

Holiday Highlights

Sri Lanka

17-30 March 2018

Leaders: Dr Charles Anderson and Nilantha Kodithuwakku

Scope bearer: Darren Rees

Ground transport facilitator: Sanjeeba

Guests: Andrea and Dave King, and Sarah Sharland

Day 1: Arrival

After meeting Andrea and Dave at London's Heathrow airport (the previous evening) the take-off for Sri Lanka is slightly delayed as we are leaving the UK in a blizzard - the plane needs to be de-iced first and there is a queue! Once airborne the flight is comfortable and not without highlights – valuable window seats give us views of dawn over the incredible mountains of Iran. Row after row of snow-capped ridges are cut by deep valleys with seemingly little or no settlements. Towards the coast the terrain is dissected by broader, more fertile valley floors before finally crossing the Persian Gulf.

On the southern side is the other-worldly Dubai, with its giant man-made structures occupying the fringe between blue sea and flat desert. Artificial reefs have been fashioned into palm shapes and small archipelagos as playgrounds for the rich.

Onwards over the Arabian Peninsula and the mountainous region of Oman before heading across the Indian Ocean and finally our descent into Sri Lanka.

Landing at Colombo we are soon through customs and immigration and meeting with our old friend and local guide Nilantha. The heat of the tropics greets us as we exit the airport terminal and we work our way to the minibus and meet our driver for the holiday Sanjeeba, who drives us the short distance to the Tamarind Tree Hotel. We check in to our rooms, relax and unwind after an exhausting travel day. Darren and Nilantha go back to the airport to meet Sarah and Charles who are coming in on later flights. Eventually, we all meet at the restaurant in the evening for a welcoming drink and then it's the first of many delicious Sri Lankan meals.

Day 2: The Road North

The pre-breakfast walk around the grounds of the hotel starts at the pool and finally we get to grips with the many birds calls that are contributing to an exotic morning chorus. Common Mynas, Brown-headed Barbet, Large-billed Crows and Yellow-billed babblers are the most vocal. We amble around the grounds with Nil and Chas pointing out the birds: Asian Koel, Black-headed Oriole and Spotted Dove, plus delightful Palm Squirrels that are scurrying around. Sarah spots a red-

coloured bird clinging to a wall: wow! It's a fantastic Black-rumped Flameback – a smart woodpecker with a brilliant red back – what's he doing pecking at a wall? Further along we see our first beautiful Oriental Magpie Robin perched on a rooftop aerial. A Loten's (Long-billed) Sunbird works the bushes and a Rose-ringed Parakeet feeds on a starfruit bush. White-rumped Munia and two Red-vented Bulbuls make appearances, then our attention turns to an early morning wedding party! Everyone has such exotic costumes and the whole event is being recorded by a drone-camera! Further along, it's back to the birds and there's two Crimson-fronted Barbet in a bare tree, and our first White-bellied Drongo. Oriental White-eye and Pale-billed Flowerpecker complete the list before breakfast. Not a bad start!

We are packed and in the van shortly after 10am, heading north for our base at Anuradhapura. The drive there is an education in Sri Lankan road culture. There is very little horn blowing and no speeding – just an endless procession of vans, minibuses, scooters and tuk-tuks (motorised rickshaws) going about their businesses. Our first stop is at a colourful roadside Hindu shrine with huge painted sculptures of deities. This is close to the town of Chilaw, where we drive to the shore crossing a lagoon that is busy with egrets, Indian House Crows and Brahminy Kites – there are obviously lots of fish here. There is also a nearby government-owned rest stop sited adjacent to the beach, where we can use the facilities and try some freshly-made lime and soda. After refreshments we take a slow walk to scan the ocean where there are terns passing by. A check on their bill-colour yields Crested (yellow), Lesser Crested (orange) and Gull-billed Tern (Black). Further along there are a flurry of terns in the shallows and we can pick out the black bellies of White-winged Terns. Along the waterline small numbers of Sanderling are scurrying around (as they do) and on a small piece of land behind, a Brown Shrike is perched low on a bush.

After about half-an-hour we take off down a quieter road that skirts a wetland sanctuary called Anaiwilundawa. A small troop of Tocque Macaques are moving through the bushes to the left but soon disappear. We stop when Nil sees a group of Indian Rollers on the overhead wires and they give us a real display. Unfortunately the whole area is dried up as the wet season did not really materialise this last year and there has been a prolonged drought. Still, we choose a lunch spot in the shade where we are entertained by the local dogs ever-hopeful for some scraps. We stroll along the raised track and do see a few birds: Long-billed Sunbird, Black-hooded Oriole and a large White-bellied Sea Eagle soaring above. Chas picks up our first Bee-eaters of the trip with a pair of beautiful Little Green Bee-eaters perched on a low bough of a tree.

It's really hot now and we return to the bus for some respite and to carry on our way. At Tabbowa there is usually another large body of water, one of the many freshwater tanks that have helped irrigate the island. However, this has been reduced to a couple of sorry looking pools with a few egrets alongside, but we stop anyway. Richard's Pipit, Palm Swift, Red-vented Bulbul and Purple Sunbird is all we can muster.

We carry on to The Palm Garden Hotel and check in and spend some time freshening up before a late afternoon walk.

A short walk takes us from our chalets through the wooded grounds and we can hear birds calling from the canopy. Two Sri Lankan Hornbills are squawking and moving through high in the treetops and one poses enough to get the telescope trained on it. There is cooing from a pigeon and Nilantha spots the culprit – a nice Green Imperial Pigeon. Further, we pass through to a waterhole which in the dry season can attract visitors some of which can be very big, and there is an electric fence on the near side to stop elephants wandering through the hotel! Thankfully, even with the low rainfall, there is still some water to view and we set up our scope and scan the bird activity: Red-wattled Lapwings and Indian Pond Herons are on show with Little Egret. In treetops on the far side are Rose-ringed Parakeets and a nice pairing of Purple Heron and Great Egret. Two Blue-tailed Bee-eaters are perched and later give us a flying display. On a mud bank is a Black-naped Hare and then Chas picks out our first White-breasted Waterhen – there are two closer a little further on. White-throated Kingfisher, Black-rumped Flameback, Long-billed Sunbird and Indian Peafowl are added to the list.

