the calls of Purple-rumped Sunbird, Common Tailorbird and Asian Koel. Birds in the hotel garden included Tickell's Flowerpecker, Oriental Magpie-Robin, White-

breasted Kingfisher, Rose-ringed Parakeet, White-headed Babbler (race *taprobanus*, with more yellow on the bill than southern Indian birds), Loten's Sunbird, White-bellied Drongo (race *leucopygialis*, with white restricted to lower belly and undertail coverts), Lesser Golden-backed Woodpecker (a pair of the crimson-backed race *psarodes*), Red-vented Bulbul, Common Myna, Indian Jungle and House Crows and Brown-headed Barbet. Little Egret and Indian Pond Heron flew over the grounds.

Drove to Sinharaja after breakfast, stopping at Ratnapura to buy bottled water and medicines. Hill forest on the Ratnapura–Sinharaja road provided good views of Peregrine (Shaheen) Falcon, a party of seven Sri Lanka Swallows on a wire with all-rufous under parts, a pair of Black-headed Cuckooshrike, Spotted Dove, Sri Lanka Small Barbet and Gold-fronted Chloropsis. Heard Yellow-fronted Barbet in the area. Nearing Sinharaja, we saw a single purple-faced leaf monkey on a roadside tree.

Arrived Sinharaja at 12:00 hrs. Birded the area near the stream running close to the park office at the entrance. Our park guide, Sena, said there was a Spot-winged Thrush in the vicinity but we failed to see it. We saw many Legge's Flowerpeckers, Indian Shag, Red-vented Bulbul and a water monitor in the area, while waiting for Lester to get our entrance tickets and before transferring to the jeep that was to take us to Martins Lodge.

Birds seen on the jeep ride to Martins included three White-rumped Munias (one carrying nest material), Tickell's Flowerpecker, Black Bulbul and Yellow-browed Bulbul. Arriving at Martins, we had reasonable views of a pair of Sri Lanka Hill Munias and saw two Green Imperial-Pigeons flying overhead. Sri Lanka Hanging-Parrot was common near Martins and a pair was seen eating the fruit of a palm tree in

the garden. The birds were identical to *Loriculus vernalis* of southern India, in jizz and plumage, but for the orange-red fore crown.

We had a Black Eagle circling overhead after lunch and when Lester mimicked the shrill squealing call of a small mammal in distress, the raptor came in low to investigate and we enjoyed great eye-level views of the bird with the prominent 'fingers' on the long wings.

A hen Sri Lanka Junglefowl with chicks came to take scraps from the Martins Lodge kitchen.

We birded the logging track to the research station for about a kilometer. Soon Lester heard an approaching feeding flock. Sri Lanka Rufous Babblers were the flock leaders and the dominant species with 40 birds being seen. Small parties of Layard's Parakeet and Sri Lanka Crested Drongo followed. Layard's Parakeet was distinctly short-tailed with a lovely emerald hind collar and a nasal call not unlike Malabar Parakeet. Crested Drongos appeared to 'marshal' and control the movement and direction of the feeding flocks. About 15 birds were seen including two sub-adults.

Lester then whispered, "Look out for the malkoha. It will turn up any time now" and sure enough a pair of stunning Red-faced Malkohas then put in an appearance. There was another scramble as a Sri Lanka Starling, and then four more, were located in the canopy of the tree that held the malkohas. To round off we had a gorgeous single Blue Magpie at the tail end of the flock. Other birds in the flock included Small Yellow-naped Woodpecker, Malabar Trogon, Yellow-browed Bulbul and Scarlet Minivet.

Another feeding flock further up the trail produced four Red-Faced Malkohas, Small Yellow-naped Woodpecker, Malabar Trogon, Yellow-browed Bulbul, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, the distinctive, crestless, Black-crested Bulbul and many more Sri Lanka Rufous Babblers.

Other sightings this afternoon included two Sri Lanka Wood-Pigeons, 15–20 Black-headed Babblers in low trailside bushes, located by their churring contact calls, three grizzled giant squirrels (much darker coat than the southern Indian race and in fact very much like malabar giant squirrel) and a multitude of brilliant butterflies.

Back at Martins, we had several Black Bulebuls, Yellow-fronted Barbet, three distant Sri Lanka Hill Mynas on a pine tree, and three Emerald Doves.

Around 17:00 hrs Lester heard Spot-winged Thrush and soon located a pair in leaf litter by a stream directly below Martins garden. The birds had a thin high-pitched call and irregular spotting on the primaries.

We set off at about 18:30 hrs to try for Chestnut-backed Owlet at a site close to Martins, but despite hearing the bird, we could not see it and at 20:00 hrs, we called it quits—trudging back to Martins for dinner in total darkness.

Day two (7.viii.2005)

One Blue Magpie in Martins garden at 07:00 hrs.

