

# Sri Lanka – Blue Whales & Leopards with Sinharaja Extension

Naturetrek Tour Report

18 - 30 November 2017



Sloth Bear



Blue Whale



Leopard



Spinner Dolphin

Report & images compiled by Saman Kumara



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## Highlights

In total we saw 18 mammal species, 16 species of reptiles, amphibians and fish, and 151 bird species. Blue Whales were encountered on all three days of our sea excursions, which also included a sighting of many Spinner Dolphins. Pristine sightings of Yala's famous Leopards and Sloth Bears were also enjoyed by the group, making the tour an all-round success.

### Day 1

**Saturday 18th November**

The tour started with an overnight flight from the UK to Sri Lanka.

### Day 2

**Sunday 19th November**

Arrive Colombo; travel to Weligama

The flight arrived at Colombo airport at 12.40pm, where we met the last group member Kristine together with the leaders, who were waiting for us. We left the airport at 1.40pm and encountered the following birds on the way to our hotel: Indian Peafowl, Black-headed Ibis, Indian Pond Heron, Eastern Cattle Egret, Great Egret, Little Cormorant, Crested Serpent Eagle, Changeable Hawk-Eagle, Brahminy Kite, Red-Wattled Lapwing, Rock Dove, Spotted Dove, Asian Palm Swift, White-Throated Kingfisher, Alexandrine Parakeet, Brown Shrike, Black-hooded Oriole, House Crow, Indian Jungle Crow, Barn Swallow, Sri Lanka Swallow and Yellow-billed Babbler. We also spotted Purple-faced Leaf Monkey, Ruddy Mongoose, Indian Palm Squirrel and a Common House Gecko.

We reached the Fisherman's Bay Resort at 5pm. We met for dinner at 7.30pm and afterwards called it a night.

### Day 3

**Monday 20th November**

Weligama

We left the hotel at 6.15am with packed breakfasts and reached Mirissa harbour at 6.45am for our first whale-watching trip. At 11am we saw our first Blue Whale and had some good sightings. Many Spinner Dolphins were also seen. We returned to the hotel at 1.30pm for lunch and relaxed until 3.30pm.

In the afternoon we visited the Kirala Kele sanctuary where we encountered Common Garden Lizard and Water Monitor. Bird sightings included Lesser Whistling Duck, Indian Peafowl, Painted Stork, Asian Openbill, Black-headed Ibis, Indian Pond Heron, Spot-billed Pelican, Little Cormorant, Oriental Darter, Brahminy Kite, White-breasted Waterhen, Red-wattled Lapwing, Lesser Crested Tern, Spotted Dove, Asian Palm Swift, Indian Swiftlet, White-throated Kingfisher, Blue-tailed Bee-eater, Brown Shrike, Black-hooded Oriole, Red-vented Bulbul, Sri Lanka Swallow, Yellow-billed Babbler, Common Myna, Loten's Sunbird, Tricolored Munia, Scaly-breasted Munia, Purple Sunbird, Grey-headed Swamphen, Indian Paradise Flycatcher, White-browed Fantail, Rose-ringed Parakeet, Alexandrine Parakeet, Brown-headed Barbet, Pied Kingfisher, Asian Koel, Green Imperial Pigeon, Whiskered Tern, Great Crested Tern and Pheasant-tailed Jacana.

We returned to the hotel at 6.30pm and did the checklist at 7.30pm, followed by dinner and a briefing for the next day.

## Day 4

**Tuesday 21st November**

### Weligama

We left the hotel at 6.15am and once again set off for a whale-watching excursion. We again had good sightings of Blue Whales today.

In the afternoon we visited the historic Galle Fort. After visiting the fort we returned to the hotel at 6.30pm amidst heavy rain. At 7.30pm we did the checklist and had our dinner.

## Day 5

**Wednesday 22nd November**

### Weligama

Another whale-watching excursion yielded sightings of Spinner Dolphins and eight sightings of a Blue Whale. We returned to the hotel at 11am and had our lunch at 12.30pm.

At 3.30pm three group members visited Mirissa town, whilst the rest of the group visited Kirala Kele sanctuary where sightings included Watercock, White-winged Tern, White-bellied Drongo, Zitting Cisticola, Plain Prinia, Yellow Bittern, Stork-billed Kingfisher, Peregrine Falcon and Indian Silverbill.