At the far end we see a pair of Indian Cuckoos in a tree, the male calling all the while. On a nearby electric fence is perched a gorgeous male Sri Lankan Paradise Flycatcher, his long tail trailing below and easily outdoing a White-bellied Drongo that is sat in the same field of view. Nilantha spots a Tawny-bellied Babbler – a good bird to see as it is real skulker. There's a Jerdon's Bushlark on the ground, but more obvious (and a whole lot more impressive) is a white-breasted Changeable, or Crested Hawk Eagle sat in the far trees (it later flies across the scene). Yet, perhaps the most impressive bird, or indeed birds, are to come. From stage right three wonderful Malabar Pied Hornbills fly across with their faltering flight manner – deep flaps then a glide, more deep flaps then a glide. They land in the tallest tree and we can wonder at their admirable bills. Contenders for bird-of-the-week methinks. As we walk back more birds land in the small pool of water, including two Lesser Whistling Duck. The setting sun starts to colour the sky and water pink – and so to the bar for a well-earned beer!

Day 3: Wilpattu National Park

We have breakfast at 7am and are soon on our way to nearby Wilpattu National Park, some 30 mins ride away. At the gate we meet our jeep driver and Park tracker Nishanta, who will guide us for the next three days. First, he completes the paperwork while we start the bird list around the make-shift visitor centre. A Sri Lanka Wood Shrike is in the tree where we park, smart Indian Robins hop across the lawn and a Coppersmith Barbet is calling in a nearby tree. Crested Treeswifts are flying around, then a spectacular Malabar Pied Hornbill perches in a tree-top. We walk towards the water and in another tree is a confiding pair of Jerdon's Leafbirds. Nil points out two Small Minivets - looking similar to our Redstart. From the shade of a large tree we can scan the large body of water that has a good covering of lily-pads. Lots of Whiskered Terns are working the

channels and Chas finds our first Pheasant-tailed Jacana. Little Cormorants are swimming in the water and we get great looks at three kingfishers: Common, White-throated and oversized Stork-billed Kingfisher. Other birds include Oriental Magpie Robin, Orange-breasted Pigeon, Common Tailorbird and iridescent Little Green Bee-eaters that are sat on low twigs and fence wires. It's time to board the jeep and enter the gates of the National Park on a safari drive.

We pass through a dry scrubby area and stop where a jeep is parked and a Leopard has been reported a short while ago. Unfortunately it has disappeared but we are hoping it may reappear to drink at a nearby pool... we wait a while but it doesn't. Soon we pass Grey Langurs in trees and we see our first Barking Deer, all the while we drive along the track that cuts through the woodland commenting on the butterfly blizzard that is like a white confetti storm. Passing through sections of more dense trees we see some special birds of the dry forest including Tickell's Flycatcher and long-tailed White-rumped Shama. At forest waterholes we add smart Chestnut-headed Bee-eater and Common Iora.

We venture further into the Park, to work a series of natural freshwater pools or villu. These are naturally occurring and fed by springs so have not been affected by the drought conditions and are proving attractive to birds and mammals. At the first there are lots of waders to work through: as well as lots of Great and Little Egrets, there are Indian Pond Herons, two large Great Thick-knees, Black-winged Stilts, Greenshank, Wood Sandpipers, Black-headed Ibis and Chas picks out a summer plumage Lesser Sand Plover. Many Spotted Deer, favourite prey for Leopards, are working the shaded edge of the far bank.

A short drive takes us to where we can scan a much larger pool and this proves to be another productive place and we amass an impressive tally of birds: Pacific Golden Plover, Kentish Plover (alongside Lesser Sand Plover for comparison), Curlew Sandpiper, Marsh Sandpiper, Little Stint, Redshank, Pintail Snipe and Paddyfield Pipit amongst others.

We take a break for lunch at one of the few places where we can get out of the jeeps. The picnic site is at another large villu with huge kumbuk trees around the shore – called Kumbukvillu! From the shore we can see a good selection of birds including Little Cormorants, Oriental Darter, Little Tern, a half-submerged Water Buffalo, Spotted Deer and Nil finds a Brahminy Kite on a nest. Star bird award goes to a smart Black-naped Monarch that is taking flies from the surface of the water and landing back on a perch in front of us.

After lunch we start down narrower tracks through the woodland and around new pools. At the first there is a very happy jumbo! A large Asian Elephant is up to its chin in the water. We watch it pull up the water sedges and shake the sand of their roots – a very particular feeder! With the near shore sprinkled with birds like Black-winged Stilt, Greenshank, and Black-headed Ibis, and a single stag Sambar Deer on the edge, it makes a beautiful scene.

Resuming down more sandy tracks we see Emerald Dove on the ground. Finally, we start the journey back past some of the pools we've been by before. The cooler temperatures and less harsh light is good for an afternoon flurry of activity and the return route yields more Chestnut-headed Bee-eater and Malabar Pied Hornbills dusting themselves in the sand. In the dense forest section we come across Sri Lanka Junglefowl – a handsome cockerel and a dowdy hen. Then, a little closer to the Park entrance there is a jeep parked – we stop and instinctively look around thinking we may have missed something. Then, looking behind we see two black Sloth Bears are standing in the centre of the track. Wow! They amble to the left and disappear behind a bush so we drive a little nearer. We watch them enter the more dense vegetation to the left and then they melt away into the bushes - wonderful.

Our driver has an eye on the watch, as we have to be at the gate at 6.30pm at the latest, in some ten minutes time. However, the animals have not read the script and another bear is at the side of the track and it wanders down to drink at a pool in front of us. What a way to finish an amazing day at Wilpattu!

Day 4: Wilpattu and Anuradhapura

It's an early start for a second visit to Wilpattu and we meet at 6am for the drive to the gates of the National Park. We climb aboard the jeep and start our safari around 6.30am in the cool of the morning. The first section is through woodland and we note a beautiful cock Sri Lankan Junglefowl and while we are watching him something is working the leaf litter alongside – it's a tawny-coloured Brown-capped Babbler. We get better looks at a Barking Deer soon after, then we arrive at the first large pool marked with lily-pads and a huge tree on an island. Perched in this is a group of four Woolly-necked Storks – new for the trip. The whole place is busy with birds with kingfishers darting this way and that and Treeswifts chasing through the air. A Peacock is perched in the top of one of the tallest trees making an interesting skyline.

Shortly after, in a pool to the right of the track is a collection of four Painted Storks, so we pause and look around. We add Emerald Dove and Orange-breasted Pigeon to the day list. Back in the forest we stop for two Ruddy Mongooses, before hearing news of bigger things, we then drive up and down past a section of forest where a Leopard was seen just twenty or thirty minutes or so before we arrive. Sadly, we can't relocate the animal.

Next stop is a small clearing where there is a circular concrete-lined pool that attracts bathers. In a short-time we watch a Tickell's Flycatcher, Black-naped Monarch and an elusive Besra – a forest-dwelling accipiter.