Birded the trail from Martins to the research station encountering three feeding flocks in about three hours. Two of these had the subtly coloured, restricted range endemic Ashy-headed Laughingthrush and we were able to count 45–50 birds.

We had great views of a pair of Sri Lanka Wood-Pigeon feeding on fruit on the Mulawella Nature Trail. Also saw two Sri Lanka Scimitar Babblers, single males of Tickell's Blue-Flycatcher and Black-naped Monarch, a Small Yellow-naped Woodpecker, ten Black-headed Babblers, three Malabar Trogons (two males and a female), Black Bulbul (race *humei*), Black-crested Bulbul, Yellow-browed Bulbul, Tickell's Flowerpecker, a solitary Red-faced Malkoha, several Sri Lanka Rufous Babblers and Layard's Parakeets, Sri Lanka Crested Drongo and a single Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill. Sri Lanka Junglefowl and Sri Lanka Spurfowl both appeared to be widespread at Sinharaja judging by the frequent calls, but proved difficult to see.

We also saw kangaroo lizard, giant wood spider, green vine snake and Oliver's bronzeback snake. At the research station, we tried long and hard for Sri Lanka Scaly Thrush but to no avail. We however had close up views of a party of four Blue Magpies (two sub-adults) eating an enormous grey earthworm not far from the station. Three Sri Lanka Hill Mynas flew into a tall bare tree and we had good look at the wattles set well back at the rear of the crown and heard its diagnostic call. A pair of Sri Lanka Junglefowl came right up to the makeshift kitchen at the station to take scraps.

We saw a small troop of purple-faced leaf monkeys at the entrance to the core area of the reserve.

Relaxing at Martins after lunch, we had singles of Rufous-bellied and Black Eagle, Indian Swiftlets and Red-vented Bulbul with small parties of Sri Lanka Hanging-Parrot flying about. Heard Spot-winged Thrush and Common Iora. The best bird was a single Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill in a tree in the Martins garden.

We set off at about 16:00 hrs along the road to the village. We had a party of seven Pompadour Green-Pigeons and a male Legge's Flowerpecker at the village. Also, saw ruddy mongoose, grizzled giant squirrel, Layard's squirrel and a blue oakleaf butterfly.

After nightfall, we walked back up the trail to Martins spotlighting at a few likely sites for Serendib Scops-Owl and Chestnut-backed Owlet. However, we heard no night birds at all and returned to Martins disconsolate.

Day three (8.viii.2005)

Left Sinharaja after breakfast for Kitulgala. Birds seen en route included a male Black-naped Monarch, three Green Imperial-Pigeons, a male Legge's Flowerpecker, two Purple-rumped Sunbirds, a Changeable Hawk-Eagle and two White-rumped Munias.

Reached Kitulgala at 12:30 hrs. It was an incredibly humid and sweltering afternoon. After an eminently forgettable lunch, we set off for the Kelani Forest Reserve on the other side of the river by crossing a rope bridge that swayed alarmingly at every step. Once we were safely across, we birded the riverside plantations before climbing higher into the forest.

Birdlife was varied and interesting. We saw Yellow-fronted and Brown-headed Barbets, Stork-billed and White-breasted Kingfishers, Crested and White-bellied Drongos, Tickell's Flowerpecker, Purple-rumped Sunbird, Indian Jungle Crow, Layard's and Rose-ringed Parakeets, Sri Lanka

Hanging-Parrot, White-headed and Sri Lanka Rufous Babblers, Indian Shag, Spotted and Emerald Doves, Southern Hill Myna, Red-vented, Black and Yellow-browed Bulbuls, Lesser Golden-backed Woodpecker (race *psarodes*), Small Yellow-naped Woodpecker, Pied Flycatcher-Shrike, Black-headed Oriole, Sri Lanka Scimitar Babbler and Black-naped Monarch.

We added three endemics to our list at Kitulgala. First, a Brown-capped Babbler came to within eight feet, in light scrubby undergrowth, in response to Lester's brief tape playback. The bird continued singing sweetly (reminiscent of Spotted Babbler *Pellorneum ruficeps*) long after we had moved on.

Then Lester located a Chestnut-backed Owlet on an exposed horizontal branch of a tree in a grove bordering the forest. This beautiful little owl, with finely marked plumage, gave excellent frontal and rear views and responded very quickly to Lester's playback. It kept calling for a long while thereafter.

Finally, a pair of Sri Lanka Coucals was located in bushes c.10 m across the water. We had good views of this shy endemic through binoculars. Its bill appeared ivory yellow and not apple green as depicted in field guide illustrations.

However, we had no luck with Sri Lanka Spurfnwl, despite checking out a very promising site c.2 km uphill from the bridge. The birds approached very close and called frequently but kept out of sight. This species is widespread but is extremely difficult to see.

We returned to the rest house, crossing the river by dugout canoe. We saw several Alpine Swifts, Brown-backed Needletail-Swifts, Indian Swiftlets and a solitary Black Eagle overhead.

