

## Whale & Leopard Tour Report- March 2015



**Photo Credits: Upul Wickremasinghe**

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**Participants:**

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- Martin Bridge
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- David Ward
- Bridget Ward
- Karl Lawrence
- Lesley Lawrence
- Patricia Child
- Victoria Forster
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- John Haynes
- Norma Bye
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**Report Compiled by:** Upul Wickremasinghe & Saman Kumara Gamage

## **Day 01 Saturday 07<sup>th</sup> March**

The group met at the Airport and boarded the flight to Sri Lanka for their 10 day Whale & Leopard watching tour.

## **Day 02 Sunday 08<sup>th</sup> March**

The group arrived at 12.50 pm and we left the Airport at 2.00 pm. We proceed to Talangama tank via Katunayakae expressway and encounter Painted Stork, Black-headed Ibis, Indian Pond Heron, Grey Heron, Purple Heron, Cattle Egret, Intermediate Egret, Little Egret, Spot-billed Pelican, Little Cormorant, Brahminy Kite, Shikra, Whiskered Tern, Rock Pigeon, Spotted Dove, Rose-ringed Parakeet, Asian Palm Swift, Blue-tailed Bee-eater, White-throated Kingfisher, House Crow, Barn Swallow, Sri Lanka Swallow, White-bellied Drongo, Yellow-billed Babbler and Common Myna. It was a very hot and humid day.

We reach our hotel at 5.00 pm and check in to our rooms and met at the restaurant at 8.00 pm for dinner.

## **Day 03 Monday 09<sup>th</sup> March**

We started the day at 6.00 am with tea and preceded to the Mirissa pier for the day's whale watching tour with picnic breakfast. It was a very bright and clear morning as we set out to sea. After a very long journey in to the ocean we spot a pod of 20 Spinner Dolphins a few Flying Fish. Although the captain and the crew searched the entire horizon for the Blue Whales and Bryde's Whale there was no luck and we returned to the pier at 1.00pm and reached the hotel for lunch at 1.30pm. At 3.30pm we left to the Kamburugamuwa tank for some birding and encounter Lesser Whistling Duck, Cotton Pygmy-goose, Little Grebe, Indian Cormorant, White-breasted Waterhen, Purple Swamphen, Pheasant-tailed Jacana, Little Tern, Large-billed Crow, Red-vented Bulbul, Purple-rumped Sunbird and Loten's Sunbird.

We head back to the hotel at 6.00pm and meet for the checklist at 7.30pm. We had our dinner at 8.00pm after the next day's briefing.

## **Day 04 Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> March**

Once again with tea at 6.00am we proceeded to the pier for our second day of whale watching in anticipation of sighting the gentle Blue Whale. We are once again greeted with a pod of Spinner Dolphins and an exciting sighting of a Whale Shark which was quite close to the boat. After a few more hours at sea we decided to head back to the pier as once again there were no sightings of the Blue Whales. Word around was that a Cyclone which was occurring near New Zealand had changed the Whales feeding habitat. The local fishermen were also keeping away from the seas as waters had turned murky and fish were scarce. We reach the pier at 1.30pm and arrive at the hotel by 1.45pm for lunch. At 3.30 pm we visit the Galle fort en-route stopping to watch the Stilt Fisherman who continues their age old traditional fishing style perched on a stilt. We also encounter Striated Heron, Asian Koel, Common Tailorbird, Oriental Magpie Robin and House Sparrow at the Galle ramparts. We head back to the hotel by 7.00pm and after the briefing we had dinner at 8.00pm. During dinner a cultural mask dance was performed and one of the performers presented our group member with a cake as it was her birthday. The party continued with more dances until 10.00pm.

## **Day 05 Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> March**

We once again have our tea at 6.15am and reach the pier at 7.00 am to board the boat. Our first sighting was a Green Sea Turtle followed by some Flying Fish. Once again after searching more than 5 hours we returned to the pier with no sighting of the Blue Whales. We return to the hotel at 2.30pm for lunch and at 4.00pm we

leave for a Kirala Forest for some birding. Here we encounter Indian Peafowl, Great Egret, Great Cormorant, Black Eagle, Black-winged Stilt, House Swift, Chestnut-headed Bee-eater, Stork-billed Kingfisher, Common Kingfisher, Black-hooded Oriole and Asian Paradise Flycatcher. We head back to the hotel at 6.30pm and do the checklist at 8.00pm. After dinner the group head back to their rooms for the night.

## **Day 06 Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> March**

As the previous days had not yielded any sightings of the Blue Whales we decided to try one last time before proceeding to Yala for the rest of the program. We left the pier at 7.30am and proceeded for almost 3 hours before we spot a huge Hammerhead Shark which stayed on the surface for a very long time. We encounter more Spinner Dolphins and also a Hawksbill Turtle before we once again return to the pier without any sightings of Blue Whales. We have lunch en-route to Yala and stop at Bundala National park for some birding. Here we see Sri Lanka Junglefowl, Garganey, Asian Openbill, Yellow Bittern, Darter, Watercock, Red-wattled Lapwing, Greater Coucal and Pied Kingfisher. We reach our hotel in Yala 7.30pm and had dinner at 8.00pm before heading to our rooms for the night.