Moving towards the villu we pass a corridor of woodland, where a spectacular Crested Serpent Eagle is perched just feet away. We continue around the villu passing through areas of light scrub where we see Brown Shrike and lots more Green Bee-eaters. A dead tree is loaded with Barn Swallows and two Changeable Hawk Eagles call back and forth from their perches in dead trees.

At the water's edge we check those shorebirds listing many of the same species as yesterday, with sandpipers, plovers, stilts, egrets and herons a plenty – and all before our breakfast stop.

After nibbles with the Toque Macaques we start a second tour of the villus and along the shore of one is a big group of twelve Wild Boar. Sadly, there are no signs of any Leopards or Elephants at successive pools but we do get nice views of a soaring Crested Serpent Eagle. We start working our way back but there are still highlights on the way. Sarah spots something in a tree – a smart Changeable Hawk Eagle and its calling loudly and holding prey in its talons. We can make out that its some form of rat – no doubt endemic! After more calling, it flies back to its large nest – good find!

Back through the forest we see several junglefowl crossing the road but we don't know why. We glimpse a Malabar Trogon and have more close encounters with Crested Serpent Eagles close to the road. The final stretch of the track takes us past two pools. The first is enclosed in the forest and we park and watch the comings and goings. A Black-naped Monarch and White-rumped Munias are visiting a small concrete lined pool. Our final stopping place is at the scenic open pool that is lily clad. As we approach there is a new species for us – a large Water Monitor is a spectacular looking animal with black skin and yellow spots.

Lunch is back at the Palm Gardens and afterwards we have a little down-time before a cultural excursion to visit the sacred sites at Anuradhapura, the ancient capital of Sri Lanka. A series of dome-shaped stupas mark the site of the centre of the kingdom and we have a walk around two of the most notable places, with Nilantha as our guide. Just a short walk from where we park is Sri Maha Bodhi where the sacred bodhi tree, a cutting from the original bodhi tree that Buddha sat under, marks the spot where Buddhism was brought to Sri Lanka. It is a deeply spiritual place for the followers of Buddhism and there are school groups, couples, elderly groups and many individuals seeking their own enlightenment there.

Within walking distance is Ruwanveliseya, but we first have to go by the troops of adorable Toque Macaques that are running, preening and scratching each other from within the ruins of this sacred site of ruined pillars. The view around is dominated by the largest temple in Anuradhapura - it is a compelling sight of a huge white dome bedecked with colourful Buddhist flags at the base. The curvature of the dome is marked by some wooden scaffolding and workers cling while giving the place a whitewash. We walk around the base, having first respected the traditions and taking off our shoes, soaking in the peaceful atmosphere and seeking our own enlightenment. Nice Grey Langurs too, sadly seeking enlightenment from the garbage bins.

Returning to the Palm Gardens there's still time to wander to the lake before dusk and it's a wonderful sight when we get there. Beyond the water, walking along the edge of the treeline is a magnificent bull elephant. In the nearest pool are

Indian Pond Herons, Greenshank, Common Sandpiper and a nice perched Common Kingfisher. What a way to end the day!

Day 5: Spotty Cat Day

It's our last day at Wilpattu and we've still to see an elusive Leopard, so we start early, planning on a full day in the Park. We leave no time at the entrance to wander around and choose to board the jeep, hoping to be one of the earliest vehicles in the Park. We stop here and there along the first section, noting Woolly-necked Storks, Junglefowl, Land Monitors, Shamas and a Barking Deer is close in the bushes.

We then come across two jeeps that are pulled up by a clearing, it seems we've missed a Leopard crossing the road a short time before. We stop and listen, then slowly double back hoping to intercept. Then, in front of us a large brown bird swoops across and into trees – in looks blunt and interesting. We approach slowly and relocate the bird – a nice Brown Fish Owl!

We continue to the lower reaches of the Park, marked by the series of villus and take turns scanning the shores. There are the same assortments of birds as before, with the addition of Little Ringed Plovers. At one villu, the far bank is busy with a large group of Wild Boar. Some are wallowing in the mud and generally acting very porcine.

Passing along one section the guide stops abruptly – right next to us on the right is a fantastic Brown Fish Owl – much closer than the earlier bird and when it moves to the left we can get fantastic looks at a very special species.

We stop on a circuit around another picturesque villu, when we come across a large number of duck on the near shore. Most of these are Lesser Whistling Ducks but included in the group are five Garganey, including four smart drakes. A nice new species before we take a break.

After lunch at Kumbukvillu we set off with news that a Leopard has been seen nearby, so we start our last session in Wilpattu optimistically. We skirt along the edge of another beautiful villu, the same lake that we saw the Garganey on earlier. A couple of jeeps are parked up and the guides instinctively pause to look. There on the far side of the water, lounging on the lowest bough of a tree is the most beautiful spotty cat – wow! Leopard!! We move next to the other vehicles and get the best angle to view the sleeping beauty. Through the scope it looks amazing and there is much rejoicing (and a little sighing with relief!) We watch for twenty minutes or so before the Leopard gets down and walks along the shore and takes another rest beneath a low small tree amongst the tangle of branches – for now, to the naked eye, it has disappeared.

Next the fun starts: a jeep with a German family as passengers pulls up. We tell them we are watching a Leopard through a telescope and describe where it is – but they cannot see it.. In the name of post-Brexit Anglo-German relationships

we play pass-the-children between our two jeeps! One by one the three children climb over the seats and get a ringside seat and a view of the Leopard. Mum and Dad don't want to miss out, so they too do the awkward transfer and it makes their day!

The Leopard looks settled, so we decide to take a drive to investigate another sighting. We drive to the next villu, where we've seen the large bull elephant two days earlier and he's there again. It's doing the same thing, feeding on underwater sedges and pulling up bundles then shaking them vigorously with its trunk. Close to is our first Greater Sand Plover with a noticeably large bill.

After a short circuit through the woods we end back at the villu with the Leopard, and he's still there on far bank, but soon starts to move. We track it walking left along the shore, where it takes up position on a stump where it can see a group of Spotted Deer. It seems they are unaware as they slowly walk towards the big cat. After a few strides the deer stop and start to bark. The Leopard's been rumbled. The deer spring away, barking as they go and the Leopard starts to walk in the opposite way along the shore, coming to the water's edge to drink. Then it paces along to the right and we take up a position further along the track, now being joined by other jeeps. We get closer and closer views as it gets nearer – phenomenal! We enjoy wonderful looks at a perfect looking animal, before it finally ambles out of sight. What a special moment.