Day four (9.viii.2005)

After breakfast, we left for Nuwara Eliya by way of Hatton. Birded a forested valley near Hatton, seeing Chestnut-headed Bee-eater, Yellow-fronted Barbet, Indian Robin, a flock of Tawny-bellied Babblers, Ashy Prinia, Oriental White Eye, Lesser Golden-backed Woodpecker, Scarlet Minivet, Pied Bushchat, Indian Jungle Crow, Oriental Magpie-Robin, White-bellied Drongo and Spotted Dove. Sri Lanka Swallow and Indian Swiftlets hawked insects over the valley. Toque macaque and giant squirrel were also seen. Reached Nuwara Eliya at 12:30 hrs and after lunch at an Indian restaurant, checked into the charming St Andrews Hotel.

Birded the hotel grounds and soon added two montane endemics. Sri Lanka White-eye appeared to be common and we noted the darker upper parts and close up, the broken eye-ring. The beautifully marked Yellow-eared Bulbul was also common and we saw up to five birds. We also saw Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher, Spotted Munia, Grey Tit, Oriental Magpie-Robin, Sri Lanka Swallow, Common Myna, Indian Jungle Crow, Tickell's Flowerpecker and Common Myna.

After tea, we visited Victoria Park, well known to birders worldwide as the best wintering site for Pied Thrush and Kashmir Flycatcher. Lester showed us several regular spots for both species within the rather ragged-looking park and we took notes and made plans for a winter visit. We also saw Sri Lanka White-eye, White-breasted Kingfisher, White-

breasted Waterhen and dusky striped squirrel in the park and a White-bellied Sea-Eagle being mobbed by a Indian Jungle Crow.

Returning to St Andrews, we birded the cloud forest trail above the hotel looking for Sri Lanka Spurfnwl. We saw a pair of Yellow-eared Bulbuls and a female rhino-horned lizard but little else. Then we had a windfall. Lester was his usual amazing self and conjured up a fantastic male Sri Lanka Whistling-Thrush after a very brief tape playback. The bird initially appeared black and dumpy in profile when perched in hillside shrubbery but in good light we could see the brilliant blue powdering in the plumage and had prolonged views at very close range. A sharp single note was heard a few times. After this unexpected encounter with Sri Lanka's rarest and most elusive endemic, we cancelled plans for a 04:30 hrs departure for Horton Plains and the well known Arrenga pool site the next morning and instead opted to leave with a packed breakfast at 06.30 hrs.

Day five (10.viii.2005)

En route to Horton Plains National Park, we had three Hill Swallows and a pair of muntjac in a dairy farm pasture. We saw the scat of leopard on the winding mountain road. Of note was a splendid male Sri Lanka Junglefowl crossing the road ahead of our vehicle.

It was cold and windy in the national park and we had to wear warm clothing. We birded the road leading up to the 'Arrenga Pool'. Had brief views of a pair of Crimson-backed Woodpecker, Grey Tit, a solitary Sri Lanka Wood-Pigeon perched up in a tree, Sri Lanka White-eye, Yellow-eared Bulbul, Black-headed Babbler, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch and dusky striped squirrel.

Then Lester patiently teased out a single Sri Lanka Bush-Warbler skulking and creeping about in roadside vegetation and we had fine views. Soon thereafter, we had a Dusky-blue Flycatcher. A subtly coloured bird with a bright blue forehead, it sang sweetly in response to Lester's tape and gave excellent views at 5 m.

We stopped at all the roadside pools to look for otter but had no luck. The landscape changed to gently undulating moorland dotted with thick stunted forest patches here and there. The resemblance to the shola vegetation of the Nilgiris could not have been more striking.

This habitat produced Black-shouldered Kite, Pied Bush Chat, Zitting Cisticola, Paddyfield Pipit and Common Tailorbird. We also saw a distant group of four sambar and also a couple of very tame ones that came to take scraps.

We had nine Hill Swallows on a wire behind the restaurant adjoining the park office.

After a cup of refreshing tea at the restaurant, we returned to Nuwara Eliya, abandoning a visit to the Brown Wood Owl site at the Surrey Tea Estate in Welimada as it would have meant a delay of three hours. Shikra was seen en route.

Birds seen on the margins of the Nuwara Eliya Lake included Red-wattled Lapwing, Paddyfield Pipit, Little Grebe, Indian Shag and Indian Pond Heron.

Reached Kandy in time for lunch at a riverside restaurant. Had good views of Stork-billed Kingfisher, White-breasted Kingfisher, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Indian Pond Heron, Little Egret, Indian Shag, Brown-headed Barbet and Common

Tailorbird while waiting for lunch.

