

# SRI LANKA—Absolute Birding!

A 14-day Sri Lankan Birding and Wildlife Holiday with Amila Salgado, Birdwing Nature



[Sri Lanka Blue Magpie](#) | [Chestnut-backed Owlet](#) | [Serendib Scops Owl](#) | [Red-faced Malkoha](#)

## Birding and Wildlife News from the 2009/2010 birding tour season.

**24–26 Nov., & 28–29 Nov:** [A birding trip to Sinharaja rain forest and Nuwara Eliya](#) with 2 British birders, who were on an independent beach holiday, produced 26 of the 33 endemics. Highlights included seeing Serendib Scops Owl, in a daytime roost, at Sinharaja; Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush, and Sri Lanka Bush Warbler at Nuwara Eliya; plus montane migrants: Kashmir Flycatcher, and Pied Thrush at Hakgala Botanical Gardens. Misses were Sri Lanka Small Barbet, Sri Lanka Woodshrike, Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon, Sri Lanka Spurfowl, and Sri Lanka Scaly Thrush—which drove the importance of having more time and luck.

**30 Nov–13 Dec:** [An Absolute Birding trip with 3 British birders](#) produced 246 species of birds including all 33 endemics. Highlights included Serendib Scops Owl in a daytime roost at Sinharaja; Isabelline Wheater at Yala; Hume's Whitethroat at Bundala; Pied Thrush at Victoria Park; Watercock at Pannegamuwa Tank; 4 Brown Wood Owls: 1 at Sinharaja and 3 at a daytime roost at Surrey Estate; a pair of White-naped Woodpeckers; Citrine and White Wagtails at Udawalawe National Park; 1 Eurasian Widgeon at Debarawewa—a rare visitor to southern Sri Lanka; a nesting Black-throated aka. Hill Munia, and Kashmir Flycatcher at Hakgala Botanical Gardens; and Pomarine Scua, and Brown Booby while sea-watching off Negombo. Mammalian highlights included great views of Leopard resting in a tree at Yala.

**16–30 Dec:** [A Birding in Style—family holiday](#) of British birder who travelled with his non-birding U.S. spouse, and their 2 non-birding girls, aged 20 and 22, produced 221 species of birds including all 33 endemics. (And we did not visit Kithulgala, and Udawalawe!) Highlights includes a pair of Greater Painted Snipe, Peregrine, & Watercock at Bundala; Slaty-legged Crake at Sinharaja; Indian Scops Owl and Brown Fish Owl in day time roosts at Tissa; nesting Plum-headed Parakeets at Simpson's Forest; Marshall's Iora at Yala; Blyth's Pipit at Weerawila; and Pied Thrush and Kashmir Flycatcher at Victoria Park. Mammalian highlight included a Leopard resting in a tree in heavy rain seen during an unscheduled game drive on the last morning at Yala. Click [here](#) to read a 37-paged Trip Report!

**3–5 Jan:** [A 3-day trip to Sinharaja and Udawalawe NP](#) with a couple of bird watchers from CO, U.S. produced 142 species of birds including 21 endemics. Star bird of the trip was a Serendib Scops Owl in a daytime roost.

Bird of the trip for all trips above: the Serendib Scops Owl, discovered in Jan., 2001.

**9–20 Jan:** I lead [my second trip with Kudu Travels, UK](#) with 11 British visitors. Although it wasn't strictly a wildlife tour, we did manage to see 3 Leopards between 2 game drives. Other highlights included [a pair of Stilts in flagrante delicto](#), and [a very obliging Lesser Pied Kingfisher](#).

**21 Jan:** [A day excursion to Sigiriya](#) with 2 British birders produced the usual suspects in the dry zone, including the endemics: Sri Lanka Woodshrike, Sri Lanka Small Barbet, and Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill.

**22–23 Jan:** [A 2-day trip to Sinharaja](#) with the same British clients mentioned above saw us raking in a tally of 27 endemic birds out of 33 between the two trips. Natural History highlight was a Green Pit Viper.

**24 Jan–8 Feb:** [A High-octane Bird-photography Tour](#) with 3 from Hong Kong, including one wielding a Canon EOS 1D Mark IV coupled with a Canon 500mm Super Telephoto Lens, saw yet another cleaned up act of the endemics. A pair of Serendib Scops Owls in a day time roost at Kithulgala—discovered by me!—was a special highlight.

**9–11 Feb:** [A 3-day trip to Sinharaja](#) with 2 Brits produced 22 endemics. Highlights include Serendib Scops Owl in a daytime roost and a brooding male Sri Lanka Frogmouth. Top mammalian highlight of this trip was a [Red Slender Loris](#).

**14–27 Mar:** An [Absolute Birding tour](#) with 2 British birders, wielding Canon telephoto and prime lenses, registered 230 species of birds with all 33 endemics. [A special highlight](#) was seeing 12 out of the 15 resident night birds of Sri Lanka! This beat my previous best of 10 night birds in Feb., 2009. Our nocturnal misses include Barn Owl, Sri Lanka Bay Owl and Indian Jungle Nightjar. Of the endemics, all except Layard's Parakeet was photographed by the clients. (Yes, even the Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush obliged!). Mammalian specials included 2 separate sightings of Leopard at Yala, and a chance sighting of Red Slender Loris at Kithulgala. We scored 19 endemics in 2 days at Kithulgala on this trip. A detailed report has been promised by the clients.

**6–7 April:** A 2-day trip to Sinharaja with 2 German birders yielded 20 endemics including Sri Lanka Scaly Thrush and Green-billed Coucal. Natural History specials included many butterflies including the seasonal endemic One-spot Grass Yellow.

