

SRI LANKA

9 – 22 MARCH 2008

TOUR REPORT

LEADERS: CRAIG ROBSON and UPALI EKANAYAKE

During the 2008 tour to Sri Lanka, we were seriously hampered by wet weather, with rain on every day of the tour, at what is normally one of the driest times of year! Despite this unfortunate natural setback, and despite the fact that we lost quite a lot of our birding time, we still managed to find a respectable 234 species. This year we fared much better with Ceylon Spurfowl, with most of us getting onto at least one bird of a pair that were following a large bird-wave at Sinharaja. Unfortunately however, Ceylon Whistling-thrush was a leader only this time, and Ceylon Scaly Thrush a no-show. All of the other endemic species were seen very well, including scope views of roosting Serendib Scops-owl in daytime. We also found nearly 40 Indian subcontinent endemics, including Painted Francolin, Indian Scops-Owl, Ceylon Frogmouth, Indian Jungle and Jerdon's Nightjars, Malabar Pied Hornbill, White-naped Flameback, Indian Pitta, Jerdon's Bushlark, Ashy-crowned Finch-lark, Hill Swallow, Orange Minivet (split from Scarlet), White-browed, Yellow-browed and Square-tailed Black Bulbuls (split from Black), Jerdon's Leafbird (split from Blue-winged), Pied Ground-thrush, Indian Blackbird, Dark-fronted Babbler, Jungle Prinia, and Lesser Hill-myna. Other avian highlights included Indian Shag, Indian Stone-curlew, Small Pratincole, Grey-bellied Cuckoo, Brown Fish-owl, Blyth's Pipit, Black-headed Cuckooshrike, Brown-breasted Flycatcher, and Indian Reed-warbler. Amongst the mammals, superb views of the local form of Eurasian Otter, hunting in a shallow forest pool took pride of place for many of us, with other specialities including Layard's and Dusky Palm Squirrels, Sri Lanka Giant Squirrel, Tufted Grey Langur, Purple-faced Leaf Monkey, and Toque Macaque, as well as lots of Asian Elephants.

After a late arrival at Negombo airport, we headed off for the lowland forests of the Wet Zone, and Kitulgala Rest House. Our hopes of a first taste of forest birding, followed by some owling were soon dashed, as it started to rain steadily, and continued to do so until after dark. Fortunately, many species can be seen from the doorstep at the resthouse, and we were soon lapping-up our first endemics, with scope views of Ceylon Green-pigeon and Legge's Flowerpecker amongst others. At a nearby lodge, as our brollies dampened, we had some nice views of a pair of Sri Lanka Junglefowl with chicks, and our first of many Indian Pittas. The following day brought a rain-free morning, so we crossed the Kelani River by the suspension bridge, and concentrated on bagging as many endemics and specialities as possible in the mosaic of woodland patches and shade-cultivation that make the outskirts of this site so distinctive and interesting. A rather secretive Chestnut-backed Owlet gave us a

bit of a run for our money, while the skulking Green-billed Coucal showed very nicely once we had tracked it to close range, and a pair of Ceylon Scimitar-babblers proved very tame. Ceylon Hanging-Parrot, Yellow-fronted Barbet, Black-capped Bulbul, Spot-winged Ground-thrush, Ceylon Rufous (Orange-billed) Babbler and, Brown-capped Babbler all gave themselves up easily, and we also saw our first of several male Indian Blue Robins. After lunch we crossed the river again in a small dug-out canoe which provides a ferry service for local people, but the rain-clouds were gathering again. A local man showed us a roosting Chestnut-backed Owlet by its nest-hole in a palm trunk, and we had close views of Ceylon Grey Hornbill, before another deluge began. We took shelter in a small house. Again, the rain continued until after dark, and our hopes of seeing the endemic Serendib Scops-owl at this location were completely dashed. Predawn the following morning, we explored some nearby plantations, and were rewarded with close views of a calling female Ceylon Frogmouth, with its mad whiskers. After breakfast, we notched-up a few more bits and pieces from the resthouse, before heading off to Ratnaloka Inn, our base for visits to Sinharaja.

Already concerned about missing Serendib Scops-owl at Kitulgala, we undertook a long drive to Atweltota, a very good area for the species. For a third consecutive night our owling chances were dashed by rain, though we did manage to get fantastic views of early emerging Brown Hawk-owls at the forest edge, and several Ceylon Crested Drongos.

The next morning found us at the world-renowned Sinharaja World Heritage Site, one of the last refuges for Sri Lanka's extremely diverse tropical fauna and flora. We started badly, with a no-show for Ceylon Spurfowl, as we were foiled by a woman washing clothes at a stream! Further up the road however, we were soon satisfying ourselves with nice views of White-faced Starling, Ceylon Hill-Myna, and Layard's Parakeet, as they embraced the early morning sunshine. We set off along the old track to the research station. It wasn't long before a Ceylon Blue Magpie could be heard giving a thin high call from the forest depths. Eventually, a family party including two fledged young crossed the track. A rather shy Ceylon Woodpigeon was seen by the lucky few. Further along, we had our first views of Malabar Trogon in the occasional small bird-waves. Numerous colourful butterflies flitted along the track-side, including the tissue-like Ceylon Tree Nymph, and we encountered a number of wacky Sri Lankan Kangaroo Lizards. Our obligatory park guide pointed out an impressive large tree-snail, *Acavus superbus*. During a break at the research station, I noticed our local guide Upali looking at me with an odd smug expression, and was more than a little pleased when he told me that a guide had found us the Serendib Scops-owl roosting! We immediately made a beeline for the spot, with the rain-clouds already gathering again, and rain threatening. We weaved our way through the sapling understorey, and soon had one of a snoozing pair of these amazing little owls in the scope. An overwhelming sense of wonder and relief ensued, and then a heavy downpour which sent us scurrying back for shelter. Further entertainment was provided by a tame Sri Lanka Keelback Water Snake hunting fish (which were first attracted by crumbs from our box-lunches) in a small pool right in front of us. After the rain ceased, we were able to get a much clearer view of the owls. Heading back to the research station once more, it wasn't long before we picked up a large bird-wave which contained two of our main target-species here, Red-faced Malkoha and Ashy-headed Laughingthrush. On our way out of the reserve, we stopped to scope-up a male Ceylon Frogmouth sitting on his nest above the road; apparently it held a small chick that had recently hatched.

Our second day at the reserve began with *dèja vu*, and a repeat failure to see Ceylon Spurfowl. A change of plan was called for. Planting ourselves on a ridge-top in the forest, we located some spurfowl giving occasional calls, and apparently loosely following a large bird-wave. Some careful positioning, and a fair bit of patience, resulted in most of us at least seeing the female pottering across a small trail, while some actually saw colour on the male and female - almost unheard of! We had more looks at Malabar Trogon and Ashy-headed Laughingthrush in this bird-wave, and another Ceylon Woodpigeon appeared briefly. Paying another visit to the research station, we had multiple sightings of Red-faced Malkoha, Ashy-headed Laughingthrush and Ceylon Blue Magpie, and a female Besra zipped by. The rain started early for a change, and we were lucky to make it to a house by the

entrance gate, before the track became a river, and the paddyfields opposite, a lake! Upali arranged for some welcome tea and Jagiri (a local sweet made from fishtail palm flower syrup). We headed back to Ratnapura, stopping to check an area of paddyfields and gardens along the way. Upali said that this was a good spot for munias and indeed, it wasn't that long before we were watching Black-throated amongst the White-rumped and Scaly-breasted. A Layard's Parakeet also sat up very obligingly at close range.