Checked into the Hilltop Hotel, which had a very aggressive resident troop of 20+ toque macaques. After a round of shopping, we drove to a point above town for a birds' eye-view of the lake and the ceremonial Perahera procession. We saw Alexandrine Parakeet and Greater Coucal here. Around 19:00 hrs we watched in utter amazement as an endless phalanx of Indian flying foxes started streaming out of roosting trees in the Royal Peradeniya Botanical Gardens and spreading out over Kandy and its surrounds. This fantastic spectacle lasted for almost one hour ten minutes, with no indication of a slow down and there must have been many thousands of animals.

Day six (11.viii.2005)

Visited the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy, after breakfast. Sri Lanka Small Barbet was very common. Also seen were Alexandrine Parakeet, Indian Robin and Oriental Magpie-Robin. Left for Sigiriya in the Dry Zone by way of Dambulla, visiting a spice garden at Ranweli en route.

Saw several species of waterbirds along the river on the outskirts of Kandy. Large, Intermediate and Little Egrets, Indian Pond Heron and Black-crowned Night-Heron, Red-wattled Lapwing, Asian Openbill-Stork, Indian Shag and White-breasted Waterhen in large numbers.

Reached the Teak Forest Lodge in Sigiriya by 13:00 hrs and relaxed in wooden cottages supported on stilts. The resort grounds had good scrub vegetation and quite a few trees.

Birds were numerous and very active even in the middle of the day and we saw two Paradise Flycatchers (rufous coloured), a White-browed Fantail-Flycatcher, three Small Minivets, two Black-headed Orioles, five White-browed Bulbuls (this species was bolder than in southern India, and frequently perched out in the open), four Common Ioras, a pair of Purple Sunbirds, three Jerdon's Chloropsis, four Franklin's Prinias, a Large Cuckooshrike, a Purple-rumped Sunbird, two White-bellied Drongo (race *insularis* with more white in the belly than the Wet Zone *leucopygialis*), Black-headed Babbler (this species occurs in both climatic zones and a wide variety of habitats in Sri Lanka) and Tickell's Flowerpecker.

A wetland close to the resort had a good selection of birds. We recorded 20 species in under an hour. Large, Cattle and Little Egrets, Purple, Grey, Indian Pond and Black-crowned Night-Herons, Wood Sandpiper, Little, Indian and Large Cormorants, Little Ringed Plover, Red-wattled lapwing, Black-winged Stilt, Purple Moorhen, Plain Prinia, Paddyfield Pipit, Common, White-breasted and Stork-billed Kingfishers, Brahminy Kite, Asian Palm-Swift and Crested Tree-Swift were seen.

After lunch and a bit of rest, we headed for the Sigiriya Rock Fortress at 15:30 hrs. A party of five Indian Peafowl was seen en route.

The ruins leading up the foot of the rock had White-browed Fantail-Flycatcher, Indian Robin, Black-headed Cuckooshrike, Small Bee-eater, Brown-headed Barbet, Sri Lanka Woodshrike, Jerdon's Bush-Lark, toque macaque and Sri Lanka grey langur.

Climbing the rock was a fantastic experience and getting to the top a signal achievement for all four of us, considering

that we were in poor physical condition. The view from the top was well worth the arduous climb.

Large numbers of House Swift visible while ascending the rock and several nests located. Also encountered a troop of very aggressive toque macaques.

Before returning to our hotel, we spent around forty-five minutes birding the very promising scrub jungle in the Sigiriya Sanctuary, near the heritage site. White-rumped Shama, Jerdon's Nightjar and Drongo Cuckoo were seen but there was no sign of our target birds—Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill and Crimson-backed Woodpecker.

After dinner, we set off at 22:00 hrs to try for Brown Fish Owl in the wetland near Teak Forest Lodge. We walked across a dry part of the tank bed for about 700 m and then climbed up the tank bund. It was an extremely windy night and we heard golden jackals call from close. No sign of the fish owl but there was a thrilling moment when a fishing cat crossed the bund just ahead of us, giving fleeting views, courtesy Lester's spotlight.

The grounds also held slender loris, according to the owner Kamal, but despite persistent spotlighting, we could not see it. We heard Indian and Jerdon's Nightjars and Collared Scops-Owl.

Day seven (12.viii.2005)

A quick morning visit to the wetland produced 13 Darters and seven Oriental White Ibis while the garden had White-bellied Drongo and Jerdon's Chloropsis. After breakfast, we set off for the ancient Buddhist city of Polonnaruwa, crossing Minneriya National Park, famous for its seasonal elephant herds. A large tank in the national park held several Spot-billed Pelican, Grey Heron, Large Egret and Asian Openbill-Stork with a White-bellied Sea-Eagle and two Brahminy Kites flying low over the water. A painted-lipped lizard crossed the road in front of our vehicle and we had Indian Roller and Pompadour Green-Pigeon on roadside trees. On the outskirts of Polonnaruwa, we had three White-necked Storks.