The route back is as pleasant as you'd imagine with everyone knowing we've really seen the very best that Wilpattu can offer. There are highlights on the way with a nice display from Asian Paradise Flycatchers taking turns to bathe in a pool with a Black-naped Monarch.

At the last tank next to the track, one of the most scenic spots in Wilpattu, we enjoy a final look at a number of birds, including White-breasted Kingfisher, Treeswifts, Green Bee-eater, Peacocks up trees and a new bird - Forest Wagtail. It's time to bid farewell to Wilpattu.

Day 6: Kaudulla National Park

We leave the hotel after breakfast and head south to Habarana. The road takes us by a couple of wetlands close to the road and at the first we take a look from the road verge. Lots of birds are in the lily-filled lake, including Purple Swamphens, cormorants, egrets, herons and we get our best looks at Pheasant-tailed Jacanas. Also, a smart Ashy-crowned Sparrow Lark lands on the road giving us a quick look.

The second roadside stop is a smaller pool at the base of a huge granite hill. Another lily-filled pool has Pheasant-tailed Jacanas and a smart Oriental Darter – our closest views yet and we can admire its fine dorsal plumage. Other birds include Common Kingfisher, Purple Swamphen and Palm Swifts that are zipping around. From there it's a short drive to our next base, the wonderful Cinnamon Chaaya Village Hotel. As we arrive we feel very special with fresh welcoming

drinks and superb service. The buildings and grounds are a delight and we are walked to our rooms to freshen up, before the most extravagant of lunch buffets. The chilled sweet room has to be seen to be believed.

Mid-afternoon we meet for our safari at nearby Kaudulla National Park. Our Land Rover is soon loaded and we are ready to go shortly after 2.15pm. After a short distance along the main road, we stop for a nice Changeable Hawk Eagle – destined to be one of several. Entering the Park gates we see that many other people have similar plans and there are lots of jeeps lined up. Indeed, the first section of the track is very busy as we stop in turn for Toque Macaques, then Grey Langurs, before several special birds of prey. First there is a pale Changeable Hawk Eagle, presumably fishing from a low branch of a tree close to the river. This is followed a little further on by a second, more streaked bird with a superb crest – a photographer's dream model. Next is a Grey-headed Fish Eagle, in similar pose on a branch over the water. As the track veers to the right we enter more bushy country and on top of one small tree is a strange thin-necked, small-headed raptor – a curious looking Oriental Honey Buzzard that gets our Sri Lankan guide excited. Then a beautiful Black-winged Kite enters the scene with a lovely aerial display of hovering.

Just around the corner the landscape changes dramatically, with views across open grassy country to one of the famed 'tanks' that is marked by distant stands of skeletal trees. From here we see a lone elephant in the distance, evoking the African savannah. But before we explore further we can see a huge tree in front with a large nest and two big young eagles. The adult White-bellied Sea Eagle soars overhead, watching the jeeps that have their lenses trained on the scaly fledglings.

We push across the grassland and note big groups of waterbirds along the shore, including Cattle and Intermediate Egrets, Grey Heron, Spot-billed Pelicans, Painted and Openbill Storks.

Next is our first group of Asian Elephants and we settle in for a close look – for most of the time we are the only jeep watching and we can wonder in silence with only the swishing of their trunks and the background chorus of Brown-headed Barbets as our soundtrack.

Further on we get into the really big numbers – Chas estimates over 160 animals dotted across the panorama. We move from one group to another seeing young animals with mothers – one is very small and can only be months old. Two young beasts are 'tuskers' with perfect white ivories. A rare sight with Sri Lankan Elephants, as all of the large male bulls with ivory were shot long ago and it's believed that the gene governing tusk growth has been almost eliminated in the population. As if to re-iterate that fact, a huge bull male is ahead on the track, notable by its lack of tusks, but an impressive beast nevertheless. We spend a while working the groups, looking at small young animals that are always so close to their mother's side.

On the way back there are still more new things: an Oriental Skylark is next to a Pintail Snipe and Wood Sandpiper; a female Montagu's Harrier quarters the grass and back in the trees we come across a small group of Purple-faced Monkeys. All this and a glorious sunset – a magical Sri Lankan evening.

Day 7: Sigiriya

After an early breakfast we get away in good time at 7.30am for our destination of day, the World Heritage Site at Sigiriya. This is a stunning fortress that is centred on a spectacular rock formation and as we arrive the place is bathed in wonderful morning light. We join the many groups of people to start the slow ascent and Chas interprets the amazing series of well-ordered ruins that are testament to a sophisticated design of inter-connected pools and fountains that once supported a large number of people at the court of King Kasyapa. The series of steps take us through beautiful shady woods before a section of metal railings that clings to the vertical rock face. We pause to admire the view and note a special resident of the rock – a Shaheen – a dark brown dusky Peregrine.

Next there are two exposed spiral staircases, delivering the pilgrims and tourists to some beautifully preserved frescos in a high cave – the subject of which could be described in a multitude of ways – voluptuous maidens? - let's say they are bursting with femininity. What men get up to in their caves eh? Descending the spiral staircase to rejoin the route to the fortress, we can look up at the resting Shaheen that is still perched on a small branch that clings to the rockface – great looks.

We continue up a short climb to the shoulder at the foot of the Lion's Steps. Most of us that have made it this far feel compelled to go further and upwards, so we climb the narrower exposed metal stairs. Thankfully there are so many people that the climb is a slow affair allowing us to catch our breath with every few steps! At the top are the remnants of the royal palace and we can see the throne room and other features like the tank for collecting rain and the Queen's pool. The views around the surrounding countryside are wonderful with lush forest going on for miles in all directions to the far ridges of the highlands. Overhead are two Oriental Honey Buzzards soaring, no doubt enjoying the view too!

Retracing our steps we reunite with Dave who is taking a rest in the trees. We get a brief flyby from a Shaheen that flies direct into the presumed nesting ledge, marked with guano stains. From there it's a straight forward descent running the gauntlet of hawkers touting their trinkets and souvenirs. We drive towards the hotel for some well-earned rest and preparations for the afternoon's activities.

After lunch and some relaxation, there's a stroll around the grounds in the late afternoon. A large section of the grounds of the Chaaya Cinnamon village is devoted to growing organic vegetables for use in the restaurant. We walk to the garden with our guide Mahon and as we enter there are two Tickell's Flycatchers showing well, close to a delicate Purple-rumped Sunbird's nest.

