

Elephant & Other Wildlife Tour Report- 18th-30th October 2015 (With Singharaja Extension)



Indian Pitta



Asian Elephants



Rhino-horned Lizard



Ruddy-Mongoose

Tour Leader: Chaminda Dilruk

Participants: Eddy Lane
Pamela Lane

Report Compiled by: Chaminda Dilruk

Summary

An all-round wildlife experience with sightings of almost 100 Elephants and the early arrival of the Indian Pitta were the highlights of this tour. Close encounters for some superb photography and the sighting of the rare Stripe-necked Mongoose also elevated the experience of this tour.

Day 01 Friday 17th October 2015

The group met at the Airport and boarded the flight to Sri Lanka for their 14 day Elephant & Other Wildlife Tour.

Day 02 Saturday 18th October 2015

Sigiriya

We were out of the Airport by 1.45pm with Eddy and Pamela safely arriving from London. Our journey to Sigiriya took us about 3 hours and though we reached the hotel early the gloomy skies opened up with showers leaving us with no way of getting out for the evening. So it was an early night to bed.

Day 03 Sunday 19th October 2015

Kaudulla

The previous day's showers were gladly soaked up by the sun this morning as we proceeded to the Kaudulla national park for our first day of safari. The morning was spent looking at birds which included Indian Peafowl, Painted Stork, Asian Open bill, Woolly-necked Stork, Cattle, Intermediate, Little & Great Egret, Spot-billed Pelican, Little Grebe, Brahminy Kite, White-bellied Sea Eagle, Grey-headed Fish Eagle, Crested Serpent Eagle, Changeable Hawk Eagle, Little Ringed Plover, Gull-billed Tern, Saunder's Tern, Blue-tailed Bee-eater, Green Bee-eater, White-throated Kingfisher, Common Kingfisher, Crimson-fronted Barbet, Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker, Black-rumped Flameback, Crimson-back Woodpecker, Brown Shrike, Barn Swallow, Paddy-field Pipit, Jerdon's Bushlark, Red-vented Bulbul, Gray-breasted Prinia, Plain Prinia, Greenish Warbler, Common Myna, and Baya Weaver. The most exciting part of our birding session was the early and first recorded sighting of the Indian Pitta for the season and a fantastic close encounter with a Drongo Cuckoo which gave us some good photo taking possibilities.

After having our picnic lunch at a scenic location we started the rest of the day with Elephants on our mind. We were fortunate to see a herd of about 80 Elephants gathered at the lake for their evening drinks while 6 or so calves were also spotted besides their mother's protective legs. Torque Macaque, Grey Langur, Purple-faced Leaf Monkey, Ruddy Mongoose, Land Monitor, Soft Shelled Turtle and Grizzled Indian Squirrel also delighted us with their appearance. As the rains started to fall we headed back to the hotel for the day and did our checklist at by 7.00 pm before having dinner at 7.30pm.

Day 04 Monday 20th October 2015

Kaudulla

Another early morning start after breakfast yielded us some good sightings of Lesser Adjutant, Eurasian Spoon-bill, Little, Indian & Great Cormorant, Great Thick-knee, Black-winged Stilt, Red-wattled Lapwing, Common Sandpiper, Rock Pigeon, Dollarbird and Oriental Skylark. We were also able to see Spotted Deer and Indian Palm Squirrel. Once again in the evening we encountered a few Elephants but didn't stay for long as the rains started to fall making visibility very low. We reached the hotel at 4.00 pm and later met at 7.00pm for the checklist before having dinner at 7.30pm.

Day 05 Tuesday 21st October 2015

Kandy

We checked out of the hotel after breakfast and headed to our next stop Kandy. En-route we visited a spice garden in Matale where we identified different types of plants with medicinal and culinary purposes. After spending an

hour there we proceeded to a restaurant in Peradeniya for lunch. During our journey we were able to see Black-headed Ibis, Spotted Dove and Indian Swiftlet. Torque Macaque and Grey Langur were also encountered. The rest of the drive was through heavy rain and we reached our hotel by 3.00pm but once again there was no opportunity for us to venture out as there were no signs of the rains ceasing. By 7.00pm we did the check list and had dinner at 7.30pm.