A late breakfast on the following morning was followed by a little birding around Ratnaloka Inn. Another two Indian Pittas showed briefly, but best of all, we had our first views of the colourful Ceylon Small Barbet. Leaving the Wet Zone behind, we drove down to Embilipitiya in the Dry Zone, our base for sorties into the marvellous Uda Walawe National Park. Before lunch we scanned Chandrika Wewa, a large lake adjacent to our hotel grounds, where interesting birds included our first Spot-billed Pelicans and Yellow-wattled Lapwings, as well as all three species of cormorant and a scattering of shorebirds. After lunch we headed off for the first of two safari rides in Uda Walawe NP. But before we got on the bus, the driver showed us a roosting pair of Indian Scops-owls that he had located for us! Steady rain dampened our spirits again, but it eased-off and then stopped as we arrived at the park. The habitat in this beautiful park is very reminiscent of East Africa, and supports extensive areas of non-native grassland. This is a superb place to see Asian Elephant, and we encountered over 40, during our two visits. Prinias seem to be in their element in this habitat, with Jungle and Ashy being most notable, and there were the usual flocks of Tricoloured (or Black-headed) Munias. This year however, they were outnumbered by Indian Silverbills. By the dirt roads themselves, we flushed numerous Barred Buttonquails, and had close views of both the resident Jerdon's Bushlark and wintering Blyth's Pipit. Several Sirkeer Malkohas, Jacobin (or Pied) and Grey-bellied Cuckoos, a pair of Yellow-fronted Pied Woodpeckers, and Ceylon Woodshrike (a recent split from Common) also performed, and other highlights in the park included some very tame Crested Hawk-eagles, resplendent Indian Peafowl, Orange-breasted Green-pigeon, and Malabar Pied Hornbill. Close to 'the rock', our park guide pointed-out a roosting pair of Brown Fish-owls, which we eventually pieced together. Chris found Lesser Whitethroat, supposedly a vagrant to this part of Sri Lanka. Our second jeep ride on the following morning was less eventful, but we did all get superb views of a pair of Barred Buttonquails feeding on the track in front of our vehicle, and there were several Lesser Adjutants and Woolly-necked Storks. Upali attracted a pair of White-rumped Shammas with a gifted imitation.

Leaving Uda Walawe behind, we continued on to Tissamaharama (Tissa'), stopping to eat our lunch by the lagoons at Hambantota. A variety of shorebirds occupied our time here, but the fact that the entire area was being turned into a port, was somewhat depressing. On the way to our hotel, we stopped at Werawila, and admired some roosting Indian Stone-curlews, Yellow Bittern and a roosting mixed huddle of Whiskered, White-winged and Little Terns. After a break, we visited a couple more wetland sites. There were the usual Pheasant-tailed Jacanas in breeding plumage, some breeding Indian Shags and Great Egrets with fancy plumes, and Paul got us all onto a perched Black Bittern. Just before dark, a tip-off from a local man enabled us to get nice views of a female White-naped Flameback.

The next morning we left the hotel in the dark, so that we could find Jerdon's Nightjar on the way to Bundala National Park. However, not only was it raining again, but a horny bull Asian Elephant, that was making advances towards another animal, was entirely blocking the road. Luckily we found the nightjar close by, but had to settle for rather less satisfactory views than usual. After devouring our box breakfasts at the entrance gate, we headed off in our jeeps through the beautiful *Manilkara hexandra* woodland and dry thorny scrubland that characterise Bundala, stopping at various shallow pools and, in particular, the saltworks. Here we found an excellent variety of shorebirds under easy viewing conditions. Small Pratincoles had a two-egg nest right by the jeep-track, while other good waders included Great Thick-knee and Red-necked Phalarope. A roosting tern-flock consisted of Caspian, Gull-billed, both Lesser and Great Crested, and the smaller Little and Whiskered, all

huddled together. Around the various pools we found mixed groups of Painted Storks, Eurasian Spoonbills and Spot-billed Pelicans hoovering-up fish, we had close looks at a Pintail Snipe, and some reed-beds held a very obliging Indian Reed-warbler. A pair of Blue-faced Malkohas appeared on cue, but managed to slip-away largely unseen. Primates were much in evidence, with two endemics, Toque Macaque and Tufted Grey Langur.

From Tissa', we headed for the foothills, and then skirted east to the little-visited town of Bibile. Yes, it rained again, but after a fairly brief turn-around in our latest hotel, we headed off down the road to look for our target-birds in the beautiful Nilgala Medicinal Forest. Not far down the road, our assistant driver piped-up and, perched close to the bus, were a pair of Jungle Owlets, presumably not far from their nest-site. After sunset, the rain briefly stopped, just giving us time to tape-out a pair of Indian Jungle Nightjars, the male obligingly perching on an exposed dead branch until I could get the scope on it. The following morning found us back in the same area, this time concentrating on trying to see the bird that makes this area well known to birders, Painted Francolin. A male answered the tape almost immediately, and after a few minutes, he broke cover, gliding over us to one side, and then arcing around and pitching into the tall grass on the other side of the road. Try as we might for the next 90 minutes or so, we just couldn't get another view, *C'est la vie*. After breakfast at the hotel, we headed back up into the hills once more.

Before our arrival at Nuwara Eliya we spent some time at Hakgala Waterfall, in the hope of getting our first views of the elusive Ceylon Whistling-thrush. We were out of luck in this respect, but did see our first of many Dusky Blue Flycatchers. The next morning, we made a predawn start for Horton Plains National Park. Things seemed to be going according to plan, until one of our vehicles went into a roadside ditch, and from then on, things went from bad to worse. We all piled into the other mini-bus, which was a tight squeeze, and continued up to the park entrance gate. Once inside the park it was a short distance to the famous Arrenga Pool. Arriving just after dawn, there was unfortunately no sign of the whistling-thrush. Everything else that we wanted to see was on show though, with Ceylon Woodpigeon, Yellow-eared Bulbul, Indian Blackbird, Ceylon Bush-warbler, and Ceylon White-eye all showing really well, and we were even lucky enough to see a very confiding Eurasian Otter (represented here by an endemic race) hunting along the edges of the pool right in front of us. It was even visible below the clear waters. A male Kashmir Flycatcher put in a brief appearance and then it started to rain once more. We drove to the Park Café and had some tea and snacks, while we waited for the rain to ease. A tame Sambar kept us amused. Returning to the pool later on, the two leaders got out of the vehicles to listen for whistling-thrushes while it was still raining. Suddenly a female was there calling at close range, but by the time the group arrived, it had already vanished without a trace! We hung around for a while longer, admiring some white-flowered Austral Lady's-tresses *Spiranthes sinensis*, and getting more views of the otter. A little uphill, we were treated to great views of another endemic bird, this time the impressive Crimson-backed Flameback. Concluding that our luck was out with the whistling-thrush, we headed back down to Nuwara Eliya, stopping to look at a pair of Hill Swallows preening on a telegraph wire. After lunch we paid a quick visit to Victoria Park. This proved very fruitful, with excellent views of two superb male Pied Ground-thrushes, several Forest Wagtails, and two more Indian Pittas. The rest of the evening consisted of a fruitless wait for Ceylon Whistling-thrush at Hakgala. All we had to show for our efforts there, was a bathing Kashmir Flycatcher. Most of our final morning in the Nuwara Eliya area was spent back up at Horton Plains, hoping for a glimpse of the whistling-thrush. The weather was misty and wet, and birds few and far between. A white epiphytic orchid, *Eria bicolor*, was all that stood-out from the gloom.