**11–12 April:** A 2 day trip to Sinharaja with a family of 4 Brits produced over 20 endemic birds, which included a Serendib Scops Owl in a daytime roost and a nesting pair of Sri Lanka Scaly Thrush—both of which yielded scope views. A Green Pit Viper and many butterflies (April is a peak month for them) including the endemic One-spot Grass Yellow, and Five-bar Swordtail were also seen and photographed well.

**17-30 April:** An [Absolute Birding tour](#) with a top U.S. birder, with over 4,000 life birds, yielded 216 species of birds including all 33 endemics. A special highlight of this as in the previous tour was seeing 12 out of the 15 resident night birds—identical mix of species as



before! Nesting pair of Sheen Falcons at Sigiriya; White-tailed Iora at Bundala; Spot-bellied Eagle Owl at Kandy; Legge's Hawk Eagle at Sinharaja; Black Kite at Katunayake were few of the highlights. We had dry weather during this tour when it mattered most at wet zone jungle forays. The Sri Lanka Blue Magpie was picked as the "bird of trip," followed closely by the Serendib Scops Owl. April being a peak month for butterflies, we did well, and our top find was the rare Aberrant Bushblue, which we photographed at Sinharaja.

- Amila Salgado

### Outline Itinerary

**Day 01** Arrive in Sri Lanka, and transfer to Kithulgala for 2 nights.

**Day 02** Full day birding in Kithulgala for lowland endemics, and specialties.

**Day 03** Drive to Sinharaja Rainforest for endemics. 3 nights at Sinharaja.

**Day 04** Full day birding in Sinharaja for lowland endemics/mixed species bird flocks.

**Day 05** Full day birding in Sinharaja and peripheral patches for remaining targets.

**Day 06** Drive to Udawalawe for dry zone specialties. 1 night at Udawalawe.

**Day 07** Drive to Tissamaharama (Tissa) for wetland birds. 3 nights at Tissa.

**Day 08** Bundala National Park for shorebirds and Yala for Leopards.

**Day 09** Morning local birding. Afternoon visit Yala National Park.

**Day 10** Drive to Nuwara Eliya for montane endemics and specials. 2 nights at Nuwara Eliya

**Day 11** Visit a combination of patches for montane endemics & specials. P.m., local birding.

**Day 12** Drive down to Kandy. Royal Botanical Gardens. 1 night at Kandy.

**Day 13** City tour in Kandy. 1 night at Katunayake (or, optional extension to Sigiriya).

**Day 14** Departure.



[Black-backed Dwarf Kingfisher](#)

## Introduction

Situated just 6 degrees north of the equator in the Indian Ocean, Sri Lanka is a delightful island with a land area of 65,610 sq.km. A continental island, it had been connected to India for much of its geological past through times of lower sea levels. Despite these land bridge connections, faunal exchange between the endemic-rich rain forests found in southwestern India and Sri Lanka's wet zone—in the south western and central hills—had been minimal. This is likely to have occurred due to the inability of rainforest organisms to disperse through the intervening dry lowlands in the northern half of Sri Lanka, which receives its rain largely by one major rain system: North East Monsoon. By contrast, the wet zone is drained by two monsoons; plus other tropical weather systems—leaving it wet almost throughout the year.



False Lantern-fly

[Dawn Drooping](#)

Sri Lanka Tree Nymph

Green Forest Lizard

Therefore, it is little surprising why Sri Lanka's wet zone, covering an area of 22,000 sq.km., is regarded as the only "aseasonal ever-wet region of the whole of South Asia." It is believed that organisms in this part of Sri Lanka have got isolated for longer period of time—in an island within an island—due to the aforementioned climatic & geological facts.

Long insularity, high rainfall, and year-round warm temperatures can mean one thing—a splendid array of endemic biodiversity! This explains why southwestern Sri Lanka and Western Ghats of southwestern India are jointly regarded as one of the 34 biodiversity hotspots in the world. Despite losing 70% of its original habitat, this region still contains 0.7 % of the world's known vascular plants and 1.3 % of the known vertebrate animals endemic to it. Sri Lanka is the western-most representative of Indo-Malayan flora, and its abundant birdlife shows many such affinities.

The Absolute Birding tour mainly focuses on the island's abundant avifauna—especially the 33 endemics currently recognised, and Indian sub-continent & Oriental specialties including migrants. We aim to see over 75% of the 53 or so species of birds endemic to Sri Lanka and India. This birding tour ideal during late October to April, when the northern winter migrants supplement the island's resident birds. Therefore, this period is most likely to produce good numbers and great birding. We aim to see 230-250 species of birds during this period.

During May to September, this tour will focus on the resident birdlife and other wildlife such as Leopards. June-mid October is also good to see the ["gathering" of Asian Elephants](#) at the Minneriya National Park and other parks nearby. [Butterfly](#) and [dragonfly](#) enthusiasts should consider April–May; [August](#)–Oct., as those periods mark the peaks for them. Those





who like to [see the Blue Whales](#) should time their arrival between Dec.–April (Dec., and [April](#) are the two peak months).

With four game drives in Sri Lanka's top dry zone national parks: Udawalawe, Bundala, and Yala, you may see plenty of wildlife on this holiday including Sri Lanka's big three: Leopard, Elephant, and Sloth Bear. We will also be visiting the Sinharaja "world heritage" rain forests, and the cloud forests of central hills in search of the endemics and regional specialties.

