

Island of Wonder: Birds & Nature of Sri Lanka

Species List | November 6-22, 2025

with Naturalist Journeys



Compiled by guide Peg Abbott with expert local guides Ashan Piyasinghe, Tharaka Dhananjaya, and Wicky Wichramasekera. Travelers:Cathy, Debbie, Dawn, Mike, Andrew, Sherry, Jan, Elizabeth, Steven & Lise.

This was an inaugural journey for our company, though we had done many different tours in neighboring India, we had somehow missed this incredible island nation. The trip passed our test with flying colors and we will surely be back. We experienced absolutely seamless logistics by our host company, lovely accommodations, excellent food, and had great guides to help us find almost all of the country's endemics with kind attention to the hiking abilities of our group. We delighted in the beauty of the country across a wide variety of landscapes. We were impressed with the overall density and ease of seeing mammals and birds. The national parks were lively at the entry gates but people spread out and we did not feel crowded.

We saw 21 species of mammals including Leopard, Sloth Bear, Giant Squirrels, Asian Elephants, and Purple-faced Leaf and other monkeys. The birds were wonderful, 252 species from wetlands to forests, including colorful doves, and great looks at both Sirkeer and Blue-faced Malkohas (and for the hikers the Red-faced Malkoha too). We saw a wonderful array of water-loving birds including Pheasant-tailed Jacana and three species of bitterns - Yellow, Black, and Cinnamon (in order of difficulty). We enjoyed time by the ocean with many shorebirds and seeing tiny Barred Buttonquail cross forest pathways. Finding fifteen species of raptors, numerous sightings of Sri Lanka Gray and Malabar Pied Hornbills, five species of kingfisher and four barbets, and nine woodpeckers - some quite colorful kept our photographers happy. We loved the variety of parakeets, tiny hanging-parrots, and had an Indian Pitta nearly walk right up to us early one morning on a hotel lawn - wow!

This is a great country to get to know the Asian bird families which are well represented but not overwhelming. Finding 30+ endemics made for a great sense of accomplishment, and for most we had really good looks and time to watch behavior and detail. Favorite moments and birds were many, from tiny flowerpeckers to stunning Painted Storks, Stork-billed Kingfishers and their secretive and smaller Black-backed Dwarf Kingfisher cousins, two species of crimson-colored flamebacks, the drama of a lone and massive Black-necked Stork flying in just as we were about to give up hope, and the outrageous Sri Lanka Blue Magpie. Many noted the beautiful light at the start of our safaris, and seeing Leopard, Elephant, and one night at sunset tens of thousands of fascinating flying fox bats. We missed only two endemics, in part because we experienced some unseasonably heavy rain, flying out about four days ahead of a devastating cyclone. We had made such good friends of our guides and host company and at the various lodges we enjoyed that we worried long hours until they were back in communication. Thankfully our team all were safe, and it was time to help others not as fortunate. Sri Lanka is a resilient and beautiful country and thy will be ready for our return.

BIRDS: 252 species were recorded. Details are included in the eBird link below which details the 252 species of birds our group observed during the tour. If you're new to eBird, be sure to click "Show All Details" on the right side of the list to expand the report and reveal where and when each of the birds were seen and how many.

[Island of Wonder: Birds & Nature of Sri Lanka | Nov 6-22, 2025 | eBird Trip Report](#)

Following is a list of the mammals, reptiles and amphibians we were fortunate to observe during the trip.

MAMMALS (21):

Black-naped Hare *Lepus nigricollis* – (5) *Widespread, seen with ease.*

Giant Squirrel *Ratufa macroura* – (5) *Great views of this signature species of the Southern India/Sri Lanka Sky Islands.*

Dusky Striped Squirrel *Funambulus sublineatus* – (1) *Seen at high elevation, while enjoying a field breakfast.*

Palm Squirrel *Funambulus palmarum* – (12) *very common, seen regularly including around our lodgings.*

Asiatic Water Buffalo *Bubalus bubalis* (3) *Small herds seen in Wilpattu and Yala NPs.*

Indian Munjac *Muntiacus muntjak* – (2) *Wilpattu and Horton Plains NP, not common*

Sambar *Cervus unicolor* – (3) *a regal male was seen basking on a lawn near a park residence in Horton Plains. Females seen infrequently in other parks.*

Spotted Deer *Cervus axis* – (5) *Fairly common, large herds seen in the larger national parks.*

Wild Pig *Sus scrofa* – (1) *Seen by one vehicle in Yala on safari.*

Asian Elephant *Elephas maximus* – (4) *One group saw our first at Wilpattu, then we saw many in Yala and in Uda Walawe NPs.*

Sri Lankan Leopard *Panthera pardus kotiya* – (2) *Incredible sightings in Wilpattu, and Yala, several individuals.*

Ruddy Mongoose *Herpestes smithii* – (4) *Fairly common, good views.*

Stripe-necked Mongoose *Urva vitticolla* – (1) *Seen on a travel day mid-tip between national parks.*

Indian Grey Mongoose *Herpestes edwardsii* – (4) *Widespread, seen in small numbers.*

Ring-tailed Civet *Viverricula indica* – (1) *Views on our night drive in Yala.*

Sloth Bear *Melursus ursinus* – (1) *With patience and some luck, one vehicle got views of this large bear that digs for termites and other insects like an anteater.*

Golden Jackal *Canis aureus* – (1) *Seen on our first afternoon in Yala.*

Purple-faced Leaf Monkey (E) *Trachypithecus vetulus* - (3) *We got views of a troop in misty trees on our drive up to Horton Plains, and one vehicle got close up views on return. We saw them again in the vicinity of Jansen's Bungalows.*

Grey Langur *Seminopithecus priam* - (6) *Common and widespread, tolerant of human settlements.*

Toque Macaque *Macaca sinica* - (7) *Excellent views, while endemic and only locally common, we learned they could be quite bold and are aggressive pests at some park picnic areas.*

Indian Flying Fox *Pteropus giganteus* – (3) *Incredible numbers seen at roost sites, we watched as they filled the sky!*

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS (18):

Star Tortoise *Geochelone elegans* – (3)
Garden Lizard *Calotes versicolor* (4)
Land Monitor *Varanus bengalensis* – (5)
Mugger Crocodile *Crocodylus palustris* – (4)
Hard-Shelled Terrapin *Melanochelys sp.* (1)
Soft-Shelled Terrapin *Lissemys ceylonensis* (1)
Indian Skipper Frog *Euphlyctis cyanophly* (1)
Spotted Tree Frog *Polypedates maculatus* (1)
Brush Hanging Lizard – (1)
Kangaroo Lizard *Otocryptis weigmanni* (1)
Rhino-Horned Lizard *Ceratophora stoddartii* (1)
Black Lipped Green Lizard *Calotes nigrilabris* (1)
Hourglass Tree Frog *Polypedates cruciger* (1)
Pond Frog *Euphlyctis hexadactylus* (1)
House Gecko *Hemidactylus parvimaculatus* (1)
Rat Snake *Ptyas mucosa* (1)
Common Water Monitor *Varanus salvator* (1)
Notable invertebrate: Leech *Haemadipsa sylvestris* (3)