Our last stop on the tour was Kandy, Sri Lanka's cultural centre. After check-in at our hotel some of us paid a visit to the famed Temple of the (Buddha's) Tooth. Our last morning was spent birding in the nearby Udawattekelle Sanctuary. Here, we were able to catch-up with a few species that had not previously been seen by the whole group, notably the endemic Ceylon Small Barbet, which is quite common here. Other goodies during our last mornings birding included flight views of Black-backed Dwarf Kingfisher, some courting Layard's Parakeets, two superb male Indian Blue Robins, several

Large-billed Leaf-warblers, a Black-throated Munia (unusual here), and plenty of Lesser Hill-Mynas. The trees bordering the lake outside our hotel thronged with good numbers of breeding cormorants, egrets, and pond-herons, as well as thousands of roosting Indian Flying Foxes, and left us with a feeling of hope.

SYSTEMATIC LIST

Species which were heard but not seen are indicated by the symbol (H).

Species which were not personally recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (NL).

PODICIPEDIDAE

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*: Small numbers around Tissa'.

PELECANIDAE

Spot-billed Pelican *Pelecanus philippensis*: Regularly seen in the Dry Zone, with a maximum of 60 in Bundala National Park.

PHALACROCORACIDAE

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*: The scarcest of the three cormorants in Sri Lanka.

Little Cormorant *Phalacrocorax niger*: The commonest and most widespread cormorant during the tour.

Indian Shag (I Cormorant) *Phalacrocorax fuscicollis*: Still a common site in Sri Lanka, particularly in the Dry Zone. At least ten pairs were seen with young in their nests by the lake in Kandy.

ANHINGIDAE

Oriental Darter *Anhinga melanogaster*: Generally found in small numbers, but 60 at Bundala National Park was an unusually high count.

ARDEIDAE

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*: Generally small numbers, but commonly seen in the Tissa' area.

Great Egret *Egretta alba*: Generally small numbers, but commonly seen in the Tissa' area. A few, with their spectacular plumes, were on nests in the Tissa' area and at Kandy.

Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia*: Seven in the Tissa' area.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*: Fairly common in the Tissa' area.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*: Fairly common in the Tissa' area.

Eastern Cattle Egret *Bubulcus coromandus*: This recent split was very common and widespread.

Indian Pond-heron *Ardeola grayii*: Common and widespread.

Striated Heron (Little H) *Butorides striata*: Eight were seen well at Hambantota and Bundala NP.

Black-crowned Night-heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*: Small numbers in the Dry Zone and at the lake in Kandy.

Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis*: Some excellent close views of these in the Tissa' area; seven in total.

Black Bittern *Dupetor flavicollis*: Good views of one perched at Debera Wewa, and another briefly at the Airport Garden Hotel.

CICONIIDAE

Painted Stork *Mycteria leucocephala*: Good numbers this time in the Dry Zone, with maxima of 80 counted at both Uda Walawe and Bundala NP's.

Asian Openbill *Anastomus oscitans*: Relatively small numbers, mainly in cultivated areas of the Dry Zone.

Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus*: Six were seen at Bundala NP.

Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilos javanicus*: Three of these ugly big storks at Uda Walawe.

THRESKIORNITHIDAE

Black-headed Ibis *Threskiornis melanocephalus*: Only small numbers in the Tissa' area this year.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*: Good numbers in the Dry Zone national parks, with maxima of 25 at Uda Walawe NP and 50 at Bundala NP.

ANATIDAE

Lesser Whistling-duck *Dendrocygna javanica*: Fairly common on the well-vegetated tanks around Tissa'.

Garganey *Anas querquedula*: At least 150 at Hambantota, and 300 at Bundala saltworks.

ACCIPITRIDAE

Oriental Honey-buzzard (Crested H-B) *Pernis ptilorhyncus*: Great views of one seen demolishing a small hornet nest, in a rubber plantation near Kitulgala. Another was seen on the way to Ratnapura.

Black-winged Kite (B-shouldered K) *Elanus caeruleus*: Common at Uda Walawe NP.

Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus*: Seen at scattered locations throughout.

White-bellied Sea-eagle (W-b Fish-Eagle) *Haliaeetus leucogaster*: Similarly distributed to the last species, with a high count of 11 at Uda Walawe NP.

Crested Serpent-eagle *Spilornis cheela*: The small endemic race *spilogaster* was regularly recorded throughout.

Crested Goshawk *Accipiter trivirgatus* (NL): Some of us managed to see one perched briefly at Kitulgala Resthouse.

Shikra *Accipiter badius*: Occasional scattered sightings in marginal areas, particularly of juveniles.

Besra *Accipiter virgatus*: Singles were seen in flight at Kelani FR and Sinharaja World Heritage Site.

Black Eagle *Ictinaetus malayensis*: Two at Kelani FR and another at Sinharaja. Adie also counted five on the way to Nuwara Eliya from Bibile.

Crested Hawk-eagle *Spizaetus cirrhatus*: In the Dry Zone, we had some superb close encounters with this attractive eagle. Another was seen at a nest between Ratnapura and Embilipitiya. This species is only found in India and Sri Lanka, and is represented here by the endemic race *ceylanensis*.

FALCONIDAE

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*: Two or three wintering birds at Uda Walawe NP.

PHASIANIDAE

Painted Francolin *Francolinus pictus*: Although we quickly located a calling bird at Nilgala Medicinal Forest, we really had our work cut-out trying to see it amongst the tall grasses. A good flight view was the best we could manage. Another was heard. This declining Indian subcontinent endemic is represented in Sri Lanka by the endemic race *watsoni*.

Ceylon Spurfowl (Sri Lanka S) *Galloperdix bicalcarata*: Endemic species. A really difficult species to see with a group, despite its noisy nature. We fared much better this year than on recent tours, with most of us at least getting on to one bird of a pair that were following a bird-wave at Sinharaja.

Ceylon Junglefowl (Sri Lanka J) *Gallus lafayetii*: Endemic species. Regularly seen well and heard throughout the tour. Several broods of small chicks were with females

Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus*: This Indian subcontinent endemic was widespread and common in the Dry Zone, though most males were moulting their train, and only a couple were still displaying. Four small chicks were seen at Bundala NP.

TURNICIDAE

Barred Buttonquail *Turnix suscitator*: At least 20 birds at Uda Walawe NP, including superb views of a pair in front of our jeep. Also heard at Nilgala MF. Voted second favourite bird of the trip! The territorial call sounds rather like a distant motorcycle, quite unlike the calls given by the group of races that occur in the north of the Indian subcontinent and into South-East Asia. The local race is the endemic *leggei*.