A clown-like Coppersmith Barbet is on top of one tree and Rose-ringed Parakeets are squawking overhead. Mahon beckons us to where a Greater Coucal is sat in a tree gorging on a banana. Two White-rumped Munias are in a cleared earth patch and perch up well on a twig and then we reach an area of colourful bushes and plantings for a butterfly garden. The many insects in the air that are fluttering by on exquisitely marked wings beguile everyone. Butterfly species include spectacular Blue Tiger, Indian Crow, Chocolate Soldier and Psyche.

There are more interesting birds too and Mahon soon tracks down an Orange-headed Thrush that doesn't show too well. More obliging is a marvellous Indian Pitta that is in the adjacent garden. Lots more birds add to an impressive list: White-browed Bulbul, Jerdon's Leafbird, Sri Lankan Woodshrike, Common Iora, Brown Shrike, Common Tailorbird, Indian Robin and treetops full of Grey Langurs. A good species haul, but we decide for one more, we walk back to our rooms enjoying the setting sun as we go. After a quick drink and collection of our torches, we walk the short distance to a granite slope just beyond the hotel perimeter. We've heard Indian Nightjars here before and take up position as the light fades. Hundreds of House Swifts are milling around against the blue hills and pink sky. On cue, still with enough light to watch them in flight, an Indian Nightjar takes off from only fifteen feet away. It starts to dance back and forth on that distinctive buoyant flight, showing the white spots in the wing and tail. What a wonderful end to the day – now what do we do about those flying ants.

Day 8: To Trinco

A pre-breakfast walk along the perimeter of lake is well attended and we enjoy a delightful walk through the trees towards the water's edge. Immediately we notice lots of activity in the canopy and we spend half-an-hour just peering into the tops of two trees in particular. Species come and go but there is always something on show: Coppersmith Barbet, Jerdon's Leafbirds, Red-vented Bulbul, Oriental Whiteeye and a teasing Green Warbler. Chas finds a more obliging Brown Flycatcher that perches long enough to get views through the scope. A vivid Small Minivet shows well, at one point in the same view as a bright Common Iora.

We walk to a raised platform that is built around a large Terminalia tree with splaying buttresses. Across the lake and lily pads are the species we've become familiar with, with egrets, cormorants, Pheasant-tailed Jacanas, and Whistling Ducks. It's good to look down on them and we watch a Common Kingfisher preening and Purple Swamphens feeding with their long toes. White-bellied Sea Eagle, Brahminy Kite and Stork-billed Kingfisher show well too but we only glimpse an Openbill Stork that flies by and then on behind trees. Two Black-crowned Night Herons are new for the list.

Between the artificial lakes, resting beneath a culvert is a huge Water Monitor lizard – the stuff of nightmares! In nearby treetops there is a flurry of activity from Grey Langurs and we continue our walk towards the organic garden. There we meet one of the gardeners, Ajith, who also knows his birds so he escorts

us around. There are more White-rumped Munias, Common loras, and Black-headed Orioles including a streaky immature. We walk through a blizzard of beautiful butterfly wings, then Ajith beckons us as he has found an Indian Pitta. It's near where we saw it yesterday but we are much closer and get wonderful looks, even if this does test our crouching techniques! There are White-browed Bulbuls and we glimpse a Grey-breasted Prinia and Blyth's Reed Warbler skulking in the undergrowth. Other species on our circuit include Brown-headed Barbets, Paradise Flycatcher, Magpie Robin and a very smart Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike. It's not the last new bird for the list, as we wend our way along the water Chas points out a Grey-bellied Cuckoo – very co-operatively posing in the shade for views in the scope. A great start to the day – coffee is calling (along with noisy White-throated Kingfishers)

After breakfast we say our goodbyes to the staff of the hotel then we start the two hour journey north and east to the coast. This passes through several protected areas of wilderness and forest clad hills extent left and right. At one point we stop to admire a fantastic Black Eagle that is gliding over the treetops on the left of the road – superb.

At Kantale there is another of the celebrated tanks that are the life-giving man-made structures that have enabled so much of Sri Lanka to be irrigated. We park and view from the dyke. Most notable are the large herds of domesticated Water Buffalo around the green edges of the lake. Masses of cormorants, both Indian and Little, are fishing or resting on islands. Those that are active are attracting large numbers of Whiskered Terns. We get our best looks at Openbill Storks – some are arranged in large rows with the cormorants and egrets. Other species include Black-winged Stilts, Greenshank, Wood Sandpiper, White-throated Kingfisher, Spot-billed Pelican and Woolly-necked Storks - all the while we are serenaded by an Oriental Skylark in flight display (like our Skylark). Perhaps the highlight is a duel between a Brahminy Kite a large White-bellied Sea Eagle. A Grey-headed Fish Eagle is next to its nest in far off trees. It's now not far from Trincomalee and we arrive at our hotel just before lunchtime. We are greeted with the familiar niceties of a cool flannel and welcoming juice as well as a friendly smile, the biggest from Nilantha who we've missed these last two days! The view from reception takes in the pool, palms and the turquoise Indian Ocean, nice!

After lunch there is some personal down-time for the pool, a walk along the beach or maybe just relaxing with a view over the ocean.

We meet at 4pm for a late afternoon wander, taking in the Commonwealth War Cemetery first. It is a well-kept small plot with some 600 graves that are testament to the part that Sri Lanka played in the Second World War. It is poignant when regarding the ages of those who gave their lives when the Japanese bombed Trinco harbour. As well as British personnel there are headstones to Canadians, Australians, and several other nations. The gardener talks to us and tells us that his father was the original caretaker and now he

continues the role, proudly showing us an album of photos and letters from dignitaries that have visited including Princess Anne.

Afterwards, we drive to the causeway where we can check to see if there are many shorebirds gathered. The tide is at its lowest and the first pool is dried up with just six distant Greater Thick-knees shimmering in the haze. On the right side is a Kentish Plover family with two chicks, followed by Common Sandpiper, Whimbrel, Little Ringed Plover and these are joined by a dozen or so Little Stint that fly in. We walk down a quieter lane with dry scrubby wasteland either side and we see Richard's Pipit, Jerdon's Bushlark, Red-wattled and Yellow-wattled Lapwings. Nilantha knows of a more productive area for waders, so we drive a short distance to scan a couple of inter-linked pools between properties. At the first we see Marsh Sandpiper, Redshank, Wood Sandpiper, Golden Plover, Black-winged Stilts and more Greater Thick-knees. A little further along is another area we can scan the wetland and we add Garganey, Whistling Duck, Little Green Bee-eater and Moorhen to the list. Then the bee-eaters get excited and start to alarm call as a Shikra flies over – it lands in a palm tree giving us unrivalled looks at the perched bird – what a stunner.