One of the key attributes of this holiday is its high-quality interpretive ornithological & natural history guiding by Amila Salgado, who counts over 20 years field experience in the wilds of Sri Lanka. In addition to birds, which are his main interest, Amila is also conversant in many other aspects of natural history such as mammals, [reptiles](#), [amphibians](#), [dragonflies](#), [butterflies](#), [other insects](#), fish, [botany](#); plus related disciplines such as [ecology](#), biogeography, [behaviour](#), and [photography](#). Amila is passionate about Sri Lanka's history and culture and is also licensed to guide in all cultural sites in Sri Lanka. He will be flexible to accommodate your needs, whether you are [a hardcore birder needing just specific target birds](#), or a birder with broader interests in [natural history](#), [macro photography](#), [digiscoping](#), [culture](#), or—even—[Scrabble](#)! Looking into every aspect of the tour, Amila will be with you in person throughout your Absolute Birding adventure.



Legge's Flowerpecker | Crimson-backed Flameback | Chestnut-headed Bee-eater | Spot-winged Thrush

The itinerary covers a variety of habitats, which include pristine lowland rainforests, lily-covered inland reservoirs/wetlands, dry-country big game parks, tall grasslands, thorny scrublands, dense monsoon forests, coastal mudflats, imposing riverine forests, and misty cloud forests. As such, the tour combines a variety of local avifaunal zones and ensures highly profitable birding. There will be plenty of walking, particularly in the rainforests, where we will look for the endemics and mixed-species bird flocks. These comfortably paced walks create great opportunities to spot and enjoy the birds. Almost 90% of our walks will be on flat or gently sloping terrain. Amila will carry his ~~Kowa TSN-823~~ Swarovski ATM 80 HD telescope with 25-50 x eye piece during most birding walks to scope the birds that stay long enough for better appreciation. This will be particularly helpful for those new to tropics or for those who simply do not want to lug a telescope along.

The typical birding day includes catching the early morning activity before breakfast, a longer walk later in the morning, an early afternoon break for "recharging the batteries," and a late afternoon walk until dusk to focus on crepuscular activity.

In order to save up precious birding time, a variety of accommodation is used closer to the birding sites visited with the aim of keeping the drive time to a minimum and to make efficient use of the time for proper birding. These include an eco lodge, colonial Rest-house, a family-run guest house, a safari game lodge, a star class nature resort, & several star class hotels fit for overseas travellers. High quality of dining experiences complement great birding in this excellent holiday with a fine mix of western and eastern delicacies from Sri Lankan rice and curry to western-styled meals. Your breakfasts will be western-styled; however, the more adventurous could try local breakfast delights such as *hoppers* (absolutely nothing to do with grasshoppers), egg *hoppers*, string *hoppers* (comes with no strings attached), *roti*, and/or milk rice!

### Itinerary in detail.

[Bird names used here mainly follows, "Birds of South Asia" by Dr. Pamela Rasmussen (2005).]

**Day 01** After your arrival in Sri Lanka, at the Bandaranaiyake International Airport in Katunayake, we will soon set off on a three-hour journey to reach our first birding base—the lush lowlands of Kithulgala.



Sri Lanka Junglefowl

[Brown Hawk Owl](#)

Indian Pitta

[Sri Lanka Scaly Thrush](#)

The drive to Kithulgala would present a wonderful kaleidoscope of rural Sri Lanka with its verdant home gardens packed with Jak Fruit trees, Coconut palms, and Fish-tail Palms; scare crows erected in paddyfields and houses newly built, to ward off "evil eyes" of jealous onlookers; Buddhist temples with their egret-white stupas; small-scale vendors selling their buxom King coconuts; ubiquitous tuk-tuks; billboards of national cricketers who claim they cannot eat without Coke; and aggressive "private busses" blaring with their obligatory Sinhala pop.

Roadside birding in Sri Lanka is refreshingly good.

Blue-tailed Bee-eater, White-throated Kingfisher, White-bellied Drongo, Indian Roller, Sri Lanka Swallow, Scaly-bellied Munia, Brown Shrikes, Jungle Crow, Yellow-billed Babbler, Oriental Magpie Robin, and Ashy Woodswallow—are often seen perched on wires. Though we will no doubt see them again and again, these wayside temptations will be hard to resist for some.

The odd Crested Serpent Eagle and Crested Hawk Eagle sentinel on posts would almost certainly bring our vehicle to a halt. The common water birds such as Red-wattled Lapwings,

Indian Pond Heron, "Eastern" Cattle Egret, Intermediate Egret, Black-winged Stilts, and Asian Openbills won't be ignored either.

With all these leg stretching stops, it will be close to midday by the time we reach our overnight accommodation, nestled in a well-wooded garden, overlooking the Kelani River—the setting for the 50s Hollywood blockbuster, "Bridge of the River Kwai."

After enjoying our first of the many rice and curry lunches, we will commence our quest for the island's endemics in the well-wooded garden of our lodge. The resonant calls of Yellow-fronted Barbet is likely to demand our attention first—a common element in the soundscape of the wet Sri Lankan hinterland. The gregarious Orange-billed Babbler with its constant chattering will be easier to locate.

A gem of a bird, Sri Lanka Parrot—with its species name "beryllinus" named after Beryl, a semi-precious stone found in Sri Lanka—may require scope views to properly take in its scarlet forehead, and rump patch against a greener body.



Sri Lanka Frogmouth at a daytime roost in a 14-day Absolute Birding tour in March, 2010. We bagged 12 out of the 15 resident night birds on this tour. This feat was equalled in April, 2010.

Our night bird tally is likely get ticking with the adorable Chestnut-backed Owlet at a stake out. The sonorous calls that fill the air may hold promise for yet another top bird—the Green-billed Coucal, which often proves tough at the more densely wooded Sinharaja.

In the late afternoon, we will cross the Kelani River, in a hand-paddled "dug-out canoe" fitted with an outrigger, to reach the Kithulgala rain forest in search of rarer gems.