RALLIDAE

White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus*: A common and widespread species in Sri Lanka. Chicks were seen at Sinharaja and in the Tissa' area.

Watercock *Gallicrex cinerea*: Upali briefly saw one in flight near Tissa'.

Grey-headed Swamphen (G-h Gallinule) *Porphyrio poliocephalus*: About 65 birds on the well-vegetated tanks around Tissa', including three recently fledged chicks at a nest. This species is a recent split from Purple Swamphen *P. porphyrio*.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*: Small numbers in the Tissa' area, and another heard at the Airport Garden Hotel.

JACANIDAE

Pheasant-tailed Jacana *Hydrophasianus chirurgus*: Common around Tissa' and Hambantota, with over 50 seen. Many birds were in full breeding plumage and heard giving their strange calls.

CHARADRIIDAE

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*: Just two at Bundala NP.

Grey Plover (Black-bellied P) *Pluvialis squatarola*: Two at Hambantota, and four at Bundala.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*: Small numbers in the Hambantota/Tissa' area.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*: We saw at least 12 at Hambantota, and 100 at Bundala Saltworks.

Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius atrifrons*: One of the commonest shorebirds in the south, with at least 70 seen.

Yellow-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus malabaricus*: Widespread in the Dry Zone, but in small numbers. A subcontinent endemic, apart from two vagrants in South-east Asia.

Red-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus*: Common and widespread. The endemic race *lankae*.

Pintail Snipe *Gallinago stenura*: Just a single bird seen at close range at Bundala NP.

Eurasian Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*: One at Bundala NP.

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*: Two at Bundala.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*: Good numbers at southern wetlands and near the Airport Garden Hotel.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*: Relatively small numbers.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*: One of the more widespread waders in the south.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*: Two singles at Uda Walawe NP and another at Bundala.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*: A few at scattered sites in the south.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*: Regularly recorded in small numbers throughout, with a maximum of 19 coming to roost near the Airport Garden Hotel.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*: Only eight at Bundala.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*: Four at Uda Walawe NP, and at least 50 at both Hambantota and Bundala.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*: 30 at Hambantota, and at least 120 at Bundala.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*: Two were found with other shorebirds at Bundala Saltworks.

RECURVIROSTRIDAE

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*: Common at Dry Zone wetlands, particularly in the Tissa' area. One bird of a pair (the female) at Bundala NP, that showed characteristics of White-headed or Australian Stilt *H. leucocephalus* was a scarce variant.

PHALAROPODIDAE

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*: Three at Bundala Saltworks, a regular winter spot for the species. Always a joy to see.

BURHINIDAE

Indian Stone-curlew (I Thick-knee) *Burhinus indicus*: Three at Werawila and four at Bundala NP. This is a recent split from Eurasian Stone-Curlew *B. oedicnemus*.

Great Thick-knee *Esacus recurvirostris*: We counted about 12 of these excellent birds in the Bundala area.

GLAREOLIDAE

Small Pratincole *Glareola lactea*: Are luck was in with this beautiful wee pratincole at Bundala Saltworks, where we had great views of at least 10 resting on the dry banks and also in flight, showing their very striking wing pattern. One pair had a nest with two eggs, precariously close to the main access track.

LARIDAE

Brown-headed Gull *Larus brunnicephalus*: Twenty at Bundala.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*: At least 20 in the Hambantota/Tissa' area.

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*: 20 at Bundala Saltworks.

Lesser Crested Tern *Thalasseus bengalensis*: Ten at Bundala Saltworks, in company with the next species.

Great Crested Tern (Greater C T) *Thalasseus bergii*: At least 50 were counted at Bundala Saltworks.

Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*: Very common this year in the Tissa' area, with nearly 300 noted.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*: The commonest tern throughout, with maxima of 500 at Uda Walawe and in the Tissa' area, and 100 at Bundala.

White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*: A single at Hambantota, at least 30 at Werawila, and four at Bundala.

COLUMBIDAE

Rock Pigeon (R Dove) *Columba livia*: Regular on our travels as usual.

Ceylon Woodpigeon (Sri Lanka W) *Columba torringtoni*: Endemic species. We had rather brief views of one or two at Sinharaja WHS, and later, much more satisfactory perched views at Horton Plains NP.

Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis*: Common throughout. The endemic race *ceylonensis*.

Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps indica*: Seen particularly well at Kelani FR. Endemic *robinsoni*.

Orange-breasted Green-pigeon *Treron bicinctus*: Seen well, though only in small numbers, at Uda Walawe and Bundala NP's. The endemic race *leggei*.

Ceylon Green-pigeon (Sri Lanka G-P) *Treron pompadora*: Endemic species. Small numbers at scattered locations. The former Pompadour Green-Pigeon *T. pompadora*, has now been calved-up into several distinct species.

Green Imperial-pigeon *Ducula aenea*: Frequently recorded throughout.

PSITTACIDAE

Ceylon Hanging-parrot (Sri Lanka H-P) *Loriculus beryllinus*: Endemic species. One of the more numerous of the endemics, often seen zapping overhead at high speed. Great perched views were also had, particularly at Kelani River FR.

Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria*: Small numbers at scattered locations.

Rose-ringed Parakeet (Ring-necked P) *Psittacula krameri*: Particularly common in the Dry Zone parks and around Tissa'.

Plum-headed Parakeet *Psittacula cyanocephala*: Just one near Sinharaja, and another at Uda Walawe NP. Another poor year for this Indian subcontinent endemic.

Layard's Parakeet *Psittacula calthropae*: Endemic species. A good tour for this species, with regular sightings.

CUCULIDAE

- Green-billed Coucal *Centropus chlororhynchos*: Endemic species. We eventually all obtained excellent views of two at Kelani FR.
- Greater Coucal *Centropus sinensis*: Regular sightings throughout.
- Sirkeer Malkoha *Taccocua leschenaultii*: This species well at Uda Walawe NP, with at least four seen. Endemic to the Indian subcontinent.
- Red-faced Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus pyrrhocephalus*: Endemic species. At least two pairs of this strikingly-marked cuckoo were located in bird-waves at Sinharaja. It can be one of the harder endemics to find.
- Blue-faced Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus viridirostris*: Typically elusive, in Dry Zone bush country. Just two were seen very fleetingly at Bundala NP. Only found in southern India and Sri Lanka.
- Chestnut-winged Cuckoo *Clamator coromandus*: A single bird was seen by some of us, in one of the bird-waves at Sinharaja.
- Jacobin Cuckoo (Pied C) *Clamator jacobinus*: Scattered Dry Zone sightings.
- Asian Koel (Common K) *Eudynamis scolopaceus*: Frequently heard and seen throughout.
- Banded Bay Cuckoo *Cacomantis sonneratii*: Nice perched views of a calling bird at Nilgala MF.
- Grey-bellied Cuckoo *Cacomantis passerinus*: At least five in the Dry Zone reserves, where it parasitizes cisticolas, prinias and tailorbirds, including an hepatic morph female. A near subcontinent endemic, just extending into N Myanmar.
- Fork-tailed Drongo-cuckoo *Surniculus [lugubris] dicruroides* (H): This provisional split from Drongo (or Square-tailed Drongo) Cuckoo was heard at Nilgala MF. The form is restricted to peninsular India and Sri Lanka, though specimens are reported from the Himalayan foothills.
- Indian Cuckoo *Cuculus micropterus* (H): One was calling loudly while we stalked the Painted Francolin at Nilgala MF.