After admiring the exhibits in the excellent museum, we drove alongside the vast Parakramabahu Samudra reservoir seeing Brahminy Kite, Little Grebe, all three species of cormorant and Asian Koel.

The next couple of hours were spent exploring parts of the ancient ruined city. Pompadour Green-Pigeon, Shikra, Small Minivet, Small Bee-eater, toque macaque and Sri Lanka grey langur were seen while 23 Spot-billed Pelicans, three Painted Storks, 50 Asian Openbill-Storks and 11 White-necked Storks wheeled overhead on developing thermals, as the mercury rose steadily. A small pool of water held Indian Pond Heron, Red-wattled Lapwing and Intermediate, Large and Little Egrets.

Soon it was too hot to walk barefoot and after a refreshing drink of coconut milk, we returned to Teak Forest Lodge.

In the evening, we visited the Dambulla Cave Temples to see the famed rock frescoes. Many House Swifts were at their nests and toque macaques ubiquitous. We then made a second trip to the Sigiriya Sanctuary to try for Blue-eared Kingfisher. We had excellent views of a pair of Brown-capped Babblers in the undergrowth and were able to see Sri Lanka Woodshrike up close. Also seen were White-rumped Shama,

Pompadour Green-Pigeon, Lesser Golden-backed Woodpecker, Sri Lanka Small Barbet, Brown-headed Barbet, Common Iora, Jerdon's Chloropsis, Common and White-breasted Kingfishers, Common Myna and kangaroo lizard. The resident pair of Peregrine (Shaheen) Falcons circled overhead, occasionally swooping and diving along the cliff face of the massive rock. We again searched for Brown Fish Owl at a few known sites along the moat outside the fortress, but with little success. We had good views of a low flying Crested Serpent Eagle.

Day eight (13.viii.2005)

We left 'Teak Forest' early with packed breakfasts. A perched Changeable-Hawk-Eagle was seen on the outskirts of Sigiriya. We arrived at the Elephant orphanage in Pinnewala at 10:00 hrs in time for the morning feeding session. It was a great experience seeing so many pachyderms close up and touching some of the calves. The extraordinarily hairy and rough surface of the elephant's skin was a revelation.

Alexandrine and Rose-ringed Parakeets, White-breasted Kingfisher, Common Myna, Black-headed Oriole, Lesser Golden-backed Woodpecker and Indian Roller were seen.

We then moved to the nearby river to wait for all 89 elephants to arrive for their morning bath. It was a great spectacle as the giants arrived and then splashed about in the water, with some crossing over to the far side for a mud bath.

Riverside birds included Common Sandpiper, Grey Heron, Little Cormorant, Little Egret and Asian Palm-Swift. Arrived in Colombo at 13:00 hrs and checked into the Taj Samudra, on the impressive Galle Face, after lunch at a restaurant in town. Several Spot-billed Pelicans were soaring overhead.

Day nine (14.viii.2005)

Drove around Colombo, after breakfast, seeing the sights and visiting the national museum. The roads were virtually empty in the aftermath of the assassination of Sri Lanka's foreign minister, Lakshman Kadirgamar, on the 13.viii.2005. We were extremely anxious and had even contemplated skipping Colombo and taking an early flight out of Negombo, but thankfully, our fears were unfounded and there were no visible signs of any problem, except for the odd security blockade in parts of the town.

Lake Beira was particularly tranquil with a little temple in the centre and many Spot-billed Pelicans, egrets and Pond Herons on the water. After a round of shopping for local handicrafts and clothing, we had an excellent meal at Shanmugha's restaurant. Arrived early at Katunayake only to find, to our utter dismay, that our flight was delayed indefinitely. We finally took off around midnight and reached Chennai by 02:00 hrs on 15.viii.2005.

References

- Pittie, A. & Dickinson, E. C. 2006. The correct name of the Sri Lankan Woodpigeon and the citation for its original description. *Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club* 126 (3): 196-199.
- Rasmussen, P. C. & Anderton, J. C. 2005. *Birds of South Asia. The Ripley guide*. Two vols. Washington, D.C. and Barcelona: Smithsonian Institution and Lynx Edicions.

Appendices

Trip list 1: Birds

(Taxonomy and nomenclature follow Manakadan & Pittie 2002, except where indicated with an asterisk, when Rasmussen & Anderton 2005 is followed.)

1. Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*: Polonnaruwa.
2. Spot-billed Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*: Minneriya/Polonnaruwa/Colombo.
3. Little Cormorant *Phalacrocorax nigricollis*: Kandy.
4. Indian Shag *P. fuscicollis*: Sigiriya.
5. Great Cormorant *P. carbo*: Polonnaruwa.
6. Darter *Anhinga melanogaster*: Sigiriya.
7. Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*: Sigiriya.
8. Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*: Sigiriya.
9. Purple Heron *A. purpurea*: Sigiriya.
10. Large Egret *Casmerodius albus*: Polonnaruwa/Sigiriya.
11. Median Egret *Mesophoyx intermedius*: Polonnaruwa.
12. Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*: Sigiriya.
13. Indian Pond-Heron *Ardeola grayii*: Kandy.
14. Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*: Kandy.
15. Painted Stork *Mycteria leucocephala*: Polonnaruwa.
16. Asian Openbill-Stork *Anastomus oscitans*: Kandy/Polonnaruwa.
17. White-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus*: Minneriya/Polonnaruwa.
18. Oriental White Ibis *Threskiornis melanocephalus*: Sigiriya.
19. Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus*: Horton Plains.
20. Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus*: Polonnaruwa/Colombo.
21. White-bellied Sea-Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster*: Nuwara Eliya/Minneriya.
22. Crested Serpent-Eagle *Spilornis cheela*: Sigiriya.
23. Crested Goshawk *Accipiter trivirgatus*: Sinharaja.
24. Shikra *A. badius*: Polonnaruwa.
25. Besra Sparrowhawk *A. virgatus*.
26. Black Eagle *Ictinaetus malayensis*: Sinharaja.
27. Rufous-bellied Eagle *Hieraaetus kienerii*: Sinharaja.
28. Changeable Hawk-Eagle *Spizaetus cirrhatus*: Sigiriya.
29. Peregrine (Shaheen) Falcon *Falco peregrinus peregrinator*: Sigiriya/ Sinharaja.
30. Sri Lanka Spurfowl *Galloperdix bicalcarata*: Kitulgala/Sinharaja.
31. Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus*: Sigiriya.
32. Sri Lanka Junglefowl *Gallus lafayetii*: Sinharaja/Horton Plains.
33. White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus*: Victoria Park.
34. Purple Moorhen *Porphyrio porphyrio*: Sigiriya.
35. Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*: Sigiriya.
36. Red-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus*: Nuwara Eliya.
37. Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*: Sigiriya.
38. Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*: Pinnewala.
39. Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*: Sigiriya.
40. Sri Lanka Wood-Pigeon *Columba torringtoniae*²: Sinharaja/Horton Plains.
41. Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis*: Countrywide.

¹ Pittie & Dickinson 2006.

42. Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps indica*: Sinharaja.
43. Pompadour Green-Pigeon *Treron pompadora*: Sinharaja/Sigiriya/Minneriya.
44. Green Imperial-Pigeon *Ducula aenea*: Sinharaja.
45. Sri Lanka Hanging-Parrot *Loriculus beryllinus*: Sinharaja.
46. Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria*: Kandy.
47. Rose-ringed Parakeet *P. krameri*: Negombo/Kandy.
48. Plum-headed Parakeet *P. cyanocephala*.
49. Layard's Parakeet *P. calthropae*: Sinharaja/Hatton.
50. Drongo Cuckoo *Surniculus lugubris*: Sigiriya.
51. Asian Koel *Eudynamis scolopacea*: Negombo/Colombo.
52. Red-faced Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus pyrrhocephalus*: Sinharaja.
53. Greater Coucal *Centropus sinensis*: Kandy.
54. Sri Lanka Coucal *C. chlororhynchus**: Kitulgala.
55. Collared Scops-Owl *Otus bakkamoena*: Sigiriya.
56. Chestnut-backed Owlet *Glaucidium castanonotum*: Kitulgala.
57. Sri Lanka Frogmouth *Batrachostomus moniliger*: Sinharaja.
58. Jerdon's Nightjar *Caprimulgus atripennis*: Sigiriya.
59. Common Indian Nightjar *C. asiaticus*: Sigiriya.
60. Indian Swiftlet *Aerodramus unicolor**: Sinharaja/Sigiriya.
61. Brown-backed Needletail-Swift *Hirundapus giganteus*: Kitulgala.
62. Asian Palm-Swift *Cypsiurus balasiensis*: Countrywide.
63. Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba*: Kitulgala.
64. House Swift *Apus affinis*: Sigiriya.
65. Crested Tree-Swift *Hemiprocne coronata*: Sigiriya.
66. Malabar Trogon *Harpactes fasciatus*: Sinharaja.
67. Small Blue Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*: Sigiriya.
68. Stork-billed Kingfisher *Pelargopsis capensis**: Kandy/Kitulgala.
69. White-breasted Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis*: Countrywide.
70. Small Bee-eater *Merops orientalis*: Sigiriya.
71. Chestnut-headed Bee-eater *M. leschenaulti*: Hatton.
72. Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis*: Pinnewala.
73. Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill *Ocyeros gingalensis*: Sinharaja.
74. Brown-headed Barbet *Megalaima zeylanica*: Sigiriya/Kandy.
75. Yellow-fronted Barbet *M. flavifrons*: Sinharaja/Hatton.
76. Sri Lanka Small Barbet *M. rubricapillus**: Kandy.
77. Small Yellow-naped Woodpecker *Picus chlorolophus*: Sinharaja/Kitulgala.
78. Lesser Golden-backed Woodpecker *Dinopium benghalense*: Negombo/Kitulgala.
79. Crimson-backed Woodpecker *Chrysocolaptes stricklandi**: Horton Plains.
80. Jerdon's Bush-Lark *Mirafra affinis*: Sigiriya.
81. Hill Swallow *Hirundo domicola**: Nuwara Eliya/Horton Plains.
82. Sri Lanka Swallow *H. hyperythra**: Sinharaja.
83. Paddyfield Pipit *Anthus rufulus*: Nuwara Eliya/Horton Plains.
84. Large Cuckooshrike *Coracina macei*: Sigiriya.
85. Black-headed Cuckooshrike *C. melanoptera*: Sinharaja.
86. Small Minivet *Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*: Sigiriya.
87. Scarlet Minivet *P. flammeus*: Sinharaja.
88. Pied Flycatcher-Shrike *Hemipus picatus*: Kitulgala.
89. Sri Lanka Woodshrike *Tephrodornis affinis**: Sigiriya.
90. Black-crested Bulbul *Pycnonotus melanicterus*: Sinharaja.
91. Red-vented Bulbul *P. cafer*: Countrywide.
92. Yellow-eared Bulbul *P. penicillatus*: Nuwara Eliya.
93. White-browed Bulbul *P. luteolus*: Sigiriya.
94. Yellow-browed Bulbul *Iole indica*: Sinharaja.
95. Black Bulbul *Hypsipetes leucocephalus*: Sinharaja.
96. Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia*: Sinharaja/Sigiriya.
97. Jerdon's Chloropsis *Chloropsis jerdoni*: Sigiriya.
98. Gold-fronted Chloropsis *C. aurifrons*: Sinharaja.
99. Sri Lanka Whistling-Thrush *Myophonus blighi*: Nuwara Eliya.
100. Spot-winged Thrush *Zoothera spiloptera*: Sinharaja.
101. Oriental Magpie-Robin *Copsychus saularis*: Countrywide.
102. White-rumped Shama *C. malabaricus*: Sigiriya.
103. Indian Robin *Saxicoloides fulicata*: Sigiriya/Polonnaruwa.
104. Pied Bushchat *Saxicola caprata*: Horton Plains.
105. Ashy-headed Laughingthrush *Garrulax cinereifrons*: Sinharaja.
106. Brown-capped Babbler *Pellorneum fuscicapillum*: Kitulgala/Sigiriya.
107. Sri Lanka Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus melanurus**: Sinharaja/Kitulgala.
108. Black-headed Babbler *Rhopocichla atriceps*: Sinharaja/Kitulgala/Sigiriya.
109. Sri Lanka Rufous Babbler *Turdoides rufescens*: Sinharaja/Kitulgala.
110. White-headed Babbler *T. affinis*: Negombo/Sigiriya.
111. Zitting Cisticola* *Cisticola juncidis*: Horton Plains.
112. Franklin's Prinia *Prinia hodgsonii*: Sigiriya.
113. Ashy Prinia *P. socialis*: Hatton.
114. Plain Prinia *P. inornata*: Sigiriya.
115. Sri Lanka Bush-Warbler *Elaphrornis palliseri**: Horton Plains.
116. Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius*: Negombo.
117. Dusky-blue Flycatcher *Eumyias sordidus*: Horton Plains.
118. Tickell's Blue-Flycatcher *Cyornis tickelliae*: Sinharaja.
119. Grey-headed Flycatcher *Culicicapa ceylonensis*: Nuwara Eliya.
120. Asian Paradise-Flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi*: Sigiriya.
121. Black-naped Monarch-Flycatcher *Hypothymis azurea*: Sinharaja.
122. White-browed Fantail-Flycatcher *Rhipidura aureola*: Sigiriya.
123. Great Tit *Parus major*: Nuwara Eliya.
124. Velvet-fronted Nuthatch *Sitta frontalis*: Sinharaja.
125. Legge's Flowerpecker *Dicaeum vincens*: Sinharaja.
126. Tickell's Flowerpecker *D. erythrorhynchos*: Sinharaja/Sigiriya.
127. Purple-rumped Sunbird *Leptocoma zeylonica**: Sigiriya/Negombo.
128. Purple Sunbird *Cinnyris asiatica**: Sigiriya.
129. Loten's Sunbird *C. lotenia**: Negombo.
130. Sri Lanka White-eye *Zosterops ceylonensis*: Nuwara Eliya/Horton Plains.