## **Day 07 Friday 13<sup>th</sup> March**

We leave the hotel at 5.30am after tea for our first day of safari. We encounter Toque Macaque, Sloth Bear, Ruddy Mongoose, Leopard, Indian Wild Elephant, Spotted Deer, Sambar, Water Buffalo, and Indian Hare. We also spot Woolly-necked Stork, Black-necked Stork, Lesser Adjutant, Eurasian Spoonbill, White-bellied Sea Eagle, Changeable Hawk Eagle, Great Thick-knee, Yellow Wattled lapwing, Common-ringed Plover, Pintailed Snipe, Common Snipe, Common red Shank, Wood Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper, Ruddy Turnstone, Little Stint, Gull-billed Tern, Caspian Tern, Sandwich Tern, Orange-breasted Green Pigeon, Crested Treeswift, Indian Roller, Green Bee-eater, Malabar Pied-Horn Bill, Sri Lanka Woodshrike, Common Iora, Paddyfield Pipit, Jerdon's Bushlark, Oriental Skylark, Ashy-crowned Sparrow Lark, Plain Prinia, White-browed Fantail and Indian Robin . We reached the hotel at 5.30 pm amidst heavy rain and did the check list at 7.30pm and had dinner at 8.00pm

## **Day 08 Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> March**

We left the hotel 5.30am with picnic breakfast and lunch and entered the Yala park at 6.00am. We encounter the Grey Langur, Golden Jackal, Asian Wild Elephant and more birds which are Green Imperial Pigeon, Grey-bellied Cuckoo, Blue-faced Malkoha, Indian Nightjar, Common Hoopoe, and Scaly Munia. It started raining at around 11.00am. We continued the safari until late evening and head back to the hotel at 6.00pm and did the checklist at 8.00pm and had dinner at 8.30pm

## **Day 09 Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> March**

We left the hotel after breakfast at 8.45am and proceeded to Colombo via Tissamaharama. We see many Giant Fruit Bats roosting in a tree and we also observe a few ancient temples in the vicinity. We stopped for lunch at Udawalawe and then proceeded straight to Katunayake. We reach the Airport hotel by 6.45pm in the evening and had dinner soon after.

## Day 10 Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March

We met at the restaurant at 7.30am for breakfast and did the last checklist for the tour and counted a total of 190 birds and 19 mammals. We left the hotel at 9.30am to the Airport in time to catch the flight.

### Bird List

	Common name	Scientific name
1	Barred Buttonquail	<i>Turnix suscitator</i>
2	<b>Sri Lanka Junglefowl</b>	<i>Gallus lafayetii</i>
3	Indian Peafowl	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>
4	Lesser Whistling-duck	<i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>
5	Cotton Pygmy-goose	<i>Nettapus coromandelianus</i>
6	Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>
7	Painted Stork	<i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>
8	Asian Openbill	<i>Anastomus oscitans</i>
9	Woolly-necked Stork	<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>
10	Black-necked Stork	<i>Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus</i>
11	Lesser Adjutant	<i>Leptoptilos javanicus</i>
12	Black -headed Ibis	<i>Threskiornis melanocephalus</i>
13	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>
14	Yellow Bittern	<i>Lxobrychus sinensis</i>
15	Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>
16	Indian Pond Heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>
17	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
18	Purpul Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
19	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
20	Great Egret	<i>casmerodius albus</i>
21	Intermediate Egret	<i>Mesophoyx intermedia</i>
22	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
23	Spot-billed Pelican	<i>Pelecanus philippensis</i>
24	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
25	Little Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax niger</i>
26	Indian Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax fuscicollis</i>
27	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
28	Darter	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>
29	Brahminy Kite	<i>Haliastur indus</i>
30	White-bellied Sea Eagle, White-bellied Fish Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>
31	Gray-headed Fish Eagle	<i>Lcthyophaga ichthyaetus</i>
32	Shikra	<i>Accipiter badius</i>
33	Crested Serpent Eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>