STRIGIDAE

- Serendib Scops-owl *Otus thilohoffmanni*: Endemic species. We were very fortunate to be shown a roosting pair of these enigmatic birds at Sinharaja. Few people have so far had the good fortune to see this relative of the Sundaic Reddish Scops Owl *O. rufescens*, as it was only discovered in January 2001. Voted favourite bird of the tour.
- Indian Scops-owl *Otus bakkamoena*: A beautiful pair were seen at their daytime roost at the Centauria Tourist Hotel. Collared Scops-Owl *O. lempiji* of South-East Asia is now generally treated as a separate species, leaving Indian as a subcontinent endemic.
- Brown Fish-owl *Bubo zeylonensis*: A well-shaded roosting pair was shown to us at Uda Walawe NP.
- Jungle Owlet *Glaucidium radiatum*: A roosting pair were seen well on the outskirts of Bibile, and another pair were calling loudly at the Painted francolin site. Probably a subcontinent endemic, with only old doubtful records from Myanmar.
- Chestnut-backed Owlet *Glaucidium castanonotum*: Endemic species. Two at Kelani River FR, including superb scope views of one near its nest-hole, and another at Sinharaja.
- Brown Hawk-owl (B Boobook) *Ninox scutulata*: We had excellent views of a pair that emerged before it was fully dark, albeit in the rain, at Atweltota.

PODARGIDAE

- Ceylon Frogmouth (Sri Lanka F) *Batrachostomus moniliger*: A female showed very nicely predawn, in a rubber plantation near Kitulgala, and we saw a male on the nest (which apparently contained a recently hatched chick) at Sinharaja WHS. Only found in south India and Sri Lanka.

CAPRIMULGIDAE

Indian Jungle Nightjar (Jungle N) *Caprimulgus indicus*: At Nilgala Medicinal Forest, we had scope views of a perched male and good flight views of a female. This Indian subcontinent endemic is a recent split from the more widespread Grey Nightjar, which is now called *Caprimulgus jotaka*.

Jerdon's Nightjar *Caprimulgus atripennis*: Due to a horny male Asian Elephant blocking the road, and poor weather, we only had rather brief views of a calling male near the entrance to Bundala NP. Another two were heard here, and two more at Nilgala MF. The local race, *aequabilis*, is endemic. The species only occurs in south India and Sri Lanka.

APODIDAE

Indian Swiftlet *Aerodramus unicolor*: Regularly seen in good numbers. Only found in south-west India and Sri Lanka.

Asian Palm-Swift *Cypsiurus balasiensis*: Smaller numbers at widespread locations.

Little Swift *Apus affinis*: Only seen at Ratnaloka Inn, where there was an occupied nest, and at Kandy.

HEMIPROCINIDAE

Crested Treeswift *Hemiprocne coronata*: Small numbers in the Dry Zone reserves, where we had perched views.

TROGONIDAE

Malabar Trogon *Harpactes fasciatus*: Confined to southern India and Sri Lanka. This handsome forest bird, which only occurs in southern India and Sri Lanka, was seen well at Sinharaja. This is the endemic nominate race.

ALCEDINIDAE

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*: Small numbers at scattered locations.

Black-backed Dwarf Kingfisher (B-b Kingfisher) *Ceyx erithaca*: Adie saw one in flight at Kitulgala Resthouse, and we had brief flight views of another at Udawattekelle Sanctuary.

Stork-billed Kingfisher *Pelargopsis capensis*: Singles were seen at Hambantota, Udawattekelle, and the Airport Garden Hotel. Heard at Kelani River FR.

White-throated Kingfisher (White-breasted K) *Halcyon smyrnensis*: Typically common throughout.

Lesser Pied Kingfisher (Pied K) *Ceryle rudis*: Two at Bundala Saltworks.

MEROPIIDAE

Little Green Bee-eater (Green B-e) *Merops orientalis*: Common in the Dry Zone parks, often resting on the track ahead of our jeeps. A little beauty, represented here by the endemic race *ceylonicus*.

Blue-tailed Bee-eater *Merops philippinus*: Regularly recorded throughout.

Chestnut-headed Bee-eater *Merops leschenaulti*: Small numbers of this beautiful bee-eater at scattered locations.

CORACIIDAE

Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis*: Small numbers in the Dry Zone.

UPUPIDAE

Common Hoopoe (Eurasian H) *Upupa epops*: Just two at Bundala.

BUCEROTIDAE

Ceylon Grey Hornbill (Sri Lanka G H) *Ocyrceros gingalensis*: Endemic species. Regular sightings this year, from Kitulgala to Bibile.

Malabar Pied Hornbill *Anthracoceros coronatus*: A male and female of this Indian subcontinent endemic showed very nicely at Uda Walawe.

CAPITONIDAE

Brown-headed Barbet *Megalaima zeylanica*: Regular sightings of this Indian subcontinent endemic throughout. One was seen repeatedly entering its nest-hole at Kitulgala Resthouse.

Yellow-fronted Barbet *Megalaima flavifrons*: Endemic species. One of the commonest and most widespread endemics. One was seen repeatedly entering its nest-hole at Kelani River FR.

Ceylon Small Barbet (Crimson-fronted B) *Megalaima rubricapillus*: Endemic species. This handsome little barbet was seen very well in the scope at Udawattekelle. Earlier, we had seen one at Ratnaloka Inn. Voted equal fourth favourite bird of the trip.

Coppersmith Barbet *Megalaima haemacephala*: Up to eight were seen at Uda Walawe NP.

PICIDAE

Yellow-fronted Pied Woodpecker (Y-crowned W) *Picoides mahrattensis*: Great views of three at Uda Walawe NP.

Rufous Woodpecker *Micropternus brachyurus*: One was heard, and seen briefly at Kelani River FR.

Lesser Yellownape *Picus chlorolophus*: Small numbers of the highly distinctive local race, *wellsi*, at Kelani FR and Sinharaja WHS.

Black-rumped Flameback *Dinopium benghalense*: Frequent sightings of red-backed, endemic *psarodes*. A near subcontinent endemic species, just extending into SW Myanmar.

Crimson-backed Flameback (Sri Lanka F) *Chrysocolaptes stricklandi*: Endemic species. We were very lucky to have great views of three feeding birds near the Arrenga Pool at Horton Plains NP. Voted third favourite bird of the tour.

White-naped Flameback (W-n Woodpecker) *Chrysocolaptes festivus*: A female showed nicely at the traditional site near Debera Wewa. A number of the favourite trees were recently cut down, and it was feared that the birds would change their behaviour. The local race of this Indian subcontinent endemic is *tantus*, which is somewhat more heavily marked with black than the nominate race.

PITTIDAE

Indian Pitta *Pitta brachyura*: Sri Lanka is the best place to see this attractive wintering subcontinent endemic. We had great views of several birds throughout the tour.