131. Oriental White-eye *Z. palpebrosus*: Hatton.
132. White-rumped Munia *Lonchura striata*: Sinharaja.
133. Black-throated Munia *L. kelaarti*: Sinharaja.
134. Spotted Munia *L. punctulata*: Nuwara Eliya.
135. House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*: Negombo.
136. Sri Lanka Starling *Sturnus albobfrontatus*: Sinharaja.
137. Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis*: Countrywide.
138. Sri Lanka Myna *Gracula ptilogenys*: Sinharaja.
139. Southern Hill-Myna *G. indica*: Kitulgala.
140. Black-headed Oriole *Oriolus xanthornus*: Sigiriya.
141. White-bellied Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus*: Countrywide.
142. Sri Lanka Crested Drongo *D. lophorhinus**: Sinharaja.
143. Ashy Woodswallow *Artamus fuscus*: Countrywide.
144. Sri Lanka Blue Magpie *Urocissa ornata*: Sinharaja.
145. House Crow *Corvus splendens*: Negombo.
146. Indian Jungle Crow *C. culminatus**: Negombo.

Trip list 2: Butterflies (from Sinharaja)

1. Plum judy *Abisara echerius*.
2. Common albatross *Appias albina*.
3. Angled pierrot *Caleta decidia*.
4. Common tiger *Danaus genutia*.
5. Common crow *Euploea core*.
6. Great crow *E. phaenareta*.
7. Three spot grass yellow *Eurema blanda*.
8. Tailed jay *Graphium agamemnon*.
9. Common bluebottle *G. sarpedon*.
10. Ceylon tree nymph *Idea iasonia*.
11. Common cerulean *Jamides celeno*.
12. Chocolate soldier *Junonia iphita*.
13. Blue oakleaf *Kallima philarchus*.
14. Commander *Moduza procris*.
15. Common bushbrown *Mycalesis perseus*.
16. Common sailor *Neptis hylas*.
17. Gladeye bushbrown *Nissanga patnia*.
18. Common rose *Pachliopta aristolochiae*.
19. Crimson rose *Pachliopta hector*.
20. Red helen *Papilio helenus*.
21. Blue mormon *Papilio polymnestor*.
22. Clipper *Parthenos sylvia*.

23. Red pierrot *Talica nyseus*.
24. Tawny coster *Telchinia violae*.
25. White four-ring *Ypthima ceylonica*.

Trip list 3: Reptiles

1. Green vine snake *Ahaetulla nasuta*: Sinharaja.
2. Green garden lizard *Calotes calotes*: Sinharaja.
3. Painted-lip lizard *Calotes ceylonensis*: Minneriya National Park. Endemic.
4. Common garden lizard *Calotes versicolor*: Sigiriya.
5. Rhino-horned lizard *Ceratophora stoddartii*: Nuwara Eliya. Endemic.
6. Oliver's bronzeback *Dendrelaphis oliveri*: Sinharaja. Endemic.
7. Corrugated water frog *Limnonectes corrugatus*: Sinharaja.
8. Kangaroo lizard *Octocryptis wiegmanni*: Sinharaja. Endemic.
9. Land monitor *Varanus bengalensis*: Sigiriya.
10. Water monitor *Varanus salvator*: Sinharaja.

Trip list 4: Mammals

1. Sri Lanka grey langur *Semnopithecus priam*: Sigiriya. Endemic.
2. Purple-faced leaf monkey *Trachypithecus vetulus*: Sinharaja. Endemic.
3. Toque macaque *Macaca sinica*: Sigiriya. Endemic.
4. Sambar *Cervus unicolor*: Horton Plains.
5. Muntjac *Muntiacus muntjak*: Horton Plains.
6. Ruddy mongoose *Herpestes smithii*: Sinharaja.
7. Fishing cat *Felis viverrina*: Sigiriya.
8. Golden jackal *Canis aureus*: Sigiriya.
9. Indian flying fox *Pteropus giganteus*: Kandy.
10. Ceylon giant squirrel *Ratufa macroura*: Sinharaja/Dry Zone.
11. Dusky striped squirrel *Funambulus sublineatus*: Horton Plains.
12. Layard's squirrel *Funambulus layardi*: Sinharaja.
13. Three-striped palm squirrel *Funambulus palmarum*: Negombo.
14. Indian pipistrelle *Pipistrellus cormandra*: Sigiriya.
15. Leopard *Panthera pardus*: Horton Plains: Scat on road.

Sewree birds

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As the rains recede and the onslaught of October's heat begins in Mumbai (Maharashtra, India), an amazing change over occurs at Sewree.

Another, buzzing, metropolis starts taking shape. The vast emptiness of algae-covered slush beach starts getting dotted with winged visitors. Flamingos and waders invade the busy metro of Mumbai.

Known initially to a small coterie of birdwatchers and now to an ever-growing number of non-birders, Sewree has gained popularity as a 'flamingo destination'. The Bombay Natural History Society has conducted here a few popular "flamingo watch" camps for the citizens of the city for the past couple of years—a visual treat even to the uninitiated. The label of "Flamingo Bay" though, does no justice to this immensely diverse metro of birds.