Day 06 Wednesday 22nd October 2015

Nuwara Eliya

After breakfast we checked out of the hotel and visited the Peradeniya Botanical Gardens and then proceeded to Nuwara Eliya central highlands en-route stopping at a working Tea Factory to witness the production process of the world's finest tea. We reached our next hotel at 1.30 pm and had our lunch before heading out to Victoria Park. The new species we encountered today included a Green Forest Lizard, Indian Pond Heron, Rose-ringed Parakeet, Asian Palm Swift, Black-hooded Oriole, House Crow, Large-billed Crow, Hill Swallow, Grey Wagtail, Yellow-billed Babbler, Lesser Hill Myna, Oriental Magpie Robin, Tickell's Blue Fly Catcher, Oriental White-Eye, Great Tit, House Sparrow and Scaly-breasted Munia. Once again at 7.00pm we met for the checklist and proceeded for dinner thereafter.

Day 07 Thursday 23rd October 2015

Yala

After breakfast we checked out of the hotel and visited the Bomuru Ella forest area and encounter Sri Lanka White-eye, Velvet Fronted Nuthatch, Rhino Horned Lizard and the hill race of the Purple-faced Leaf Monkey also known as the Bear Monkey. We reached our next stop for lunch at a restaurant overlooking a picturesque valley in Ella and after some good time spent on photographing the surrounding we had lunch and relaxed till around 2.00pm. En-route to our next destination we stopped at the Tissa Lake for some birding and encounter Oriental Honey-buzzard, Black-tailed Godwit, Chestnut-headed Bee-eater, Malabar Pied Horn-bill, Scarlet Minivet, Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike, Yellow-eared Bulbul and Asian Brown Fly-catcher. We also encounter more Torque Macaque, Ruddy Mongoose and the rare Stripe-necked Mongoose. Later in the evening we were able to witness a colony of flying fox gradually leaving their roosting for their night activity. We reached our hotel by 5.30 pm and met up at 7.00pm for the checklist and subsequent dinner.

Day 08 Friday 24th October 2015

Yala

It was an early start at 5.30am as we headed out to the Yala national park with our picnic breakfast and lunch packs. We were able to encounter Elephants, Indian Hare, Wild Boar, Golden Jackal, Crocodile, Water Buffalo, Bronze-back Tree Snake, Indian Cobra, Fan-throated Lizard, Garden Lizard, Parker's Black Turtle along with Barred Buttonquail, Sri Lanka Jungle Fowl, Lesser-whistling Duck, Black-necked Stork, Yellow-wattled Lapwing, Lesser Sand Plover, Orange-breasted Green Pigeon, Jacobin Cuckoo, Grey-bellied Cuckoo, Asian Koel, Sirkeer Malkoha, Pied Kingfisher, Sri Lanka Woodshrike, Black-headed Cuckooshrike, Common Tailorbird, Asian Paradise Fly-catcher, Yellow-eyed Babbler, Brahminy Starling, White-rumped Shama and Black-headed Munia. Towards

3.00pm it started raining quite heavily and by the time we reached the hotel we were all soaking wet but happy with the days progress although the rains had left us without a sighting of the elusive Leopard. After completing the checklist at 7.00pm we had dinner and called it a day.

Day 09 Saturday 25th October 2015

Embilipitiya

We checked out of the hotel at 8.30am amidst slight rain and proceeded to the Tissa tank to witness the roosting of Indian Flying Fox. We also visited the Debara tank and managed to take some photos of birds from inside the vehicle as it was raining heavily and we weren't able to step out and walk around. We drove to another tank called Nelum Pokuna in Thanamalvilla before reaching our hotel by 1.30pm. After lunch we visited the roosting site of an Indian Scops Owl and were able to take some photos before the rains set in again forcing us back to the hotel. Our day yielded sightings of Black-crowned Night Heron, Shikra, Besra, White-breasted Waterhen, Purple Swampphen, Pheasant-tailed Jacana, Whiskered Tern, Sri Lanka Green Pigeon, Common Hoopoe, Jerdon's Leaf Bird, Black-capped Bulbul, Purple-rumped Sunbird and Water Monitor.