We were back in the hotel at 6.30pm and our usual routine of checklist and dinner followed.

## Day 6

**Thursday 23rd November**

### Yala

We had our breakfast at 8am and left for Yala. On our way we stopped at Tissamaharama to see a colony of over 500 Flying Foxes.

We reached Yala at 2pm and had lunch. At 4pm we started birding around the hotel garden and saw Lesser Adjutant Stork, Black-crowned Night Heron, Intermediate Egret, Shikra, Lesser Sand Plover, Common Redshank, Marsh Sandpiper, Green Sandpiper, Terek Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper, Little Stint, Curlew Sandpiper, Gull-billed Tern, Indian Scops Owl, Marshall's Iora, Baya Weaver and Western Yellow Wagtail.

Checklist and dinner followed after our return to the hotel at 6pm.

## Day 7

**Friday 24th November**

### Yala

We had tea/coffee at 5.30am and then set out with packed meals for our first jeep safari. At Lunugamwehera National Park our sightings included Sri Lanka Junglefowl, Great Cormorant, Little Ringed Plover, Orange-breasted Green Pigeon, Sri Lanka Green Pigeon, Greater Coucal, Blue-faced Malkoha, Grey-bellied Cuckoo, Crested Treeswift, Brown-backed Needletail, Chestnut-headed Bee-eater, Coppermith Barbet, Brown-capped

Pygmy Woodpecker, Indian Pitta, Sri Lanka Woodshrike, Small Minivet, Orange Minivet, Jerdon's Bush Lark, Oriental Skylark, Jerdon's Leafbird, Golden-fronted Leafbird, Forest Wagtail, Paddyfield Pipit, Asian Elephant, Wild Boar, Spotted Deer, Water Buffalo, Russell's Viper and Soft-shelled Terrapin.

We returned to the hotel at 7pm and did the checklist at 8.15pm, followed by the briefing and dinner.

## Day 8

**Saturday 25th November**

### Yala

We had tea/coffee at 5am and then left the hotel at 5.30am with packed breakfast and lunch. We entered Yala National Park at 6.45am and enjoyed a good sighting of the most famous Sri Lankan Leopard. At 12.30pm we were at the beach area to have our lunch.

After lunch, five group members returned to the hotel whilst the rest continued on a full day safari, encountering a Sloth Bear which came right up to the jeep. We returned to the hotel at 6pm and did our checklist before dinner.

## Main Tour Day 9; Extension Day 1

**Sunday 26th November**

### Katunayake (Main Tour); Sinharaja (Extension)

We had breakfast at 8am and left the Cinnamon Wild Hotel at 9am. We reached the Silver Ray Hotel in Rathnapura at 12.30pm. After lunch the group split, with Kristine and Matt going with Saman for their extension to Sinharaja, while the rest of the group proceeded to Katunayake for their final night's stay at the Gateway Airport Garden Hotel.

The Extension party reached the Blue Magpie Lodge at 4pm. Whilst birding around the lodge, sightings included Brown-breasted Flycatcher, Sri Lanka Myna, Black Bulbul and Orange-billed Babbler. We had a briefing about the next day's program before dinner.

## Main Tour Day 10; Extension Day 2

**Monday 27th November**

### Return to UK (Main Tour); Sinharaja (Extension)

After breakfast the Main Tour group checked out of the hotel and proceeded to the airport in time for a return flight to the UK, where their Naturetrek adventure came to an end.

The Extension party left their hotel at 6am with packed breakfast and lunch. We reached the Sinharaja Rainforest ticket counter and, while there, encountered Spot-winged Thrush. We had good weather and light as we entered the rainforest. During our walk we encountered Sri Lanka Kangaroo Lizard, Hump-nosed Lizard, Sri Lanka Green Pit Viper, Green Vine Snake, Common Emerald Dove, Red-faced Malkoha, Sri Lanka Frogmouth, Malabar Trogon, Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill, Lesser Yellownape, Sri Lanka Drongo, Layard's Parakeet, Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot, Black-capped and Yellow-browed Bulbuls, Dark-fronted Babbler, Ashy-headed Laughingthrush and Oriental White-Eye. We returned to the hotel at 2pm and did some birding around the hotel until 5pm. In the evening we did the checklist at 7pm and then had our dinner, followed by a briefing for the next day.