Foremost among these is the Serendib Scops Owl, discovered in 2001, and with an estimated population of only 200-250 birds in the wild. The ultra-secretive Sri Lanka





Spurfowl may require patience as it is highly wary of bipeds. A mid-forest vigil at gap will see more additions to our list in the form of Dollarbird—a rarity in Sri Lanka, curiously named Crimson-backed Flameback, and Layard's Parakeet, named after E. L. Layard, a 19<sup>th</sup> century British civil servant, who added an astonishing 136 species of birds to Sri Lanka's avian inventory.

Birding: Black-capped Bulbul, Yellow-fronted Barbet, Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot, Layard's Parakeet, Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill, Sri Lanka Green Pigeon, Green-billed Coucal, Chestnut-backed Owlet, Crimson-backed Flameback, Sri Lanka Crested Drongo, Brown-capped Babbler, Sri Lanka Scimitar Babbler, Orange-billed Babbler, Serendib Scops Owl, Sri Lanka Frogmouth, Malabar Trogon, Brown-headed Barbet, Brown Hawk Owl, Black-backed Dwarf Kingfisher, Crested Serpent Eagle, Jerdon's Leafbird, Gold-fronted Leafbird, Dark-fronted Babbler, Orange Minivet, "Square-tailed" Black Bulbul, Lesser Hill Myna, Yellow-browed Bulbul, Indian Pitta, Forest Wagtail, Purple-rumped Sunbird, Long-billed Sunbird, Pale-billed Flowerpecker, Brown-breasted Flycatcher, Oriental White-eye, Lesser Yellownappe, Rufous Woodpecker, Black-rumped Flameback, "Southern" Coucal, Asian Palm, House Swifts, Indian Swiftlet, Crested Treeswift, Asian Paradise Flycatcher, Tickell's Blue Flycatcher, Green Imperial Pigeon, Black Eagle, Rufous-bellied Hawk Eagle. (In an 18-day birds, wildlife and culture tour done with 2 British birders (24 Jan-9 Feb, 2009), we managed to score 19 of the 33 endemics at Kithulgala on the first 2-days. This tally was equalled in April, 2010 with a single U.S. birder.)



Chestnut-backed Owlet at Kithulgala

Non-birding highlights: Dragonflies and Damselflies: Spine-tufted Skimmer, Pied Parasol, Black-tipped Flashwing, Asian Pintail, Yerbury's Elf, & Shining Gossamerwing; Butterflies: Sri Lanka Birdwing, Clipper, Cruiser, Glad-eye Bushbrown, Plum Judy, Blue Bottle, Red Helan & Blue Mormon; Mammals: Grizzly Giant Squirrel, Palm Squirrel, Layard's Squirrel and Toque Macaque.





Overnight: at a resthouse or a birding lodge.

**Day 02** The Spot-winged Thrush may greet the new day with its rhythmic dawn chorus. And it may perhaps come hopping to find an easy meal at first light. The “pretty-dear” call, likely to be heard in the undergrowth, may betray a flock of Brown-capped Babblers, moving low. The Himalayan delight Indian Pitta would also be not too far, if you scan well.



Layard's Parakeet

With more light of the day, the dawn chorus may peak with additional tunes of Bright Green Warbler, Large-billed Leaf Warbler, Tickell's Blue Flycatcher, Sri Lanka Green Pigeon, Yellow-browed Bulbul, and Black-capped Bulbul. The discordant Sri Lanka Junglefowls too would try its thing. We will look for all.

Our morning's birding will add a huge boost to our tally with the likes, Orange Minivet, Golden-fronted Leafbird, Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill, “Square-tailed” Black Bulbul, Long-billed Sunbird, Lesser Yellownape, Black-naped Monarch, Black-rumped Flameback (endemic in the waiting), Purple-rumped Sunbird, Oriental White-eye, Emerald Dove, and Green Imperial Pigeon.

The star bird of the day, however, is likely to be the diminutive Black-backed Dwarf Kingfisher. Hopefully, it may stay long enough give us scope views to show its brilliant purple-shot orange and black plumage, and vermillion beak and feet.

We will access the forest once more in search of new and missing specials. Our night bird tally may also see a further boost with the likes of Brown Hawk Owl, and Sri Lanka Frogmouth the latter which is endemic to southern India and Sri Lanka.

Birding: As listed above.



Overnight: at a resthouse or an eco lodge.

**Day 03** After some early morning birding, and breakfast, we will drive to the amazing Sinharaja “world heritage” rain forest, which represents the largest expanse of lowland rainforest in Sri Lanka and the premier site for endemics.

Under the euphemistic jargon “selective logging,” this forest was subjected to clear-felling in what was the first mechanised logging project in Sri Lanka from 1972-1977, which was carried out by a Canadian logging company.

The research following the halting of logging operations due to public outrage, led to the recognition of its amazing wealth of biodiversity, and in 1988, it was declared a World Heritage. The former logging tracks now provide the main access to the forest’s interior for visitors.



Red-faced Malkoha holding a giant stick insect *Phobaeticus hypharpax* (Westwood, 1859). in its beak, Sinharaja, in December, 2004.

A highlight of birding in Sinharaja is seeing mixed-species bird flocks, which is a strategy adopted by birds in the tropics to maximise feeding efficiency and to reduce the risk of predation. Studied since 1981, Sinharaja’s is the world’s longest studied bird flock in the world. So far, 59 species have been found in Sinharaja’s bird flocks, averaging 12 species. Interestingly, five species of mammals too have been found to associate birds, which include several squirrel species. Average number of birds of a flock is 42, with Orange-billed Babbler boosting this tally with 16 individuals. Found in 92 % & 89 % respectively, Orange-billed Babbler and Sri Lanka Crested Drongo are jointly regarded as the “nuclear-species” of the flock.

