

# Sri Lanka Blue Whales & Leopards

27 March- 07 April 2016

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Spinner Dolphin



Sloth Bear



Indian Pitta



Blue Whale

Report compiled by Saman Kumara & Suminda Dodangoda  
Images by Saman Kumara



Tour participants: Saman Kumara & Suminda Dodangoda (leaders) with 12 Naturetrek clients

## Highlights

The Blue Whales put on a great show during our sea excursion along with many Spinner Dolphins. A very close encounter with the Leopard and Sloth Bear made it a successful tour with all the big mammals showing them self. In total we saw 21 Mammals, 15 Reptiles & Others and 137 Birds.

### Day 1

**Saturday 26th March**

Group members met at the airport and boarded a flight to Sri Lanka to start their tour.

### Day 2

**Sunday 27th March**

The flight arrived at Colombo airport at 1.15pm, and we left the airport at 2.15pm. We reached the hotel at 5.00pm and had a briefing at 7.00pm regarding the next few days whale watching excursions and had dinner afterwards.

### Day 3

**Monday 28th March**

We left the hotel at 6.20am after a cup of tea/coffee and proceeded to the pier.

At around 8.00am we spotted many pods of 10 -15 Spinner Dolphins along with Flying Fish. Our first sighting of the Blue Whale was at around 10 am and it stayed with us for almost for 1 hour. During this time we were able to see it dive 3 times with its tail up out the 6 times it appeared and fed on the krill in the vicinity. Everybody had very good views as it was very close to the boat.

We were back in the hotel by 1.30pm and after having lunch we relaxed in our rooms. At 3.30pm we left for Galle Fort and enjoyed the views of the city within the ramparts which boasts much colonial architecture well preserved up to this day.

We returned to the hotel at 7.00pm and did our checklist at 7.15pm followed by the next day briefing and dinner.

### Day 4

**Tuesday 29th March**

We left the hotel at 6.30am after having tea/coffee and reached the pier at 7.00am.

Again at around 8.00am we saw a pod of more than 50 Spinner Dolphins spread across the ocean. They swam surrounding our boats as we were in a race and the crystal clear waters gave us some good views.

Our Blue Whale for the day appeared at 10.00am and once again enjoyed a show lasting over 1 hour.

We returned to the hotel at 1.00pm and had our lunch. After lunch we left to Kiralakele for some birding and encountered Comb Duck which is a very rare sighting here although very common in Europe. Lesser-whistling Duck, Purple Swamphen, Pheasant-tailed Jacana, Painted Stork, Stork-billed Kingfisher, Pied Kingfisher, Asian Paradise Fly-catcher, Blue-tailed bee-eater, Chestnut-headed bee-eater and Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot.

We returned to the hotel at 6.45pm did the checklist at 7.00pm and after the next day's briefing we had dinner and called it a day.

## Day 5

Wednesday 30th March

We left the hotel once again at 6.30am after tea/coffee and were on our boat sailing in to the ocean by 7.45am.

Our first sighting for the day was Flying Fish followed by 3 Blue Whales at a bit of a distance.

We returned to the hotel at 2.30pm and had our lunch. After lunch we visited a tea factory and learnt how tea is made in this factory. The rains that followed us in to the tea factory set the ideal temperature for us to enjoy and sample different varieties of the tea produced here.

After our tea tour we visited a Turtle hatchery which cares for injured Turtle which are usually rescued from fishing boats or which wash up to the shore. Here we were able to see the Green Turtle, Hawk-billed Turtle and a Leatherback Turtle been cared for here. There were many eggs been incubated in a patch of sand within this premise which will be taken care of by the carers until they hatch. After the turtle hatchery we went down to the beach and enjoyed the sunset and walked leisurely on the beach catching a few waves.

We returned to the hotel at 7.00pm and did the checklist at 7.45pm. The hotel organized a special cocktail for the clients which followed by dinner.