**Extension Day 3****Tuesday 28th November**

## Sinharaja

We had a pre-breakfast birding session around the Sinharaja Rainforest buffer zone and encountered Sri Lanka Blue Magpie, Sri Lanka Spurfowl, Green-billed Coucal and many other birds seen before. We returned to the hotel for breakfast and then had time to relax.

In the evening we did the checklist at 7pm, followed by a briefing and dinner.

**Extension Day 4****Wednesday 29th November**

## Katunayake

After breakfast we checked out of the hotel and proceeded to Katunayake. We reached the Gateway Airport Garden Hotel at 1.30pm and had the rest of the day to relax.

**Extension Day 5****Thursday 30th November**

## Return flights

We checked out of the hotel and travelled to the airport in time for our return flights home.

## Species Lists (Endemic species in bold; some previous/alternative names in brackets)

### Mammals

	<b>Common name</b>	<b>Scientific name</b>
1	Toque Macaque	<i>Macaca sinica</i>
2	Grey Langur	<i>Semnopithecus entellus</i>
3	Purple-faced Leaf Monkey	<i>Trachypithecus vetulus</i>
4	Sloth Bear	<i>Melursus ursinus</i>
5	Common Palm Civet	<i>Paradoxurus hermaphroitus</i>
6	Ruddy Mongoose	<i>Herpestes smithii</i>
7	Leopard	<i>Panthera pardus kotiya</i>
8	Asian Elephant	<i>Elephas maximus</i>
9	Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>
10	Spotted Deer	<i>Cervus axis</i>
11	Water Buffalo	<i>Bubalus Bubalis</i>
12	Indian Palm Squirrel	<i>Funambulus palmarum</i>
13	Dusky Striped Squirrel	<i>Funambulus sublineatus</i>
14	Indian (Black-naped) Hare	<i>Lepus nigricollis</i>
15	Indian Flying Fox	<i>Pteropus gigantea</i>
16	Blue Whale	<i>Balaenoptera musculus</i>
17	Spinner Dolphin	<i>Stenella mulla</i>
18	Indian Gerbil	<i>Tatera indica</i>

### Birds

	<b>Common name</b>	<b>Scientific name</b>
1	Lesser Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>
2	<b>Sri Lanka Spurfowl</b>	<i>Galloperdix bicalcarata</i>
3	<b>Sri Lanka Junglefowl</b>	<i>Gallus lafayettii</i>
4	Indian Peafowl	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>
5	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
6	Painted Stork	<i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>
7	Asian Openbill	<i>Anastomus oscitans</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	Yellow Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus sinensis</i>
13	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
14	Indian Pond Heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>
15	Eastern Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus coromandus</i>
16	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
17	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
18	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>
19	Intermediate Egret	<i>Egretta intermedia</i>
20	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
21	Spot-billed Pelican	<i>Pelecanus philippensis</i>
22	Little Cormorant	<i>Microcarbo niger</i>
23	Indian Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax fuscicollis</i>
24	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
25	Oriental Darter (Darter)	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>
26	Crested Serpent Eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>
27	Changeable Hawk-Eagle	<i>Nisaetus cirrhatus</i>