A good flock adds life to the forest, which, under normal circumstances, is relatively silent and uneventful. It can suddenly provide a mouth-watering array of sought-after specials within the span of a few minutes—a pleasantly overwhelming experience for birders.

The star of this coterie of flock-associated specials is the enigmatic Red-faced Malkoha—a canopy dwelling endemic, found typically at heights of 25-35 metres, with a remarkably ability to melt away into the dense thickets.

White-faced Starling too keeps to the canopy. Ashy-headed Laughingthrushes, in comparison, are found in bottom levels of the flock, often scratching the forest's floor for insect prey. The Malabar Trogon hawks insects in the sub-canopy, and remains largely silent. The “steering wheel” of the flock, Orange-billed Babbler, which leads the flocks, occupies from the understorey to the canopy, and is closely watched by the sentinels of the flock, Sri Lanka Crested Drongo—which benefits from the “prey-beating effect” of the gregarious species such as babblers and Laughingthrushes as they forage. This drongo is capable of mimicking most members of the flock—a skill it uses to good effect to call in the birds to form flocks. And in real alarm situations, such as when there is a ground predator, it mixes its own alarm calls in given in such situations with copied versions of the ground-predator specific alarm calls of flock associates such as Orange-billed Babbler, and Ashy-headed Laughingthrush—as if to warn of the impending danger in their own language.



The endangered endemic Serendib Scops Owl—discovered less than a decade ago—at a daytime roost at Sinharaja in Sep., 2010.

Staying overnight a jungle lodge, overlooking the climax rain forest—just 200m from the forest's entrance, we will have first class access to experience such live actions as they unfold. While playing the “numbers game” of adding species after species to lifeless life lists, we will also try to get insights into the real dynamics and ecology of the flocks.



Non-birding highlights: Dragonflies: Asian Skimmer, Marsh Skimmer, Sapphire Flutterer, Wall's Grappletail, Dark-glittering Threadtail, and Jungle Threadtail; Butterflies: Giant King Crow, Tawny Rajah, Red-spot Duke, Five-bar Swordtail (seasonal), Great Eggfly, Rustic, Three-spot Grass Yellow, One-spot Grass Yellow (seasonal), Tailed Jay, Blue Glassy Tiger, and Sri Lanka Tree Nymph; Botany: Ant plant, 45m canopy giants of various Dipterocarp species, and the alien Bamboo orchid; Mammals: "Western" Purple-faced Leaf Monkey, Red Slender Loris (if lucky), Giant Squirrel, Layard's Squirrel, and Dusky-striped Squirrel.



Sri Lanka Blue Magpie.

Overnight: at a family-run guest house just 200 m from the virgin forest.

**Day 04-05** A flock of Sri Lanka Blue Magpies—a blue and chestnut knockout—that lay siege to our accommodation at first light to raid on the moths attracted to the lights is likely to be the first highlight. A puff of feathery dust clouds their beaks as they process hawk moths and such morsels they can find with no mercy.

Soon, we will go looking for the Sri Lanka Scaly Thrush—the high-pitched metallic calls of which is beyond the hearing range of some of the "mature" birders.

We will also look for the montane endemic, Sri Lanka Wood Pigeons—which descends to Sinharaja in search of season fruits. With right technique, and application, more bonus birds will come in our way in the form of Hill Munia, Indian Blue Robin, Slaty-legged Crane, Malayan Night Heron, Indian Cuckoo, and Rufous-bellied Hawk Eagle.

Finding a white morph Asian Paradise Flycatcher, sporting its white ribbon like tail streamers nearly a foot in length may be a possibility, if we encounter a good flock, as this migrant

obtains “regular membership” (defined as found in 25% or more of flocks), during of the flock during its stay. Chestnut-winged Crested Cuckoo, another migrant that joins flocks, may however, present a tougher challenge, as it isn’t as regular.

We will also try forest raptors Besra and Crested Goshawk, which lurk behind flocks to catch birds. As it approaches midday, we may perhaps hear the blood-curdling screams of Grizzled Giant Squirrels, which would betray the presence of more formidable forest raptors such as Legge’s Hawk Eagle and Black Eagle, soaring above the canopy.

In addition to the above, we will try to obtain improved views of the endemics already seen and try to experience the magic of mixed species bird flocks.



Asian Paradise Flycatcher

Overnight: at a family-run guest house just 200 m from the virgin forest.

**Day 06** In the morning, we will explore several patches in the periphery of the reserve, before driving to the dry lowlands of Udawalawe National Park, where a totally different avifauna await us. We will check in to our cosy game lodge accommodation, and after a sit-down lunch, we will board an “open-topped” safari jeep to access the Udawalawe National Park.

This dry zone park is comprised of an interesting tapestry of habitats: grasslands interspersed with shrubs and taller trees—some with dead tops; gallery forests—little islands of forest harbouring different mix of birds from surroundings; smaller water holes owned by buffalos; monsoon forests—restricted to sections of the reserve; and vast freshwater bodies, to name a few.



Consequently, today's birding will see a steep rise in our bird tally with the likes of such dry zone specials as Sri Lanka Woodshrike, Little Green Bee-eater, Malabar Pied Hornbill, Sirkeer Malkoha, Blue-faced Malkoha, Coppersmith Barbet, Yellow-eyed Babbler, Indian Silverbill, Jungle Prinia, Rosy Starling, Jacobin Cuckoo, Grey-bellied Cuckoo, Jerdon's Bushlark, Ashy-crowned Sparrow Lark, Blyth's Pipit, Orange-breasted Green Pigeon, Barred Buttonquail, Spot-billed Pelican, Yellow-wattled Lapwing, Lesser Adjutant, Painted Stork, and Woolly-necked Stork.