The sun is setting and the sky turns red – another lovely evening in Sri Lanka.

Day 9: Whales, or maybe not

After an early breakfast we meet up on the beach, a short walk from our rooms. But our plans for an 8am departure for a morning with the whales seem scuppered. It's a windy morning and looks uncomfortable out on the ocean waves, so we decide for some stalling tactics to see if there is a change in the weather mid-morning.

We amble along the beach in the direction of the river mouth, in a relaxed manner checking out the Green Bee-eaters and the many terns going by. Rose-ringed Parakeets are chasing crows and generally acting like they are nesting in a hole in a palm tree and there is a Black-rumped Flameback on a post. Some of the Whiskered Terns are sporting their summer plumage whiskers. At the river mouth are more Indian Pond Herons, Common Sandpiper and Whimbrel. Star bird goes to a Pied Kingfisher that is fishing in the shallows – fun to watch.

Back along the beach, in front of the hotel, we see the unfolding event of locals fishing with nets. It's a slow and deliberate, coordinated procedure and the bounty is hauled up to the beach, attracting lots of terns and House Crows as well as human bystanders. Gradually, hundreds of small and medium-sized silver fish are hand-sorted into sandy piles, ready to be washed in baskets with seemingly little waste – although there are a few undesirable catches like a couple pieces of wood and coconut shells. It's an act carried out a few times a day and must be an important supplement to locals. The prize larger fish will probably go straight to the hotel!

The couple of boats that braved the windy conditions have returned back to land with tales of dolphin sightings but no whales, so we opt to cancel our boat trip plans for the day and hope for better weather in the morning. Instead we settle for an amble around the grounds to catch up on a few of the local birds.

In one fruiting tree, House Crows are joined by Brown-headed and Coppersmith Barbets. Green Bee-eaters fly back and forth and we find a Hoopoe working the grassy area beyond the fence. We get our first scope views of an Ashy Woodswallow perched in the open – we'd only seen them in the air until now. There are Magpie Robins, Indian Robin, Red-wattled Lapwing and a few more familiar faces. All very nice!

After another sumptuous lunch, around mid-afternoon we drive to Trincomalee where we have a couple of cultural visits planned, first of which is the National Maritime Museum. This is at the site of a former Governors residence that we soon learn was in a bad state of disrepair and restored in 2006. Inside there are exhibits showing the history of this busy port and also the natural history of the productive seas, including some nice models of whales!

Then through Fort Frederick on the Swami headland to the Hindu shrine at Kandasamy Kovil. It's another colourful temple with painted statues to Hindu gods, again wonderfully supported by the local community. In the trees are the tame Spotted Deer that have colonised the fort, and above the canopy a White-bellied Sea Eagle soars. We scan across the water thinking of what lurks beneath – hopefully we'll have a chance to explore tomorrow..

Day 10: Whales ahoy

We meet at breakfast and note that the calm conditions forecasted have come to pass, so excitedly we eat, go back to our rooms and prepare, then are back on the beach at 8am for our first whale-watch excursion. Conditions of a very light wind and almost flat seas should make for a comfortable ride. We climb aboard our small boat that has a sun canopy shielding six seats and set off, heading first to pray for good luck at the Hindu temple along the shore (a custom for all boatmen).

Then it's a heading of due east towards the deeper water and the undersea canyon that marks the entrance to the natural harbour of Trincomalee. First thing of note is a small group of Spinner Dolphins and we spend some time with animals left and right of the boat. Soon after we move towards a group of small fishing boats that are hunting tuna and as we get nearer we can see more Spinner Dolphins working around the boats – they too are interested in the tuna. We get nice looks of a large group of a hundred plus animals, though no-one is quick enough to record any dolphins spinning! We get a message over the radio that other boats are with Blue Whales so we start to move out over deeper water.

After a long while we move into the area where we can see whalewatch boats dotted around and soon we see the tell-tale tall blow of a Blue Whale. We pause

and wait for it to re-surface. While we are looking around our captain points to something behind – two dark brown smallish whales are at the surface showing a typical sickle-shaped fin. As they move forward a much smaller animal comes to the surface adjacent to them – two adults and a young beaked whale. But which species? Unfortunately, they dive and are never to be seen again.

We see a large whale blow in the distance and move nearer. For the next couple of hours we get progressively better looks at mighty Blue Whales. Their distinctive dappled grey skin colour looks even paler in the tropical sun and getting the boat parallel to them travelling and diving we can appreciate their full size – huge! One surfaces right by the side of the boat then after three breaths dives showing its huge flukes. On the underside of the tail fins are Remoras or sucker fish, hitching a ride.

Another boat joins us and it has on board a couple of divers keen to photograph whales underwater, so we leave to seek other whales and head further out away from other boats. It works a treat as we get a whale blowing and surfacing several times, albeit at infrequent times. Chas records the dive times and we are getting anything from four to twelve minutes. When it does surface it seems unfazed by us and actually comes very close on a couple of occasions, but at no point does it 'fluke up' or shows its tail in order to dive deep. The dives are very shallow, so much so that we can see the whole animal seemingly suspended underneath the boat as it swims slowly thirty feet or so beneath us.

After the third close encounter and great looks through the water again we make the big decision – any one for a dip? The whale surfaces once more and we are moving slowly parallel with it then it starts on a trajectory that should pass across the bow and we get in. Darren lowers his head and below is something it would be difficult to even dream about and is beyond our imagination. Glowing turquoise within the interminably darkest of blues is the largest thing that has ever graced the planet. Beautifully streamlined it glides steadily lower with a few gentle motions of its tail and Darren kicks his fins to catch up, watching all the while. Gradually fading into the dark abyss the whole experience is over in twenty seconds. An experience of a lifetime.

Our final experience is with another whale right by the boat; its head is way in front and its tail glowing greeny-blue behind our boat – perhaps fifty feet? And so we make our way back to Trinco and lunch, pausing only when a dark shearwater crosses the bow – a Short-tailed Shearwater! It's been an amazing morning for sure, but now for some food.

Our afternoon excursion is to Periyakulam, another tank on the edge of Trincomalee, some twenty minutes ride, passing an eagle nest along the way. We stop short of the tank to walk through some bushes and trees with flooded rice fields on the right, that are dotted with Black-headed Ibis, Cattle, Intermediate, and Little Egrets. Chas points to a thermal of Brahminy Kites (fourteen) spiralling upwards with three Woolly-necked Storks. In the trees are Malabar Pied

Hornbills - always great to see. As we reach the dyke that holds back the reservoir the view opens up across water and lily-pads to the distant wooded edge. There are lots of Indian Pond Herons, Pheasant-tailed Jacanas and Purple Swamphens on show, and Andrea spots an elephant foraging along the far bank.