Day 10 Sunday 26th October 2015

Udawalawe

With picnic breakfast we checked out of our hotel at 5.30am and proceeded to Udawalawe national park for a half day safari where we encounter Montagu's Harrier, Green Imperial Pigeon, Brown Fish Owl, Indian Roller, White-bellied Drongo, Forest Wagtail, Jungle Prinia, Zitting Cisticola and White-rumped Munia. We left the park around 12.30pm and proceeded to the Udawalawe transit home in time to witness the feeding of the Elephant calves. We had our lunch in a local restaurant nearby and then left for Singharaja amidst heavy rains. By 4.30pm we reached the hotel and did the checklist before having dinner at 7.30pm.

Day 11 Monday 27th October 2015

Singharaja

After an early breakfast at 6.30am we got in to a jeep which took us up to the Singharaja Rainforest entrance gate. Our trek inside the forest yielded sightings of Kangaroo Lizard, Layard's Parakeet, Sri Lanka Frogmouth, Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill, Sri Lanka Blue Magpie, Red-rumped Swallow, Yellow-browed Bulbul, Greenish Warbler, Dark-fronted Warbler, Spot-winged Thrush, Brown-breasted Flycatcher and Black-throated Munia. We returned to the hotel at 1.30pm for lunch. Once again the heavy rains stopped us from doing any walking around the hotel gardens and we called it a day by finishing the checklist at 7.00pm followed by dinner.

Day 12 Tuesday 28th October 2015

Once again we left after early breakfast to the Singharaja Rainforest and added more new species to our list which included Green-billed Coucal, Black Bulbul, Tawny-bellied Babbler, Orange-bellied Babbler and Ashy-headed Laughing thrush. The rains started to pour after lunch hindering with our plans to visit the nearby forest patch and village area. We wrapped up the day after the checklist and dinner at 7.30pm.

Day 13 Wednesday 29th October 2015

We left for a nearby forest after breakfast and did a little birding around the area and encountered two more new birds the Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot and White-browed Bulbul. We returned to the hotel for lunch and checked out after doing the checklist for the day. We reached our final hotel for the tour in Katunayake at 6.30pm and were greeted by Perry and Mukesh at the hotel lobby.

Day 14 Thursday 30th October 2015

At 7.00am we left for Muthurajawela Bird Sanctuary for some birding and once again see many of the birds we encountered during our tour but we still managed to score one more new bird which was the Black Bittern. We returned to the hotel by 9.00am and checked out by 10.00am and proceeded to the Airport in time for the departure flight to London.

Bird List

	Common name	Scientific name
1	Barred Buttonquail	<i>Turnix suscitator</i>
2	Sri Lanka Junglefowl	<i>Gallus lafayetii</i>
3	Indian Peafowl	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>
4	Lesser Whistling-duck	<i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>
5	Painted Stork	<i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>
6	Asian Openbill	<i>Anastomus oscitans</i>
7	Woolly-necked Stork	<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>
8	Black-necked Stork	<i>Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus</i>
9	Lesser Adjutant	<i>Leptoptilos javanicus</i>
10	Black-headed Ibis	<i>Threskiornis melanocephalus</i>
11	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>
12	Black Bittern	<i>Dupetor flavicollis</i>
13	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
14	Indian Pond Heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>
15	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
16	Purpul Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
17	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
18	Great Egret	<i>casmerodius albus</i>
19	Intermediate Egret	<i>Mesophoyx intermedia</i>
20	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
21	Spot-billed Pelican	<i>Pelecanus philippensis</i>
22	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
23	Little Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax niger</i>
24	Indian Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax fuscicollis</i>
25	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
26	Darter	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>