## Day 6

Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> March

We had an early breakfast and checked out of the hotel at 8.30am. En-route to Yala we stopped at a local farm and enjoyed some local sweets and also had some king coconut water. We reached the next hotel at 1.30pm and had our lunch and relaxed in the hotel enjoying its facilities. At 5.00pm we did a small nature walk around the hotel garden and saw a very rare Flying Snake on the restaurant roof. We encountered Spot-billed Pelican, Indian Darter, Indian Cormorant, Great Egret along with many Mugger Crocodiles and a single Estuarine Crocodile which were absorbing the dying heat of the day. From the garden we went towards the beach and spent some time there before returning to the hotel at 6.30pm. We did the checklist at 7.30pm and then had a briefing for the next day followed by dinner.

## Day 7

Friday 1<sup>st</sup> April

We had tea/coffee and left the hotel at 5.30am for our first jeep safari. We entered the park at 6.00am and were lucky with a sighting of a Sloth Bear in less than half an hour of entering the park.. We encountered Spotted Deer, Sambar Deer, Golden Jackal, Ruddy Mongoose, Grey Mongoose, Asian Elephants, Grey Langur, Wild Boar, Water Buffalos, Giant Squirrel and Black-naped Hare.

We stopped beside the river at around 12.00pm and had our packed lunch while enjoying sightings of Torque Macaques. Before long we were under attack by the intruding macaques which wanted our food and Saman and Suminda stood guard keeping the macaques at bay. After an exciting lunch we relaxed until 2.30pm as the temperature and humidity was very high to venture further in to the park.

On our way out of the park we spotted a Leopard which was ambushing a Sambar Deer and we watched it skilfully manoeuvre itself closer to the unsuspecting prey. Since it was closing time we had to exit the park so we left the site hoping the Leopard will get its dinner sorted tonight.

It was a very good day of safari and everyone was excited by the sightings of the day.

We returned to the hotel at 6.00pm and did the checklist at 7.15pm followed by the briefing and dinner.

## Day 8

Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> April

Once again we left the hotel at 5.30am after tea/coffee for our safari. A few clients wanted to do a full day safari while the remaining wanted to come back early. Once again we encounter Spotted Deer, Grey Langur, Golden Jackal, many Ruddy Mongoose, Wild Boar, Giant Squirrel and Palm Squirrel. White-bellied Sea Eagle, Grey-headed Fish Eagle, Orange-breasted Green Pigeon, Sirkeer Malkoha and Pied Cuckoo were also encountered.

At around 11.45am 7 clients returned from the park with Suminda as Saman continued the tour with the other 5 clients. Saman was able to show the clients many of the mammals and birds seen in the morning along with another sighting of a Leopard at a distance camouflaged amongst the bushes. It was not a very clear sighting.

We returned to the hotel at 6.30pm and did the checklist at 7.15pm followed by the next day's briefing and dinner.

## Day 9

Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> April

We had breakfast at 8.00am and checked out of the hotel at 9.00am. We visited a colony of Indian Flying Fox in the Tissamaharama lake area along with a nesting Brown-headed Barbet, Rose-ringed Parakeet and Grey heron.

We reached Silver Ray restaurant at 1.00pm and after having lunch three clients left with Saman for their Sinharaja extension while the rest proceeded to Colombo for their last night's stay.

Saman reached Blue Magpie Lodge at 5.00pm and had a cup of tea and relaxed in our rooms. At 7.15pm we did the checklist followed by the briefing of the next day and had dinner.

## Day 10

Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> April

We had breakfast 5.30am and at 6.00am left in the jeep for the rainforest. We encountered Layard's Parakeet, Yellow-fronted barbet, Sri Lanka Green Pigeon, Pale-billed Flower-pecker, White-faced Starling, Black-throated Munia, Legge's Flower Pecker, Sri Lanka Crested Drongo, Sri Lanka Blue Magpie, Orange-billed Babbler, Spot-winged Thrush, Black-capped Bulbul, Brown-capped Babbler, Malabar Trogon and Sri Lanka Frogmouth.