Walking along the shaded track we stop when Nilantha points out the biggest Mugger Crocodile we've seen to date – a real monster! Next up is a new species: three black- and-white Jacobin Cuckoos are fluttering amongst the lily pads – nice.

We carry on, strolling along and birds seems to be everywhere: Whiskered Terns, Oriental Darter, Whistling Ducks, Painted Stork, Grey-headed Fish Eagle, Oriental Honey Buzzard and Orange-breasted Pigeon. We obviously look a little odd looking at all these birds and we attract the attention of three Chinese tourists who think we 'look really cool' and can they take our picture – 'not without looking down the telescope' Darren insists. 'Oh wow!' they say – and so we convert some more to the wonder of birds!

At the furthest point Nilantha points out yet more new birds. An Ashy Prinia is perched up well in a bush and bushes and tree-tops are filling with flocks of Rosy Starlings that are starting to gather to roost. We wander back to the van and as we leave yet another new beastie, a Grey Mongoose, scurries along to our right in plain view to all. What a lovely evening walk and coupled with the whalewatch (and whale-swim) a day of days for sure!

Day 11: The Mystery of Whales

It is another beautiful morning and after breakfast we meet at the beach at 8am. It's our second whale-watch and we are soon boarded and ready to go. Again, there are good sea conditions and we quickly head east to see what we can find (after a blessing from the temple!)

We push out past groups of terns including a few Bridled but we fail to connect with any dolphins in the shallower water. Indeed, we struggle to see much at all as we push further out. We come across a dive boat bobbing along in the middle of nowhere and speak to two young Australians who have had little success too. Nevertheless we keep on looking and head further east. Nil spots some flukes in the far distance and we continue on a trajectory to where something has executed a deep dive. Chas points out that Sperm Whales can dive from anywhere between twenty and forty minutes, we cut the engine and float and play the waiting game. Sadly, after forty-five minutes nothing shows so we decide to head north, knowing other whale-watch boats have seen Blue Whales there.

We slowly move north over very deep water and after thirty minutes or so arrive at the area that the whales have been reported. There are no boats and again we do a thorough search to no avail. We decide on a heading back towards the coast and are slowly working our way west when a dark whale moves across the bow. It surfaces again, showing a sleek blackish profile with a sickle-shaped fin that appears relatively quickly as the whale 'rolls'. It is 'Bryde's Whale type', a medium-

sized whale of the tropics – but as Chas has seen closely related Eden's and Omura's Whales we decide to spend some time trying to photograph the animal. Again and again it surfaces, often heralded by a ring of bubbles as it exhales before surfacing. The diagnostic features are displayed on the whale's rostrum, the flatish area between the blowhole and the pointed snout. Bryde's has three ridges, the rarely seen Eden's has five and the even less known Omura's has none.

We get a few opportunities of getting alongside, while it goes through its dive sequence and it looks like it has a smooth snout and rostrum – Chas thinks it may be an Omura's whale – a species he has seen only once before. The whale gets accustomed to our boat as on a couple of occasions it surfaces and drifts slowly towards us, hanging just below the surface. Twice it twists over underwater and reveals its white belly, shimmering beneath the waves. We can actually see it swim upside down as it moves underneath the boat – wow! After more close encounters when the whale moves very close to the boat Chas decides perhaps an underwater photograph would help clinch identification. So, in the name of scientific research two brave souls enter the water – another lifetime's high snorkelling with one of the most unknown of the great whales.

While we are enjoying the last encounter with the mystery whale we see large blows in the distance, between our position and the shore. We move away looking for bigger things and sure enough as we get nearer we can see the tall blows of two Blue Whales. It's a mother and calf pairing and we get looks at them close to the surface. They have attracted dive boats and photographers are entering into the water with them so we hang back. The whales move through the melee and we travel alongside them for a while before the boats catch up again. After a second encounter we move away as ahead is yet another blow from a single whale. We move towards it and again we have a lone Blue Whale. It completes its sequence of two surfaces then does a deep dive showing off its flukes – like so many of the animals we've seen it has Remoras on its fins.

So, after a slow start, it's has proven to be a fruitful, if long, boat trip – three Blue Whales and our mystery Bryde's/Eden's/Omura's Whale. Lucky Nilantha brought some food to sustain us over the seven hours at sea!

As we've had an extended time on the water we decide the rest of the afternoon should be a very relaxed affair with everyone choosing their own form of activity.

Day 12: Dolphins at Dawn

As we missed out on our first day at sea, everyone is keen to squeeze in one last boat trip and with Nilantha's help we manage to arrange an early morning excursion at 6.30am. The water is flat calm and the sun just rising over the sea as we gather on the beach – we couldn't wish for more perfect conditions. As we only have three hours to play with we set our ambitions accordingly and decide to focus on the coastal waters and canyon at the mouth of Trinco harbour where there were large dolphin groups a couple of days earlier.

We are only ten minutes out and we see our first fins in the water, these are strong sickle-shaped dorsals on a uniform brown-grey back. When the dolphins surface they seem more robust and lack the long snout of the Spinners – these are Indo-Pacific Bottlenose Dolphins – a group of seven. We spend fifteen minutes or so enjoying their company, getting looks at the salient identification points and just being with them. Our captain Rashan points out these are the clever dolphins that will take tuna from the fishermen's nets!

We move further out and are soon with more dolphins, this time a modest group of Spinners. They are interested in the tuna shoals, feeding on the same smaller fish and as they associate with the much-prized, valuable fish, the fishermen look out for them and will set their nets ahead of the dolphins. Two boats are doing just that when we approach. We get good looks but don't want to impede the fishing activities so carry on further out.

In the distance is a larger group of small boats and as we get nearer we can see why the fishermen are gathered. The water is bursting with dolphins that have obviously found a very large shoal of tuna – everyone wants a piece of the action it seems. We spend the next hour or so steadily working around the perimeter, getting great looks of a superpod of dolphins –perhaps 6-700 animals. At times they are all around us, often bursting from the water with boisterous spinning leaps. We all take turn at the bow looking across the spectacle – a special moment for sure.

Then Chas spots some dolphins leaping in a different manner. His keen eyes and years of experience tells him that these are Spotted Dolphins so we try and manoeuvre to get better looks. Sure enough we finally get looks at their features – a thinner sickle dorsal, a caped appearance with a pale face and a shorter snout with a pale tip. Our third dolphin species. A great morning!