27	Brahminy Kite	<i>Haliastur indus</i>
28	White-bellied Sea Eagle, White-bellied Fish Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>
29	Gray-headed Fish Eagle	<i>Lcthyophaga ichthyaetus</i>
30	Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>
31	Shikra	<i>Accipiter badius</i>
32	Besra	<i>Accipiter virgatus</i>
33	Oriental Honey-buzzard	<i>Pernis ptilorhynchus</i>
34	Crested Serpent Eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>
35	Changeble Hawk Eagle	<i>Spizaetus cirrhatus</i>
36	White-breasted Waterhen	<i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i>
37	Purple Swamphen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>
38	Pheasant-tailed Jacana	<i>Hydrophasianus chirurgus</i>
39	Great Thick-knee	<i>Esacus recurvirostris</i>
40	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
41	Yellow-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus malabaricus</i>
42	Red-wattled lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>
43	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
44	Lesser sand Plover, Mongolian Plover	<i>charadrius mongolus</i>
45	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>
46	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
47	Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>
48	Saunders's Tern	<i>Sternula saundersi</i>
49	Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>
50	Common Pigeon, Rock Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>
51	Spotted Dove	<i>Stigmatopelia chinensis</i>
52	Orange-breasted Green Pigeon	<i>Treron bicinctus</i>
53	Sri Lanka Green Pigeon	<i>Treron (Pompadora) pompadora</i>
54	Green Imperial Pigeon	<i>Ducula aenea</i>
55	Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot	<i>Loriculus beryllinus</i>
56	Rose-ringed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>
57	Layard's Parakeet	<i>Psittacula calthropae</i>
58	Jacobin Cuckoo, Pied Cuckoo	<i>Clamator jacobinus</i>
59	Grey-bellied Cuckoo, Plaintive Cuckoo	<i>Cacomantis passerinus</i>
60	Drongo Cuckoo	<i>Surniculus lugubris</i>
61	Asian Koel	<i>Endynamys scolopacerus</i>
62	Sirkeer Malkoha	<i>Taccocua leschenaultii</i>
63	Green-billed Coucal	<i>Centropus chlororhynchos</i>
64	Sri Lanka Frogmouth	<i>Batrachostomus moniliger</i>
65	Collared Scops Owl	<i>Otus bakkamoena</i>
66	Brown Fish Owl	<i>Ketupa zeylonensis</i>
67	Indian Swiftlet	<i>Collocalia unicolor</i>
68	Asian Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus balasiensis</i>
69	Indian Roller	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>
70	Dollarbird	<i>Eurystomus orientalis</i>
71	Green Bee-eater, Little Green Bee-eater	<i>Merops orientalis</i>
72	Blue-tailed Bee-eater	<i>Merops philippinus</i>

73	Chestnut-headed Bee-eater	<i>Merops leschenaulti</i>
74	White-throated Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>
75	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
76	Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>
77	Common Hoopoe, Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>
78	Brown-headed Barbet	<i>Megalaima zeylanica</i>
79	Yellow-fronted Barbet	<i>Megalaima flavifrons</i>
80	Crimson-fronted Barbet	<i>Megalaima rubricapillus</i>
81	Sri lanka Grey Hornbill	<i>Ocyrceros gingalensis</i>
82	Malabar Pied Hornbill	<i>Anthracoceros coronatus</i>
83	Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos nanus</i>
84	Lesser Goldenback, Black-rumped Flameback	<i>Dinopium benghalense</i>
85	Crimson-backed Goldenback, Crimson-back Woodpecker	<i>Chrysocolaptes(lucidus) stricklandi</i>
86	Indian Pitta	<i>Pitta brachyura</i>
87	Sri Lanka Woodshrike	<i>Tephrodornis (pondicerianus) affinis</i>
88	Black-headed Cuckooshrike	<i>Coracina melanoptera</i>
89	Scarlet Minivet,Flame Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus flammeus</i>
90	Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike	<i>Hemipus picatus</i>
91	Brown Shrike	<i>Lanius cristatus</i>
92	Jerdon's Leafbird	<i>Chloropsis jerdoni</i>
93	Black-hooded Oriole	<i>Oriolus xanthornus</i>
94	Sri Lanka Blue Magpie	<i>Urocissa ornata</i>
95	House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>
96	Large-billed Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>
97	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
98	Hill Swallow	<i>Hirundo(tahitica) domicola</i>
99	Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>
100	White-bellied Drongo	<i>Dicrurus caerulescens</i>
101	Forest Wagtail	<i>Dendronanthus indicus</i>
102	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>
103	Paddyfield Pipit	<i>Anthus rufulus</i>
104	Jerdon's Bushlark	<i>Mirafra affinis</i>
105	Oriental Skylark	<i>Alauda gulgula</i>
106	Black-capped Bulbul, Black-headeed Yellow Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus melanicterus</i>
107	Red-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>
108	Yellow-eared Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus penicillatus</i>
109	White-browed Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus luteolus</i>
110	Yellow-browed Bulbul	<i>Acritillas indica</i>
111	Black Bulbul	<i>Hypsipetes leucocephalus</i>
112	Gray-breasted Prinia	<i>Prinia hodgsonii</i>
113	Jungle Prinia	<i>Prinia sylvatica</i>
114	Plain Prinia	<i>Prinia inornata</i>
115	Common Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>
116	Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>
117	Greenish Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochiloides</i>
118	Asian Paradise-flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone paradisi</i>