ALAUDIDAE

Jerdon's Bushlark *Mirafra affinis*: Common at Uda Walawe NP and also seen at Nilgala MF. This is a fairly recent split from Rufous-winged (now Bengal) Bushlark. An Indian subcontinent endemic.

Oriental Skylark *Alauda gulgula*: Six at Bundala Saltworks.

Ashy-crowned Finch-Lark (A-c Sparrow-Lark) *Eremopterix grisea*: We found reasonable numbers of these attractive little larks in the Dry Zone, with a maximum of 12 counted at Bundala Saltworks. Endemic to the Indian subcontinent.

HIRUNDINIDAE

Common Sand-martin (Sand Martin, Bank Swallow) *Riparia riparia*: Two were seen with Barn Swallows at Bundala NP.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*: Common throughout.

Hill Swallow *Hirundo domicola*: This recent split from Pacific (now House) Swallow *H. tahitica* is only found in south-west India and Sri Lanka. Two were seen on the way back to Nuwara Eliya from Horton Plains.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*: About 30 wintering birds at Uda Walawe.

Ceylon Swallow (Sri Lanka S) *Hirundo hyperythra*: Endemic species. This beautiful endemic was seen at widespread localities.

MOTACILLIDAE

Forest Wagtail *Dendronanthus indicus*: We had great looks at about five birds in Victoria Park, Nuwara Eliya.

Grey-headed Wagtail *Motacilla [flava] thunbergi*: Scattered sightings, notably at least 60 heading for a roost at the Airport Garden Hotel.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*: Small numbers at scattered locations.

Paddyfield Pipit *Anthus rufulus*: Four in the Tissa' area and eight at Horton Plains NP.

Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii*: Up to 15 at Uda Walawe NP, a wintering area for this little-known species.

CAMPEPHAGIDAE

Large Cuckooshrike *Coracina macei*: A female showed nicely at Kelani River FR.

Black-headed Cuckooshrike *Coracina melanoptera*: Single males of this striking cuckooshrike were seen at Kelani FR, Ratnaloka Inn, and Bibile. A near subcontinent endemic, just extending into SW and W Myanmar.

Small Minivet *Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*: Small numbers in the Dry Zone.

Orange Minivet *Pericrocotus flammeus*: Regularly recorded at forested Wet Zone sites. This is now a different species from Scarlet Minivet *P. speciosus* of the northern Indian subcontinent through South-East Asia, and is a subcontinent endemic.

Pied Flycatcher-shrike (Bar-winged F-S) *Hemipus picatus*: Small numbers in the Bibile area, and at Udawattekelle. A pair were feeding a recently fledged juvenile at the latter location. Endemic *leggei*.

Ceylon Woodshrike (Sri Lanka W) *Tephrodornis affinis*: Endemic species. Two at both Uda Walawe and Bundala NP's. Recently split from Common Woodshrike *T. pondicerianus*.

MONARCHIDAE

Asian Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi*: Many seen, including some banner-tailed white males. The endemic race *ceylonensis*.

Black-naped Blue Monarch (B-n Monarch) *Hypothymis azurea*: Regularly seen in the Wet Zone. Endemic *ceylonensis*.

RHIPIDURIDAE

White-browed Fantail *Rhipidura aureola*: Small numbers at scattered locations.

PYCNONOTIDAE

Black-capped Bulbul *Pycnonotus melanicterus*: Endemic species. Absolutely unlike the widespread Black-crested Bulbul, with which it was formerly lumped. Seen at Kelani River FR and Sinharaja.

Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer*: Very common. The endemic race *haemorrhousus*.

Yellow-eared Bulbul *Pycnonotus penicillatus*: Endemic species. This highly distinctive and attractive montane bulbul was seen at several localities in the Nuwara Eliya area.

White-browed Bulbul *Pycnonotus luteolus*: Small numbers of this skulker were found in scrubby Dry Zone habitats. Only found in the Indian subcontinent, and represented here by the endemic race *insulae*.

Yellow-browed Bulbul *Hypsipetes indica*: Common in the Wet Zone forests. Only found in south-west India and Sri Lanka.

Square-tailed Black Bulbul *Hypsipetes ganeesa*: The endemic race *humii*, of this recent split from Himalayan Black Bulbul *H. leucocephalus*, was regularly seen in the Wet Zone. Only found in south-west India and Sri Lanka.

AEGITHINIDAE

Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia*: Scattered sightings, including two superb males in full breeding plumage.

CHLOROPSEIDAE

Gold-fronted Leafbird (Golden-f L) *Chloropsis aurifrons*: Scattered sightings.

Jerdon's Leafbird *Chloropsis jerdoni*: One showed rather briefly at Kelani River FR. This is another Indian subcontinent endemic, recently split-off from Blue-winged Leafbird *C. cochinchinensis*.

LANIIDAE

Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*: Surprisingly common in Sri Lanka. Several grey-crowned *lucionensis* were noted.

TURDIDAE

Pied Ground-thrush (Pied T) *Zoothera wardii*: One of the most stunning birds seen on the trip. Two males were seen well in Victoria Park at Nuwara Eliya, and another at nearby Bomuruella. A high Himalayan breeder and Indian subcontinent endemic.

Spot-winged Ground-thrush (Spot-winged T) *Zoothera spiloptera*: Endemic species. At least nine of these wonderful songsters were seen in the Wet Zone forests.

Indian Blackbird (Nilgiri B) *Turdus simillimus*: Another recently split thrush, this time endemic to the southern Indian subcontinent. We were very fortunate to see two of these highly elusive thrushes in the Nuwara Eliya area, including a male in the scope. The endemic race *kinnisii* is actually dark bluish-slate (not black), with reddish-orange bill and orbital skin.

Ceylon Whistling-thrush (Sri Lanka W-T) *Myophonus blighi*: Endemic species. A female called and appeared briefly in the rain at the Arrenga Pool, Horton Plains NP, but was unfortunately missed by the entire group!

MUSCICAPIDAE

Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica*: Odd singles of this winter visitor were found in the Wet Zone.

Brown-breasted Flycatcher *Muscicapa muttui*: Regularly seen in the Wet Zone forests. Usually perches much lower down than Asian Brown, and inside the forest.

Kashmir Flycatcher *Muscicapa subrubra*: A male appeared briefly by the Arrenga Pool at Horton Plains, and a female-type bird was seen bathing at Hakgala waterfall.

Dusky Blue Flycatcher (Dull Blue F) *Muscicapa sordidus*: Endemic species. Regularly seen in the Nuwara Eliya area.

Tickell's Blue Flycatcher *Muscicapa tickelliae*: Small numbers in the Wet Zone. A nest with three eggs was found at Kelani River FR. The local race is the distinctive endemic *ferdoni*, a potential split.

Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher *Culicicapa ceylonensis*: Odd birds in the Nuwara Eliya area and at Udawattekelle.

Indian Blue Robin *Erithacus brunnea*: At least six were seen during the tour, including males scoped at Kelani River FR and Udawattekelle. A winter visitor from the Himalayas.

Oriental Magpie-Robin *Copsychus saularis*: Frequently recorded throughout.

White-rumped Shama *Copsychus malabaricus*: Good views of a pair at Uda Walawe, and two males at Udawattekelle. Upali did a superb imitation of the species. This is the endemic *leggei* subspecies. Voted fifth favourite bird of the tour.