We return and get a well-deserved breakfast before packing for the day's transfer to Colombo. We say our goodbyes to the staff at the Trinco Blu and board the minivan for the long journey to our hotel near the airport. The road takes us first towards Habarana and a comfort and refreshment stop at the Cinnamon Village. We pass a few wetlands on the way and see a handful of species through the window, but don't really stop – we see Painted and Openbill Storks and collections of Intermediate, Cattle and Little Egrets in groups.

After lunch at Dambulla we take the busier road towards Colombo, stopping once only for a comfort break and a juice, before finally checking in at the familiar Tamarind Tree Hotel.

Before dinner we meet at the bar and exchange memories and collect the votes for species of the trip:

Joint Winners: Leopard, Blue Whale and the mystery Bryde's/Eden's Whale.

Second: Sloth Bears.

Best bird: Black-naped Monarch.

Honourable mentions: Indian Pitta, Malabar Pied Hornbill, Little Green Bee-eater.

Magic Moment: Too many! But two clear favourites were close encounters of the whaley kind and the Wilpattu Leopard sighting.

Special Place: We all have special places: Trinco and the peaceful Indian Ocean; the langur-filled gardens at Cinnamon Village, Habarana; and the moving Commonwealth War Cemetery, Trinco.

Charles has to leave us, as he has a Maldives cruise to lead – can we come? Reluctantly we say our goodbyes to him and Sanjeeba, who both have taken great care of us these last twelve days.

Day 13: **The Way Home**

There's a relaxed breakfast before we soon have to leave the Tamarind Tree Hotel. We say our goodbyes to Sarah whose adventure still continues – she's off to Borneo! Two hours later Nilantha escorts us to the airport, a short distance away. Our final goodbyes to him – many thanks for looking after us so well. Then it's into the air-conditioned terminal of Colombo airport and check-in for the long flight home..

Species Lists

Birds

Little Grebe
Short-tailed Shearwater
Spot-billed Pelican
Little Cormorant
Indian Cormorant
Great Cormorant
Oriental Darter
Black-crowned Night Heron
Indian Pond Heron
Cattle Egret
Little Egret
Intermediate Egret
Great Egret
Grey Heron
Purple Heron
Painted Stork
Asian Openbill
Woolly-necked Stork
Black-headed Ibis
Lesser Whistling-duck
Garganey
Oriental Honey Buzzard
Brahminy Kite
White-bellied Sea Eagle
Grey-headed Fish Eagle
Crested Serpent Eagle
Crested (Changeable) Hawk Eagle
Black Eagle
Besra
Shikra
Montagu's Harrier
Sri Lanka Junglefowl
Indian Peafowl
White-breasted Waterhen
Common Moorhen
Purple Swampphen
Pheasant-tailed Jacana
Black-winged Stilt
Great Thick-knee
Little Ringed Plover
Kentish Plover
Lesser Sand Plover
Greater Sand Plover
Pacific Golden Plover
Red-wattled Lapwing
Yellow-wattled Lapwing
Black-tailed Godwit
Whimbrel
Common Redshank
Marsh Sandpiper
Common Greenshank
Green Sandpiper
Wood Sandpiper
Common Sandpiper
Pintail Snipe
Little Stint
Curlew Sandpiper
Whiskered Tern
White-winged Tern
Gull-billed Tern
Common Tern
Little Tern
Saunders's Tern
Great Crested Tern
Lesser Crested Tern
Bridled Tern
Feral / Rock Pigeon
Spotted Dove
Emerald Dove
Orange-breasted Green Pigeon
Sri Lanka Green Pigeon
Green Imperial Pigeon
Rose-ringed Parakeet
Jacobin (Pied) Cuckoo
Indian Cuckoo
Grey-bellied Cuckoo
Asian Koel
Blue-faced Malkoha
Greater Coucal
Brown Fish Owl
Indian Nightjar
House Swift
Asian Palm Swift
Crested Treeswift
Stork-billed Kingfisher
White-throated Kingfisher
Common Kingfisher
Pied Kingfisher

Green Bee-eater
Blue-tailed Bee-eater
Chestnut-headed Bee-eater
Indian Roller
Common Hoopoe
Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill
Malabar Pied Hornbill
Brown-headed Barbet
Crimson-fronted Barbet
Coppersmith Barbet
Black-rumped Flameback
Indian Pitta
Sri Lanka Woodshrike
Brown Shrike
Jerdon's Bushlark (Rufous-winged Lark)
Oriental Skylark
Ashy-crowned Sparrow Lark
Barn Swallow
Richard's Pipit
Paddyfield Pipit
Forest Wagtail
Yellow Wagtail
Small Minivet
Bar-winged Flycatcher-Shrike
Black-capped Bulbul
Red-vented Bulbul
White-browed Bulbul
Common Iora
Jerdon's Leafbird
Oriental Magpie Robin
White-rumped Shama

Indian Robin
Brown-capped Babbler
Dark-fronted Babbler
Yellow-billed Babbler
Green Warbler
Thick-billed Warbler
Blyth's Reed Warbler
Zitting Cisticola
Grey-breasted Prinia
Ashy Prinia
Common Tailorbird
Black-naped Monarch
Asian Paradise-flycatcher
Asian Brown Flycatcher
Tickell's Flycatcher
Pale-billed Flowerpecker
Purple-rumped Sunbird
Loten's (Long-billed) Sunbird
Purple Sunbird
Oriental White-eye
White-rumped Munia
House Sparrow
Rosy Starling
Common Myna
Black-hooded Oriole
White-bellied Drongo
Black Drongo
Ashy Woodswallow
House Crow
Large-billed Crow

Cetaceans

Blue Whale

Bryde's/Eden's Whale

Beaked Whale sp

Indo-Pacific Bottlenose Dolphin

Spinner Dolphin

Spotted Dolphin

Terrestrial Mammals

Indian Flying Fox (Fruit Bat)

Toque Macaque

Grey Langur

Purple-faced Leaf Monkey

Sloth Bear

Ruddy Mongoose

Grey Mongoose

Leopard

Asian Elephant

Wild Boar

Spotted Deer

Sambar Deer

Barking Deer

Water Buffalo

Indian Palm Squirrel

Grizzled Giant Squirrel

Black-naped Hare

Reptiles and Amphibians

Green Garden Lizard

Common Skink

Asian House Gecko

Bark Gecko

Land Monitor

Water Monitor

Mugger Crocodile

Star Tortoise

Indian Softshell Turtle