Common name	Scientific name
28 Shikra	<i>Accipiter badius</i>
29 Brahminy Kite	<i>Haliastur indus</i>
30 White-bellied Sea Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>
31 Grey-headed Fish Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus ichthyaetus</i>
32 Slaty-legged Crane	<i>Rallina eurizonoides</i>
33 White-breasted Waterhen	<i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i>
34 Watercock	<i>Gallinix cinerea</i>
35 Barred Buttonquail	<i>Turnix suscitator</i>
36 Great Stone-curlew (Great Thick Knee)	<i>Esacus recurvirostris</i>
37 Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
38 Yellow-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus malabaricus</i>
39 Red-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>
40 Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
41 Lesser Sand Plover (Mongolian Plover)	<i>Charadrius mongolus</i>
42 Pheasant-tailed Jacana	<i>Hydrophasianus chirurgus</i>
43 Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
44 Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>
45 Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>
46 Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>
47 Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
48 Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>
49 Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>
50 Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>
51 Greater Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bergii</i>
52 Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>
53 White-winged Tern	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>
54 Rock Dove (Common Pigeon)	<i>Columba livia</i>
55 Spotted Dove	<i>Spilopelia chinensis</i>
56 Common Emerald Dove (Emerald Dove)	<i>Chalcophaps indica</i>
57 Orange-breasted Green Pigeon	<i>Treron bicinctus</i>
58 <b>Sri Lanka Green Pigeon</b>	<i>Treron pompadora</i>
59 Green Imperial Pigeon	<i>Ducula aenea</i>
60 <b>Green-billed Coucal</b>	<i>Centropus chlororhynchus</i>
61 Greater Coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>
62 <b>Red-faced Malkoha</b>	<i>Phaenicophaeus pyrrhocephalus</i>
63 Blue-faced Malkoha	<i>Phaenicophaeus viridirostris</i>
64 Jacobin Cuckoo (Pied Cuckoo)	<i>Clamator jacobinus</i>
65 Asian Koel	<i>Eudynamis scolopaceus</i>
66 Grey-bellied Cuckoo (Plaintive Cuckoo)	<i>Cacomantis passerinus</i>
67 Indian Scops Owl (Collared Scops Owl)	<i>Otus bakkamoena</i>
68 Sri Lanka Frogmouth	<i>Batrachostomus moniliger</i>
69 Crested Treeswift (Gray-rumped Treeswift)	<i>Hemiprocne coronata</i>
70 Indian Swiftlet	<i>Aerodramus unicolor</i>
71 Asian Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus balasiensis</i>
72 Little Swift (House Swift)	<i>Apus affinis</i>
73 Malabar Trogon	<i>Harpactes fasciatus</i>
74 Indian Roller	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>
75 Stork-billed Kingfisher	<i>Pelargopsis capensis</i>
76 White-throated Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>
77 Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
78 Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>
79 Green Bee-eater (Little Green Bee-eater)	<i>Merops orientalis</i>
80 Blue-tailed Bee-eater	<i>Merops philippinus</i>

Common name	Scientific name
81 Chestnut-headed Bee-eater	<i>Merops leschenaulti</i>
82 Eurasian Hoopoe (Common Hoopoe)	<i>Upupa epops</i>
83 Malabar Pied Hornbill	<i>Anthracoceros coronatus</i>
84 <b>Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill</b>	<i>Ocyrceros gingalensis</i>
85 Brown-headed Barbet	<i>Psilopogon zeylanicus</i>
86 <b>Yellow-fronted Barbet</b>	<i>Psilopogon flavifrons</i>
87 Coppersmith Barbet	<i>Psilopogon haemacephalus</i>
88 Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos nanus</i>
89 Yellow-crowned Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos mahrattensis</i>
90 Lesser Yellownape	<i>Picus chlorolophus</i>
91 Black-rumped Flameback (Lesser Goldenback)	<i>Dinopium benghalense</i>
92 Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
93 Plum-headed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula cyanocephala</i>
94 <b>Layard's Parakeet</b>	<i>Psittacula calthrapae</i>
95 Alexandrine Parakeet	<i>Psittacula eupatria</i>
96 Rose-ringed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>
97 <b>Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot</b>	<i>Loriculus beryllinus</i>
98 Indian Pitta	<i>Pitta brachyura</i>
99 <b>Sri Lanka Woodshrike</b>	<i>Tephrodornis affinis</i>
100 Common Iora	<i>Aegithina tiphia</i>
101 Black-headed Cuckooshrike	<i>Coracina melanoptera</i>
102 Orange Minivet (Scarlet/Flame Minivet)	<i>Pericrocotus flammeus</i>
103 Brown Shrike	<i>Lanius cristatus</i>
104 Black-hooded Oriole	<i>Oriolus xanthornus</i>
105 White-bellied Drongo	<i>Dicrurus caerulescens</i>
106 <b>Sri Lanka Drongo (Sri Lanka Crested Drongo)</b>	<i>Dicrurus lophorinus</i>
107 White-browed Fantail	<i>Rhipidura aureola</i>
108 Indian Paradise Flycatcher (Asian Paradise Flycatcher)	<i>Terpsiphone paradisi</i>
109 <b>Sri Lanka Blue Magpie</b>	<i>Urocissa ornata</i>
110 House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>
111 Indian Jungle Crow (Large-billed Crow)	<i>Corvus culminatus</i>
112 Jerdon's Bush Lark	<i>Mirafra affinis</i>
113 Oriental Skylark	<i>Alauda gulgula</i>
114 <b>Black-capped Bulbul</b>	<i>Pycnonotus melanicterus</i>
115 Red-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>
116 Yellow-browed Bulbul	<i>Acritillas indica</i>
117 Black Bulbul	<i>Hypsipetes leucocephalus</i>
118 Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
119 <b>Sri Lanka Swallow</b>	<i>Cecropis hyperythra</i>
120 Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>
121 Ashy Prinia	<i>Prinia socialis</i>
122 Plain Prinia	<i>Prinia inornata</i>
123 Common Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>
124 Grey-headed Swamphen (Purple Swamphen)	<i>Porphyrio poliocephalus</i>
125 Dark-fronted Babbler	<i>Rhopocichla atriceps</i>
126 <b>Orange-billed Babbler</b>	<i>Turdoides rufescens</i>
127 Yellow-billed Babbler	<i>Turdoides affinis</i>
128 <b>Ashy-headed Laughingthrush</b>	<i>Garrulax cinereifrons</i>
129 Oriental White-Eye	<i>Zosterops palpebrosus</i>
130 <b>Sri Lanka Hill Myna (Sri Lanka Myna)</b>	<i>Gracula ptilogenys</i>
131 Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>
132 Brahminy Starling	<i>Sturnia pagodarum</i>
133 <b>Spot-winged Thrush</b>	<i>Geokichla spiloptera</i>