With its vast expanse of openness, the park also harbours a rich diversity of raptors such as Crested Hawk Eagle, Crested Serpent Eagle, White-bellied Sea Eagle, Grey-headed Fish Eagle, Osprey—a local rarity, Pallid Harrier, Montagu's Harrier—another rarity, Booted Eagle, Shaheen—the resident race of Peregrine, Black-shouldered Kite, Common Kestrel, Oriental Honey Buzzard, and Shikra.

Migrant forms of Red-rumped Swallow, Western Yellow Wagtail, White Wagtail, and Citrine Wagtail may show up too. "Keeping to an appointment," we will also reach a "patch" that is good for White-naped Woodpeckers; a pair has been sighted there on a regular basis.

Our night bird tally may get further boosted with the addition of Little Indian Nightjar.

In addition to excellent birds, a visit to Udawalawe would also present a good opportunity to observe Asian Elephant, which are found in good numbers in the park..



[Tawny-bellied Babbler](#)



**Birding:** Sri Lanka Woodshrike, Blue-faced Malkoha, Sirkeer Malkoha, Malabar Pied Hornbill, Green Bee-eater, Coppersmith Barbet, Yellow-eyed Babbler, Tawny-bellied Babbler, Indian Robin, Brown Fish Owl, Indian Scops Owl, Rosy Starling, Orange-breasted Green Pigeon, Jungle Prinia, Baya Weaver, Streaked Weaver, Black-headed Munia, Indian Silverbill, Plum-headed Parakeet, Oriental Darter, Paddyfield Pipit, Richard's Pipit & Blyth's Pipit, Jerdon's Bushlark, Oriental Skylark, Ashy-crowned Sparrow Lark, Lesser Cuckoo, Grey-bellied Cuckoo, Orange-headed Thrush, Barred Buttonquail, "Indian" Red-rumped Swallow, White Wagtail, Yellow Wagtail, Citrine Wagtail, Pied Kingfisher, Spot-billed Pelican, Woolly-necked Stork, Lesser Adjutant, Painted Stork, Pallid Harrier, Western Marsh Harrier, Osprey, White-bellied Sea Eagle, Crested Hawk Eagle, Common Kestrel, Black-shouldered Kite, and Grey-headed Fish Eagle.



Malabar Pied Hornbill

Hanuman Langur Asian Elephant

White-naped Woodpecker

**Non-birding highlights:** Dragonflies: Variable Flutterer, Dancing Dropwing, Wandering Glider, Foggy-winged Twister, Scarlet Basker, Blue Percher, Blue Pursuer, and Oriental Scarlet; Butterflies: Lime Butterfly, Blue Wanderer, Plain Tiger, Glassy Tiger, Blue Tiger, Tamil Bushbrown, Small Salmon Arab, Pioneer, Crimson Rose, Common Rose, Common Gull, Common Jezebel, Tawny Coster, Common Cerulean, Grey Pansy, Lemon Pansy, Peacock Pansy, Lemon Emigrant, & Psyche; Mammals: Asian Elephant, which is present in fair numbers in this park, Golden Jackal, Wild Boar, Wild Buffalo, Ruddy Mongoose, Jungle Cat & Spotted Deer.

**Overnight:** in a game lodge just 15 minutes from the park's entrance.

**Day 07** An early stroll in the hotel gardens may yield possibly our second views of Indian Pitta and Blue-faced Malkoha. After an early breakfast, we will penetrate deeper into the dry zone and reach Tissamaharama (lovingly, Tissa!), which lies superimposed on the ancient provincial capital of "Magama," with its massive milky white stupas, inscriptions, and ancient man-made "tanks" (reservoirs)—some of which date back to the 3rd century B.C.! Most of these lily and reed-covered tanks—evidence of a once thriving hydraulic civilization—are excellent for birding.

En route, we will look White-tailed Iora (Marshall's Iora), which was rediscovered from southeast Sri Lanka and found to be breeding resident by the Field Ornithology Group of Sri Lanka (FOGSL) in March 2006.

Here, we will also look for Sirkeer Malkoha, and White-naped Woodpecker; and other bird species still missing such as Yellow-crowned Woodpecker, Indian Pygmy Woodpecker, Large



Cuckooshrike, Black-headed Cuckooshrike, Brahminy Myna, Small Minivet, and Orange-headed Thrush.

Pausing in the several wetlands, we would be able to edge closer to 200 ticks for the trip with the likes of Purple Swampphen, Pheasant-tailed Jacana, Cotton Pygmy-goose, Pintail Snipe, Painted Stork, Indian Thick-knee, Great Thick-knee, Yellow Bittern, Black Bittern, Indian Reed Warbler, Streaked Weaver, and Watercock.



Leopard adult male



Tissamaharama



Plain Tiger



[Pied Kingfisher](#)

Today, our night bird tally may increase with the likes of Jungle Owlet, Brown Fish Owl, and Jerdon's Nightjar. A pair of Indian Scops Owl at a daytime roost may also offer great views.



We will stay in a cosy hotel with a bird-rich garden and a swimming pool. The rooms here come air-conditioning, fan, and private facilities with hot/cold water.

[One of the 7 Leopards seen](#) in just 2 game drives in February, 2009.

Thereafter, we will visit two of the tanks at Tissa, until dusk. Finally, we will reach our comfortable nature resort, nestled in a quaint dry zone village, where we will be based for three nights.