119	Dark-fronted Babbler	<i>Rhopocichla atriceps</i>
120	Tawny-bellied Babbler	<i>Dumetia hyperythra</i>
121	Yellow-eyed Babbler	<i>Chrysomma sinense</i>
122	Orange-billed Babbler	<i>Turdoides rufescens</i>
123	Yellow-billed Babbler	<i>Turdoides affinis</i>
124	Ashy-headed Lughingthrush	<i>Garrulax cinereifrons</i>
125	Lesser Hill Myna	<i>Gracula (religioosa) indica</i>
126	Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>
127	Brahminy Starling	<i>Sturnia pagodarum</i>
128	Spot-winged Thrush	<i>Zoothera spiloptera</i>
129	Oriental Magpie Robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>
130	White-rumped Shama	<i>Copsychus malabaricus</i>
131	Asian Brown Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa dauurica</i>
132	Brown-breasted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa muttui</i>
133	Tickell's Blue Flycatcher	<i>Cyornis tickelliae</i>
134	Purple-rumped Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia zeylonica</i>
135	Oriental White-eye	<i>Zosterops palpebrosus</i>
136	Sri Lanka White-eye	<i>Zosterops ceylonensis</i>
137	Velvet-fronted Nuthatch	<i>Sitta frontalis</i>
138	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>
139	Baya Weaver	<i>Ploceus philippinus</i>
140	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
141	White-rumped Munia	<i>Lonchura striata</i>
142	Scaly-breasted Munia	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>
143	Black-throated Munia	<i>Lonchura kelaarti</i>
144	Black-headed Munia	<i>Lonchura malacca</i>

	Mammals	
	Common name	Scientific name
1	Toque Macaque	<i>Macaca sinica</i>
2	Grey Langur	<i>Presbytis entellus</i>
3	Purple-faced Leaf-Monkey	<i>Presbytis vetulus</i>
4	Golden Jackal	<i>Canis aureus</i>
5	Ruddy Mongoose	<i>Herpestes smithii</i>
6	Indian Elephant	<i>Elephas maximus</i>
7	Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>
8	Chital (Spotted Deer)	<i>Cervus axis</i>
9	Water Buffalo	<i>Bubalus arnee</i>
10	Indian Palm Squirrel	<i>Funambulus palmarum</i>
11	Grizzled (Giant) Indian Squirrel	<i>Ratufa macroura</i>
12	Indian Hare	<i>Lepus nigricollis</i>
13	Indian Flying Fox	<i>Pteropus gigantea</i>
14	Stripe-necked Mongoose	<i>Herpestes vitticollis</i>

	Reptiles & Other	
	Common name	Scientific name
1	Giant Wood Spider	<i>Nephila pilipes</i>
2	Bronze back tree snake	<i>Dendrelaphis tristis</i>
3	Indian Cobra	<i>Naja naja</i>
4	Land Monitor	<i>Varanus bengalensis</i>
5	Water Monitor	<i>Varanus salvator</i>
6	Green Forest Lizard	<i>Calotes calotes</i>
7	Rhino-horned Lizard	<i>Ceratophora stoddartii</i>
8	Fan-throated Lizard	<i>Sitana ponticeriana</i>
9	Kangaroo Lizard	<i>Otocryptis wiegmanni</i>
10	Garden Lizard	<i>Calotes versicolor</i>
11	Crocodile	<i>Crocodylus palustris</i>
12	Softshelled Turtle	<i>Lissemys punctata</i>
13	Parker's Black Turtle	<i>Melanochelys trijuga parkeri</i>