<b>Common name</b>	<b>Scientific name</b>
134 Indian Robin	<i>Copsychus fulicatus</i>
135 Oriental Magpie-Robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>
136 White-rumped Shama	<i>Copsychus malabaricus</i>
137 Brown-breasted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa muttui</i>
138 Jerdon's Leafbird	<i>Chloropsis jerdoni</i>
139 Golden-fronted Leafbird	<i>Chloropsis aurifrons</i>
140 Purple-rumped Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia zeylonica</i>
141 Purple Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris asiaticus</i>
142 Loten's Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris lotenius</i>
143 House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
144 Baya Weaver	<i>Ploceus philippinus</i>
145 Indian Silverbill (White-throated Silverbill)	<i>Euodice malabarica</i>
146 White-rumped Munia	<i>Lonchura striata</i>
147 Scaly-breasted Munia	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>
148 Tricolored Munia (Black-headed Munia)	<i>Lonchura malacca</i>
149 Forest Wagtail	<i>Dendronanthus indicus</i>
150 Western Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>
151 Paddyfield Pipit	<i>Anthus rufulus</i>

## Reptiles & Amphibians

<b>Common name</b>	<b>Scientific name</b>
1 Sri Lanka Green Pit Viper	<i>Trimeresurus trigonocephalus</i>
2 Green Vine Snake	<i>Ahaetulla nasuta</i>
3 Common Rat Snake	<i>Ptyas mucosus maximus</i>
4 Bengal (Land) Monitor	<i>Varanus bengalensis</i>
5 Asian Water Monitor	<i>Varanus salvator</i>
6 Oriental (Common) Garden Lizard	<i>Calotes versicolor</i>
7 Green Garden Lizard	<i>Calotes calotes</i>
8 Sri Lanka Kangaroo Lizard	<i>Otocryptis wiegmanni</i>
9 Hump-nosed Lizard	<i>Lyriocephalus scutatus</i>
10 Mugger Crocodile	<i>Crocodylus palustris</i>
11 Soft-shelled Terrapin	<i>Lissemys punctata</i>
12 Hard-shelled Terrapin	<i>Melanochelys trijuga parkeri</i>
13 Green Turtle	<i>Chelonia mydas</i>
14 Common House Gecko	<i>Hemidactylus frenatus</i>
15 Common Skink	<i>Eutropis carinata</i>
16 Russell's Viper	<i>Vipera russellii</i>