34	Black Eagle	<i>Lctinaetus malayensis</i>
35	Changeble Hawk Eagle	<i>Spizaetus cirrhatus</i>
36	White-breasted Waterhen	<i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i>
37	Watercock	<i>Gallicrex cinerea</i>
38	Purple Swampen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>
39	Pheasant-tailed Jacana	<i>Hydrophasianus chirurgus</i>
40	Great Thick-knee	<i>Esacus recurvirostris</i>
41	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
42	Yellow-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus malabaricus</i>
43	Red-wattled lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>
44	Pacific Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis fulva</i>
45	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>
46	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
47	Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>
48	Lesser sand Plover, Mongolian Plover	<i>charadrius mongolus</i>
49	Pin-tailed Snipe	<i>Gallinago stenura</i>
50	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>
51	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>
52	Common Red shank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
53	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
54	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>
55	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>
56	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
57	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
58	Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>
59	Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>
60	Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>
61	Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>
62	Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>
63	Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>
64	Common Pigeon, Rock Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>
65	Spotted Dove	<i>Stigmatopelia chinensis</i>
66	Orange-breasted Green Pigeon	<i>Treron bicinctus</i>
67	Green Imperial Pigeon	<i>Ducula aenea</i>
68	Rose-ringed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>
69	Grey-bellied Cuckoo, Plaintive Cuckoo	<i>Cacomantis passerinus</i>
70	Asian Koel	<i>Endynamys scolopacerus</i>
71	Blue-faced Malkoha	<i>Rhopodytes viridirostris</i>
72	Greater Coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>

73	Indian Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus asiaticus</i>
74	Asian Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus balasiensis</i>
75	House Swift, Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>
76	Crested Treeswift , Gray-rumped Treeswift	<i>Hemiprocne coronata</i>
77	Indian Roller	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>
78	Green Bee-eater, Little Green Bee-eater	<i>Merops orientalis</i>
79	Blue-tailed Bee-eater	<i>Merops philippinus</i>
80	Chestnut-headed Bee-eater	<i>Merops leschenaulti</i>
81	Stork-billed Kingfisher	<i>Pelargopsis capensis</i>
82	White-throated Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>
83	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
84	Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>
85	Common Hoopoe, Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>
86	Coppersmith Barbet	<i>Megalaima haemacephala</i>
87	Malabar Pied Hornbill	<i>Anthracoceros coronatus</i>
88	Indian Pitta	<i>Pitta brachyura</i>
89	Sri Lanka Woodshrike	<i>Tephrodornis (pondicerianus) affinis</i>
90	Large Cuckooshrike	<i>Coracina macei</i>
91	Black-headed Cuckooshrike	<i>Coracina melanoptera</i>
92	Small Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus cinnamomeus</i>
93	Brown Shrike	<i>Lanius cristatus</i>
94	Common Iora	<i>Aegithina tiphia</i>
95	Black-hooded Oriole	<i>Oriolus xanthornus</i>
96	House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>
97	Large-billed Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>
98	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
99	Sri Lanka Swallow	<i>Cecropis (daurica) hyperythra</i>
100	White-bellied Drongo	<i>Dicrurus caeruleus</i>
101	Paddyfield Pipit	<i>Anthus rufulus</i>
102	Jerdon's Bushlark	<i>Mirafra affinis</i>
103	Oriental Skylark	<i>Alauda gulgula</i>
104	Ashy-crowned Sparrow Lark	<i>Eremopterix griseus</i>
105	Red-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>
106	White-browed Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus luteolus</i>
107	Plain Prinia	<i>Prinia inornata</i>
108	Common Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>
109	White-browed Fantail	<i>Rhipidura aureola</i>
110	Asian Paradise-flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone paradisi</i>
111	Yellow-eyed Babbler	<i>Chrysomma sinense</i>

112	Yellow-billed Babbler	<i>Turdoides affinis</i>
113	Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>
114	Brahminy Starling	<i>Sturnia pagodarum</i>
115	Oriental Magpie Robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>
116	White-rumped Shama	<i>Copsychus malabaricus</i>
117	Indian Robin, Black-backed Robin	<i>Saxicoloides fulicatus</i>
118	Purple-rumped Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia zeylonica</i>
119	Loten's Sunbird, Long-billed Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia lotenia</i>
120	Baya Weaver	<i>Ploceus philippinus</i>
121	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
122	Indian Silverbill, White-throated Silverbill	<i>Lonchura malabarica</i>
123	Scaly-breasted Munia	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>

#### Mammals List

	<b>Common name</b>	<b>Scientific name</b>
1	Toque Macaque	<i>Macaca sinica</i>
2	Grey Langur	<i>Presbytis entellus</i>
3	Golden Jackal	<i>Canis aureus</i>
4	Sloth Bear	<i>Melursus ursinus</i>
5	Ruddy Mongoose	<i>Herpestes smithii</i>
6	Leopard	<i>Panthera pardus</i>
7	Indian Elephant	<i>Elephas maximus</i>
8	Spotted Deer (Chital)	<i>Cervus axis</i>
9	Sambar	<i>Cervus unicolor</i>
10	Water Buffalo	<i>Bubalus arnee</i>
11	Indian Palm Squirrel	<i>Funambulus palmarum</i>
12	Indian Hare	<i>Lepus nigricollis</i>
13	Indian Flying Fox	<i>Pteropus gigantea</i>
14	Spinner Dolphin	<i>Stenella longirostris</i>