Birding: Cotton Pygmy-goose, Pheasant-tailed Jacana, Yellow Bittern, Black Bittern, Purple Swampphen, Purple Heron, Painted Stork, Cotton Pygmy-goose, Watercock, "Western" Black-tailed Gotwit, Black-winged Stilt, Pintail Snipe, Indian Pygmy Woodpecker, Ashy Woodswallow, White-naped Woodpecker, Jungle Owlet, Indian Scops Owl, White-rumped Shama, Stork-billed Kingfisher, Oriental Honey Buzzard, Indian

Reed Warbler, and Yellow-wattled Lapwing.

Non-birding highlights: Dragonflies: Common Bluetail, Painted Waxtail, Yellow Waxtail, Pruinosed Bloodtail, Sombre Lieutenant, Pink Skimmer, and Paddyfield Parasol; Butterflies: Lime Blue, Common Pierrot, Red Pierrot, Metallic Cerulean, Chocolate Soldier, Tiny Grass

Blue, Blue Mormon, and Common Lascar; Reptiles: Common & Green Forest Lizards, Land Monitor, Water Monitor, and Mugger Crocodile.



Jungle Owlet at a dayroost close to Tissa

Overnight: a nature resort at Tissa—offering fantastic garden birding, and great lodging.

**Day 08** After an early cuppa, we will collect packed breakfasts and visit Bundala National Park, which is the first “Ramsar Wetland” and a premier site for waterbirds including waders. The park comprises of large extents of dry zone scrub jungles, freshwater bodies, brackish water bodies, lagoons, and plain old mud flats. This visit should boost our tally with a great many shorebirds and more dry zone specials. Thereafter, we will retreat to our air-conditioned comforts of our nature resort for a midday break and to chill by the pool.

After recharging our batteries, we will explore the wilderness expanse of Yala National Park. Yala comprise of a bewildering array of habitats including monsoon forests, scrub jungle, mud flats, lagoons, riverine forests, lily-covered inland fresh-water bodies, open grassy plains, and rock outcrops.





Indian Scops Owls in a daytime roost during [my last "Birding in Style" tour](#)

Consequently, these ecosystems harbour a rich diversity of wildlife, which makes Yala the premier National Park in Sri Lanka for birds and wildlife. In fact, Yala Block 1, comprising of 141 sq.km., has close to 40 Leopards identified individually by their unique facial spot patterns and other characteristics. This therefore, makes this area of Yala, a premier Leopard hotspot with probably the highest density of Leopards anywhere in the world.

**Birding:** Western Reef Egret, Red-necked Phalarope, Small Pratincole, Little Heron, Garganey, Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveller, Caspian Tern, White-winged Tern, Whiskered Tern, Common Tern, Large Crested Tern, Lesser Crested Tern, Little Terns, Indian Cormorant, Brown-headed Gull, Greater Flamingo, Great Thick-knee, Indian Thick-knee, Eurasian Curlew, Marsh Sandpiper, Wood Sandpiper, Green Sandpipers, Lesser Sand Plover, Greater Sand Plover, Little-ringed Plover, Black-necked Stork, Common Hoopoe, Ashy-crowned Sparrow-lark, Brown Fish Owl, Yellow-crowned Woodpecker, and Ashy Drongo. (And many of the species recorded in day 6 & 7).

**Non-birding highlights:** Mammals: Leopard, Elephant, Sloth Bear, Spotted deer, Sambar, Wild buffalo, Wild Boar, Hanuman Langur, Toque Macaque, Stripe-necked & Ruddy Mongooses & Jackal; Reptiles: Mugger Crocodile and Land monitor.

**Day 09** This morning, we will visit some of the wetlands/forest patches at Tissa. And as yesterday, we will retreat to our air-conditioned comforts of our nature resort at midday. After recharging our batteries, we will visit Yala National Park, again, in search of missing dry zone specials. We will also visit a stake out of a pair of Indian Scops Owls.

**Birding:** Same as Days 6-8.

**Day 10** The day in a nutshell: "A long drive day marked with regular stops at key birding sites."



Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill   Blue-tailed Bee-eater   Rhododendron   [Legge's Hawk Eagle](#)

After breakfast, we will say goodbye to the friendly staff at our hotel, and drive up to the cooler hills of Nuwara Eliya, where several montane endemics await us. En route, we will make several strategic stops to bag several "high-value targets." First, it will be a patch of Amila holding many specialties including Sirkeer Malkoha, White-tailed Lora, Jungle Owlet, Orange-headed Thrush, and White-naped Woodpecker! And one thing he has experienced here is each visit brings new species to the trip list! Thereafter, we will continue climbing and pause at the Ella Resthouse, which faces the spectacular Ella gap, for lunch.

#### [Kashmir Flycatcher](#)

Continuing our search for "high-value targets," we will drive to a privately-owned well-wooded birding patch holding a "few surprises." Situated in the eastern direr hills of the central mountain massif, birding at Welimada presents a mixture of lowland wet zone, highland wet zone, and lowland dry zone avian elements. One of our prime targets here is the mountain endemic, Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon, which can at times, prove tough further up. Upto three Brown Wood Owls have been sighted at a daytime roost.

These large owls are extremely wary of bipeds; firewood collecting ladies who encroach make them shift their roost regularly. A special Woodpecker is also recorded here in the form of Steak-throated Woodpecker, which is an "Uva-avifaunal zone' specialty"—a restricted range species in Sri Lanka. We could also see a few montane specials such as Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher, and the highly sought-after Pied Thrush, which should cooperate better in the following morning.