Indian Black Robin (Indian R, Black-backed R) *Saxicoloides fulicatus*: Common in the Dry Zone. The local race, *leucoptera*, along with *fulicata* of S India, has glossy blue-black upperparts, unlike the northern races, which are brown above. Only found in the Indian subcontinent.

Pied Bushchat *Saxicola caprata*: Locally common in the Nuwara Eliya area. Endemic *atrata*.

TIMALIIDAE

- Ashy-headed Laughingthrush *Garrulax cinereifrons*: Endemic species. A total of up to 30 in the Sinharaja bird-waves.
- Brown-capped Babbler *Pellorneum fuscicapillus*: Endemic species. Three in the Kitulgala area, and another at Sinharaja. The subspecies is *scortillum*.
- Ceylon Scimitar-Babbler (Sri Lanka S-B) *Pomatorhinus melanurus*: Endemic species. Small numbers were seen in the Wet Zone forests, including a fantastic tame pair at Kelani River FR. The nominate race. Voted equal fourth favourite bird of the tour.
- Tawny-bellied Babbler *Dumetia hyperythra*: Several small flocks in the Dry Zone. The endemic white-throated race *phillipsi*, of this subcontinent endemic.
- Dark-fronted Babbler *Rhopocichla atriceps*: Confined to southern India and Sri Lanka. We saw small numbers of the endemic race *nigrifrons* at Kelani River FR, and Sinharaja,.
- Yellow-eyed Babbler *Chrysomma sinense*: Frequent in the Dry Zone, with one at Ratnaloka Inn, and up to 18 at Uda Walawe NP. Endemic *nasale*.
- Ceylon Rufous Babbler (Orange-billed B) *Turdoides rufescens*: Endemic species. Several flocks were encountered at Kelani River FR and Sinharaja.
- Yellow-billed Babbler *Turdoides affinis*: The endemic subspecies *taprobanus*, of this southern Indian subcontinent endemic, was common and widespread.

CISTICOLIDAE

- Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*: Small numbers of endemic *omalura* were seen at Uda Walawe, and Horton Plains.
- Grey-breasted Prinia *Prinia hodgsonii*: Just four at Uda Walawe NP. Another endemic race, this time *leggei*.
- Ashy Prinia *Prinia socialis*: Commonly seen at Uda Walawe NP and also in the Tissa' and Nuwara Eliya areas. Very smart in fresh plumage; the local race of this subcontinent endemic is the endemic *brevicauda*.
- Jungle Prinia *Prinia sylvatica*: Good views of a singing male at Uda Walawe NP. Several others were heard in the savanna-like habitat of the Dry Zone national parks. Only found in the Indian subcontinent, it is represented here by the endemic race *valida*.
- Plain Prinia *Prinia inornata*: Regular sightings throughout, a familiar species. Endemic *insularis*.
- Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius*: Odd birds at scattered locations. Both endemic subspecies were seen, the nominate bird in the lowlands, and *fernandornis* at Horton Plains.

SYLVIIDAE

- Sri Lanka Bush-warbler *Elaphrornis palliseri*: Endemic species. Brilliant views of three at the Arrenga Pool, Horton Plains NP.
- Blyth's Reed-warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*: Scattered sightings of this winter visitor.
- Indian Reed-warbler *Acrocephalus brunnescens*: Four were seen and four more heard in the Tissa' area. The endemic race *meridionalis*. One showed particularly well at Bundala NP.
- Bright-green Warbler (Green W) *Phylloscopus nitidus*: A frequently encountered winter visitor here.
- Large-billed Leaf-warbler *Phylloscopus magnirostris*: This winter visitor from the Himalayas was less common than Bright-green, but eventually seen quite well at Udawattekelle.
- Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*: Chris found us two at the rocky area in Uda Walawe NP. A rare species in Sri Lanka, which got Upali very excited.

PARIDAE

- Grey Tit *Parus cinereus*: A mainly montane species in Sri Lanka, we saw small numbers in the Nuwara Eliya area, as well as one at Bibile. The local race is, *mahrattarum*, shared with south India. A long overdue split in my opinion.

SITTIDAE

Velvet-fronted Nuthatch *Sitta frontalis*: Small numbers of this very attractive nuthatch in the Nuwara Eliya area, and at Udawattekelle.

DICAEIDAE

Thick-billed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum agile*: Upali saw two briefly at Nilgala MF.

Legge's Flowerpecker (White-throated F) *Dicaeum vincens*: Endemic species. A cracker! Small numbers in the Wet Zone forests, including an adult feeding a recently fledged juvenile at Sinharaja WHS.

Pale-billed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum erythrorhynchos*: Commonly seen. Endemic *ceylonense*. A near subcontinent endemic, just extending into Myanmar.

NECTARINIIDAE

Purple-rumped Sunbird *Leptocoma zeylonica*: Very common in Sri Lanka, a real beauty. The nominate race of this near subcontinent endemic.

Purple Sunbird *Cinnyris asiatica*: A male at Uda Walawe NP, and four at the Airport Garden Hotel.

Loten's Sunbird (Long-billed S) *Cinnyris lotenius*: Confined to southern India and Sri Lanka. This sickle-billed sunbird was quite common.

ZOSTEROPIDAE

Ceylon White-eye (Sri Lanka W-eye) *Zosterops ceylonensis*: Endemic species. Found only in the highlands, at all localities visited in the Nuwara Eliya area.

Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus*: Occasional sightings.

ESTRILDIDAE

Indian Silverbill (White-throated S) *Euodice malabarica*: Very good numbers this year at Uda Walawe NP, with at least 100 seen.

White-rumped Munia *Lonchura striata*: The very black-and-white looking nominate race was seen at various Wet Zone locations. Breeding was noted at Ratnaloka Inn and Udawattekelle.

Black-throated Munia *Lonchura kelaarti*: After dipping on the last tour, it was good to catch up with this distinct bird again. Although lumped with the south Indian form by Rasmussen and Anderton (2005), it is generally regarded as an endemic species.

Scaly-breasted Munia *Lonchura punctulata*: Commoner than the last species, but mainly seen in the Dry Zone.

Tricoloured Munia (Black-headed M) *Lonchura malacca*: Smaller numbers than usual in the extensive grasslands of Uda Walawe NP, with only about 80 noted. Small numbers also at Bundala NP and Nilgala MF. Restricted to southern India and Sri Lanka.

PASSERIDAE

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*: Frequent sightings on our travels.

STURNIDAE

White-faced Starling *Sturnia albofrontata*: Endemic species. Only to be found at Sinharaja, where we saw up to 14 this time. One of the rarest and most threatened endemics.

Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis*: Very common and widespread. The only recognised race of this familiar species is the dark endemic *melanosternus*.

Ceylon Hill-myna (Sri Lanka H-M, Sri Lanka Myna) *Gracula ptilogenys*: Endemic species. Small numbers at Sinharaja were seen very nicely. The male has a dark iris and the female a pale one.

Lesser Hill-myna (Southern H-M) *Gracula indica*: Scattered Wet Zone sightings of this recent split from the larger Common Hill-Myna *G. religiosa*. Particularly common and conspicuous at Udawattekelle. Only found in south-west India and Sri Lanka.