Since the clients were very interested in other insects and butterflies we changed our focus to these and see Sri Lanka Bird Wing, Blue Mormon, Blue Bottle, Spot-swordtail, Sri Lanka Tree-nymph, Great Crow, Cruiser, Commander, Glad-eye Bush Brown, White-four ring along with many water striders, Robber fly, Spiders, Snakes and Reptiles.

We returned to the hotel at 3.00pm and as we reached the hotel there was a very heavy rain which kept us indoors for the rest of the day. We did the checklist at 7.15pm followed by the briefing about the next day followed by dinner.

## Day 11

Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> April

We had our breakfast at 5.30am and left for the rainforest with our picnic lunch. We encountered Sri Lanka Myna, Ashy-headed Laughing Thrush, Black-headed Cuckooshrike, Brown-capped Babbler and Scaly Thrush along with many other species.

We returned to the hotel at 3.00pm and once again it rained heavily in the evening. We met at 7.15pm for the checklist and after the next day briefing we had dinner and called it a night.

## Day 12

Sunday 6th April

We had breakfast at 7.00am and visited the Sinharaja village. We encountered many birds, butterflies, dragonflies and reptiles during our walk.

We returned to the hotel at 10.00am had lunch at 12.00pm. At 1.15pm we checked out of the hotel and were on our way to Colombo via the southern highway.

We reached the Airport Garden hotel at 4.30pm and did the checklist at 7.00pm followed by dinner.

## Day 13

Monday 7th April

After breakfast, we left the hotel at 9.45am and went to the airport for our flight back to the UK, where another Naturetrek adventure came to an end.

## Species Lists

### Mammals

	<b>Common name</b>	<b>Scientific name</b>
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	Sloth Bear	<i>Melursus ursinus</i>
6	Indian Grey Mongoose	<i>Herpestes edwardsii</i>
7	Ruddy Mongoose	<i>Herpestes smithii</i>
8	Leopard	<i>Panthera pardus</i>
9	Indian Elephant	<i>Elephas maximus</i>
10	Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>
11	Spotted Deer (Chital)	<i>Cervus axis</i>
12	Sambar	<i>Cervus unicolor</i>
13	Water Buffalo	<i>Bubalus arnee</i>
14	Layard's Striped Squirrel	<i>Funambulus layardi</i>
15	Indian Palm Squirrel	<i>Funambulus palmarum</i>
16	Grizzled Giant Squirrel	<i>Ratufa macroura</i>
17	Indian Hare	<i>Lepus nigricollis</i>
18	Indian Flying Fox	<i>Pteropus gigantea</i>
19	Lesser False Vampire Bat	<i>Megaderma spasma</i>
20	Blue Whale	<i>Balaenoptera musculus</i>
21	Spinner Dolphin	<i>Stenella longirostris</i>

## Reptiles & Others

	<b>Common name</b>	<b>Scientific name</b>
1	Land Monitor	<i>Varanus bengalensis</i>
2	Water Monitor	<i>Varanus salvator</i>
3	Black-cheek Lizard	<i>Calotes nigrilabris</i>
4	Sri Lanka Kangaroo Lizard	<i>Otocryptis wiegmanni</i>
5	Common Garden Lizard	<i>Calotes versicolor</i>
6	Green Garden Lizard	<i>Calotes calotes</i>
7	Mugger Crocodile	<i>Crocodylus palustris</i>
8	Esturine Crocodile	<i>Crocodylus porosus</i>
9	Round-Snout Pygmy Frog	<i>Pseudophilautus femoralis</i>
10	Flying Snake	<i>Chrysopelea taprobanica</i>
11	Brown Vine Snake	<i>Oxybelis aeneus</i>
12	Green Vine Snake	<i>Oxybelis fulgidus</i>
13	Indian Cobra	<i>Naja naja</i>
14	Green Turtle	<i>Chelonia mydas</i>
15	Flying Fish	<i>Cheilopogon sp</i>