ORIOLIDAE

Black-hooded Oriole *Oriolus xanthornus*: Widespread, particularly in the Wet Zone. This is the endemic race *ceylonensis*, which has a distinctive call.

DICRURIDAE

White-bellied Drongo *Dicrurus caerulescens*: Widespread and common, a subcontinent endemic. We saw the endemic race *leucopygialis* of the wet lowlands and nearby hills. Three were seen on nests, and another feeding a fledged juvenile.

Ceylon Crested Drongo (Sri Lanka D) *Dicrurus lophorinus*: Endemic species. Good numbers at Kelani River FR and Sinharaja WHS. We had excellent prolonged views of this recently split species.

ARTAMIDAE

Ashy Woodswallow *Artamus fuscus*: Three were found by Upali during the return journey to the airport, including a pair that seemed to be nesting in the top of a wooden telegraph-pole.

CORVIDAE

Ceylon Blue Magpie (Sri Lanka B M) *Urocissa ornata*: Endemic species. Superb views of this handsome magpie at Sinharaja, with at least four groups located, two of which included two fledged juveniles each.

House Crow *Corvus splendens*: Frequent sightings on our travels.

Indian Jungle Crow *Corvus culminatus*: Common and widespread. Part of the recent three-way division of Large-billed Crow *C. macrorhynchos*, leaving the current form endemic to the Indian subcontinent.

MAMMALS

Indian Hare (Black-naped H) *Lepus nigricollis*: Dawn/dusk sightings of four at Bundala NP, and two on the way to Horton Plains.

Sri Lanka Giant Squirrel (Grizzled Indian S) *Ratufa macroura*: Endemic to Sri Lanka and south India. We saw *melanochra* of the Wet Zone.

Layard's Palm Squirrel *Funambulus layardi*: Endemic to Sri Lanka and south India. One at Kelani River FR and four at Sinharaja. Not as boldly marked as Indian, with the buff stripes more bright rufous.

Indian Palm Squirrel (Three-striped P S) *Funambulus palmarum*: Common throughout. We saw two of the four endemic races; *favonicus* in the Wet Zone, and *kelaarti* in the Dry Zone.

Dusky Palm Squirrel (D Striped S) *Funambulus sublineatus*: Endemic to Sri Lanka and south India. Three of these very dark palm squirrels in the Nuwara Eliya area.

House Rat (Black R) *Rattus rattus*: Four in Victoria Park, Nuwara Eliya.

Short-tailed Mongoose *Herpestes brachyurus*: Scattered sightings.

Ruddy Mongoose *Herpestes smithii*: Singles at Ratnaloka Inn and Horton Plains NP.

Eurasian Otter *Lutra lutra ceylonica*: Superb views of one hunting in the Arrenga Pool, at Horton Plains. Here, they feed mainly on fresh-water crabs, frogs and eels, as well as trout.

Indian Flying Fox *Pteropus giganteus*: Large numbers were roosting around the lake at Kandy.

Tufted Grey Langur *Semnopithecus priam*: Good numbers in the Dry Zone parks, with at least 100 estimated during our safari ride at Bundala. Part of the recent division of the former Hanuman Langur *Presbytis entellus*.

Purple-faced Leaf Monkey *Trachypithecus vetulus*: This very loud endemic was seen at Sinharaja (nominate *vetulus*), and on the way to Horton Plains (*monticola*).

Toque Macaque (T Monkey) *Macaca sinica*: Regular sightings of this endemic species. We saw *aurifrons* in the Wet Zone, and *sinica* in the Dry Zone.

Indian Muntjac (Barking Deer) *Muntiacus muntjak*: Just one at Udawattekelle.

Sambar *Cervus unicolor*: At least 16 grazing the open parts of Horton Plains, including a tame male at the cafe.
Chital (Spotted Deer) *Cervus axis*: Small numbers in the Dry Zone parks, where surprisingly shy.
Asian Elephant (Indian E) *Elephas maximus*: During our two jeep rides at Uda Walawe NP, we counted 40 and 15 respectively. An aroused male was blocking our way when we entered Bundala NP, and there was another with it.

REPTILES

Streaked Kukri Snake *Oligodon sublineatus*: A juvenile of this attractive endemic snake was found hiding under leaf-litter by Jenny at Sinharaja.
Sri Lanka Keelback Water Snake *Xenochrophis asperimus*: One was watched hunting fish that were attracted by the remains of our box-lunches, in a small pool at Sinharaja! An endemic.
Green Forest Lizard (Southern Green Calotes) *Calotes calotes*: Small numbers at several Wet Zone sites.
Garden Lizard (Common Garden L) *Calotes versicolor*: Small numbers around Kitulgala, including a stripy juvenile that we photographed.
Sri Lankan Kangaroo Lizard (Kangaroo L) *Otocryptis wiegmanni*: This endemic lizard was frequently encountered along the tracks at Sinharaja, and was also seen at Udawattekelle.
Asian House Gecko (Southern H G) *Hemidactylus frenatus*: The only 'house gecko' noted during the trip
Common Skink *Mabuya carinata*: Just one at Sinharaja.
Water Monitor *Varanus salvator*: Widespread sightings, including several on the roads.
Mugger Crocodile (Marsh C) *Crocodylus palustris*: Singles at Uda Walawe and Debera Wewa, and two at Bundala NP.
Indian Pond Terrapin (Spotted Black Turtle) *Melanochelys trijuga thermalis*:
Flapshell Turtle (Indian Mud T, Flapshell) *Lissemys punctata*: Three were hauled-up by a small pool en route from Bundala to Tissa'.

AMPHIBIANS

Indian Five-fingered Frog *Euphlyctis hexadactylus*: One or two in a water channel at Debera Wewa.
Common Hour-glass Tree Frog *Polypedates cruciger*: Seen with their egg-mass suspended over the track at Sinharaja, and also in the hotel at Ratnapura. Endemic.
Common Indian Tree Frog *Polypedates maculatus*: Several 'roosting' in the ladies toilet at Bundala.

BUTTERFLIES

Ceylon Tree Nymph *Idea iasonia*: Several of these fantastic insects floating through the trees at Sinharaja.
Blue Glassy Tiger *Ideopsis similis*: Small numbers at Sinharaja.
White Four-ring *Ypthima ceylonica*: Common at Kelani FR.
Common Evening Brown *Melantitis leda*: One in the rest house at Kitulgala.
Psyche *Leptosia nina*: Small numbers along trail-sides at scattered locations.
Danaid Eggfly *Hypolimnas misippus*: At least two at Sinharaja.
Clipper *Parthenos sylvia*: A few at Sinharaja.
Common Leopard *Phalanta phalantha*: One at Kitulgala.
Cruiser *Vindula erota*: One or two females at Sinharaja.
Tailed Jay *Graphium agamemnon*: Several at Sinharaja.
Red Helen *Papilio helenus*: Two single females at Sinharaja.
Crimson Rose *Pachliopta hector*: Small numbers at Uda Walawe NP.
Blue Mormon *Papilio polymnestor*: Small numbers of this awesome large butterfly were seen in the Wet Zone, and at Udawattekelle.