## Birds (endemics in bold)

	<b>Common name</b>	<b>Scientific name</b>
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	Knob-billed Duck, Comb Duck	<i>Sarkidiornis melanotos</i>
6	Painted Stork	<i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>
7	Asian Openbill	<i>Anastomus oscitans</i>
8	Woolly-necked Stork	<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>
9	Lesser Adjutant	<i>Leptoptilos javanicus</i>
10	Black-headed Ibis	<i>Threskiornis melanocephalus</i>
11	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>
12	Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>
13	Indian Pond Heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>
14	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
15	Purpul Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
16	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
17	Great Egret	<i>casmerodius albus</i>
18	Intermediate Egret	<i>Mesophoyx intermedia</i>
19	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
20	Spot-billed Pelican	<i>Pelecanus philippensis</i>
21	Little Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax niger</i>

22	Indian Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax fuscicollis</i>
23	Darter	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>
24	Brahminy Kite	<i>Haliastur indus</i>
25	White-bellied Sea Eagle, White-bellied Fish Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>
26	Gray-headed Fish Eagle	<i>Lcthyophaga ichthyaetus</i>
27	Oriental Honey-buzzard	<i>Pernis ptilorhynchus</i>
28	Crested Serpent Eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>
29	Changeble Hawk Eagle	<i>Spizaetus cirrhatus</i>
30	Watercock	<i>Gallixrex cinerea</i>
31	Purple Swamphen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>
32	Pheasant-tailed Jacana	<i>Hydrophasianus chirurgus</i>
33	Indian Thick-knee, Eurasian Thick-knee	<i>Burhinus(oedicnemus) indicus</i>
34	Great Thick-knee	<i>Esacus recurvirostris</i>
35	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
36	Yellow-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus malabaricus</i>
37	Red-wattled lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>
38	Pacific Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis fulva</i>
39	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
40	Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>
41	Lesser sand Plover, Mongolian Plover	<i>charadrius mongolus</i>
42	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>
43	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>
44	Common Red shank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
45	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
46	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>
47	Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>
48	Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>
49	Greater Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bergii</i>
50	Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>
51	Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>
52	White-winged Tern	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>
53	Common Pigeon, Rock Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>
54	Spotted Dove	<i>Stigmatopelia chinensis</i>
55	Emerald Dove	<i>Chalcophaps indica</i>
56	Orange-breasted Green Pigeon	<i>Treron bicinctus</i>
57	Sri Lanka Green Pigeon	<i>Treron (Pompadora) pompadora</i>
58	Green Imperial Pigeon	<i>Ducula aenea</i>
59	<b>Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot</b>	<i>Loriculus beryllinus</i>
60	Rose-ringed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>



61	<b>Layard's Parakeet</b>	<i>Psittacula calthropae</i>
62	Jacobin Cuckoo, Pied Cuckoo	<i>Clamator jacobinus</i>
63	Asian Koel	<i>Endynamys scolopacerus</i>
64	Sirkeer Malkoha	<i>Taccocua leschenaultii</i>
65	Greater Coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>
66	Sri Lanka Frogmouth	<i>Batrachostomus moniliger</i>
67	Brown Fish Owl	<i>Ketupa zeylonensis</i>
68	Indian Swiftlet	<i>Collocalia unicolor</i>
69	Asian Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus balasiensis</i>
70	Crested Treeswift , Gray-rumped Treeswift	<i>Hemiprocne coronata</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	Stork-billed Kingfisher	<i>Pelargopsis capensis</i>
75	White-throated Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>
76	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
77	Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>
78	Malabar Trogon	<i>Harpactes fasciatus</i>
79	Common Hoopoe, Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>
80	Brown-headed Barbet	<i>Megalaima zeylanica</i>
81	<b>Yellow-fronted Barbet</b>	<i>Megalaima flavifrons</i>
82	Malabar Pied Hornbill	<i>Anthracoceros coronatus</i>
83	Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos nanus</i>
84	Yellow-crowned Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos mahrattensis</i>
85	Lesser Yellownape	<i>Picus chlorophus</i>
86	Lesser Goldenback, Black-rumped Flameback	<i>Dinopium benghalense</i>
87	Indian Pitta	<i>Pitta brachyura</i>
88	Black-headed Cuckooshrike	<i>Coracina melanoptera</i>
89	Small Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus cinnamomeus</i>
90	Scarlet Minivet, Flame Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus flammeus</i>
91	Brown Shrike	<i>Lanius cristatus</i>
92	Common Iora	<i>Aegithina tiphia</i>
93	Golden-fronted Leafbird	<i>Chloropsis aurifrons</i>
94	Black-hooded Oriole	<i>Oriolus xanthornus</i>
95	<b>Sri Lanka Blue Magpie</b>	<i>Urocissa ornata</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 caerulescens</i>
101	Sri Lanka Drongo, Sri Lanka Crested Drongo	<i>Dicrurus ( paradiseus ) lophorhinus</i>
102	Paddyfield Pipit	<i>Anthus rufulus</i>
103	Jerdon's Bushlark	<i>Mirafraga affinis</i>
104	Ashy-crowned Sparrow Lark	<i>Eremopterix griseus</i>
105	Black-capped Bulbul, Black-headed Yellow Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus melanicterus</i>
106	Red-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>
107	Yellow-browed Bulbul	<i>Acritillas indica</i>
108	Black Bulbul	<i>Hypsipetes leucocephalus</i>
109	Plain Prinia	<i>Prinia inornata</i>
110	Common Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>
111	White-browed Fantail	<i>Rhipidura aureola</i>
112	Asian Paradise-flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone paradisi</i>
113	<b>Brown-capped Babbler</b>	<i>Pellorneum fuscicapillus</i>
114	Dark-fronted Babbler	<i>Rhopocichla atriceps</i>
115	<b>Orange-billed Babbler</b>	<i>Turdoides rufescens</i>
116	Yellow-billed Babbler	<i>Turdoides affinis</i>
117	<b>Ashy-headed Lushingthrush</b>	<i>Garrulax cinereifrons</i>
118	<b>Sri Lanka Hill Myna, Sri Lanka Myna</b>	<i>Gracula ptilogenys</i>
119	Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>
120	<b>White-faced Starling</b>	<i>Sturnornis albofrontatus</i>
121	<b>Spot-winged Thrush</b>	<i>Zoothera spiloptera</i>
122	<b>Sri Lanka Thrush, Sri Lanka Scaly Thrush</b>	<i>Zoothera imbricata</i>
123	Oriental Magpie Robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>
124	White-rumped Shama	<i>Copsychus malabaricus</i>
125	Indian Robin, Black-backed Robin	<i>Saxicoloides fulicatus</i>
126	<b>Legge's Flowerpecker, White-throated Flowerpecker</b>	<i>Dicaeum vincens</i>
127	Pale-billed Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum erythrorhynchus</i>
128	Purple-rumped Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia zeylonica</i>
129	Purple Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia asiatica</i>
130	Loten's Sunbird, Long-billed Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia lotenia</i>
131	Oriental White-eye	<i>Zosterops palpebrosus</i>
132	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
133	Indian Silverbill, White-throated Silverbill	<i>Lonchura malabarica</i>
134	White-rumped Munia	<i>Lonchura striata</i>
135	Scaly-breasted Munia	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>
136	Black-throated Munia	<i>Lonchura kelaarti</i>
137	Black-headed Munia	<i>Lonchura malacca</i>