Thereafter, we will continue our ascent to reach the cooler interiors of Nuwara Eliya (1,890-m), the famous hill station of Sri Lanka, named by some as, "Little England," as still bears evidence of its colonial past with its English-style holiday homes, a racecourse, vegetable gardens, shooting ranges, an urban park, a few of pubs, flower gardens, and a fine 18-hole golf course to name a few.



As we ascend, vast stretches of tea gardens dominate the landscape—a cash crop introduced by the British, which is currently the country's third highest revenue earner. Drop in temperature (around 10-15 degrees centigrade) at Nuwara Eliya will necessitate sweaters, although some of you may welcome this change coming from the warmer lowlands. We will reach a patch closer to our accommodation in time to anticipate the arrival of the ultra-secretive montane endemic, Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush, which is one of the two “endangered” endemics.



Yellow-eared Bulbul | Kandy Perahara pageant | Giant Fig | Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher

**Birding:** Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush, Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon, Dull-blue Flycatcher, Sri Lanka Woodshrike, Tickell's Blue Flycatcher, Sri Lanka Junglefowl, Brown-capped Babbler, Sri Lanka Scimitar Babbler, White-tailed Iora (aka. Marshall's Iora), Lesser Hill Myna, Crested Hawk Eagle, Yellow-crowned Woodpecker, Indian Pygmy Woodpecker, Lesser Yellownappe, Streak-throated Woodpecker, Crimson-backed Flameback, White-rumped Shama, Grey-bellied Cuckoo, Indian Cuckoo, Grey Tit, Grey-breasted Prinia, Jungle Prinia, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, Jungle Owlet, Brown Wood Owl, Brown Fish Owl, Orange-headed Thrush, Indian Pitta, Asian Paradise Flycatcher, Pied Thrush and Thick-billed Flowerpecker.

**Overnight:** A cosy lodge patronised by bird watchers for many years.

**Day 11** An early vigil near a creek at a montane forest patch would give us second, and hopefully improved, views of Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush at better light.

As the dawn breaks, a chip-chip-chip chatter would fill the air more frequently, which would lead to Sri Lanka White-eyes—a gregarious endemic. The explosive whipcracks of Yellow-eared Bulbuls would add this, discordantly. This will be followed by mournful tunes of Dull-blue Flycatcher coming from the moss covered cloud forest still perhaps hidden by a veil of early morning mist.

Our attention will soon switch to low-shrubs, and bamboo thickets, in search of Sri Lanka Bush Warbler—somewhat of a skulker. The Indian Blue Robin may present us improved views close to the stream.

Next, we will reach Victoria Park, which is an urban park established in 1897 to commemorate the 60th coronation jubilee of Queen Victoria. Our main reason for visiting this is to see the Pied Thrush—a western Himalayan special that is easier to Sri Lanka than at its natal grounds. Our vigil for this should give us Forest Wagtail, and if lucky, Slaty-legged Crake.





The Himalayan delight Kashmir Flycatcher can prove rougher at Victoria Park, so we will visit another patch which has been more promising. Here, we should also get improved views of all montane specials including Dull-blue Flycatcher, Hill Munia, Crimson-backed Flameback, and Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon.

Today's tally would also have Grey Tit, Indian Blackbird, Pied Bushchat, Hill Swallow, Blyth's Reed Warbler, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, Himalayan Buzzard, and if really lucky, Jerdon's Baza.



A male Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush photographed at point blank range at Nuwara Eliya during the Absolute Birding tour from 14-27 March, 2010. Shutter speed: 1/50, ISO: 800. Photographed using a Canon 40D with Canon 100-400mm F4.5-5.6 Lens, handheld. We saw 230 species of birds on this tour, including all 33 endemics. A special highlight was seeing 12 out of the 15 resident night birds of Sri Lanka! A report is due.

**Birding:** Sri Lanka Bush Warbler, Yellow-eared Bulbul, Dull-blue Flycatcher, Sri Lanka White-eye, Kashmir Flycatcher, Pied Thrush, Indian Blue Robin, Forest & Grey Wagtails, Great Tit, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher Sri Lanka Scaly Thrush, Jerdon's Baza, Zitting Cisticola, Pied Bushchat, Blyth's Reed Warbler, newly spit Himalayan Buzzard & the potential splits; Indian Blackbird & Black-throated Munia & if patient; Slaty-legged Crake.

**Non-birding highlights:** Dragonflies: Triangle Skimmer, Red-veined Darter; Mammals: Sambar, and Bear Monkey—the montane race of the vegetarian Purple-faced Leaf Monkey of lowlands; Botany: Endemic variety of Rhododendron; Reptiles: Rhino-horned Lizard, Black-lipped Lizard and if lucky, Dwarf Chameleon.

**Overnight:** in a cosy lodge patronized by bird watchers for many years.

**Day 12** After an enjoyable birding breakfast, we will drive to Kandy (477m), the cultural-epicentre of Sri Lanka, where age-old rituals continue at the Temple of the sacred Tooth Relic. Kandy was the last Sinhalese kingdom in Sri Lanka, which was ceded to the British in 1815. En route, we will pause at a tea factory to see the newly-split Hill Swallow, which nests inside the factory; plus optionally go on a guided tour in the factory to see the production process of “Ceylon tea.” And we will also try their complimentary cuppa. Common Hawk Cuckoo is often heard in the tea plantation nearby, but don’t worry if it doesn’t cooperate as chances are better at locations further down.



Possible distractions: [Blue Tiger](#)



| [Banded Peacock](#)

Reaching the “World Heritage City” Kandy, we will pause at a restaurant, with a commanding view of the city, with its lake and the temple nicely visible, for our lunch. Next, we will drive for a short duration to reach our comfortable overnight accommodation, with its swimming pool overlooking a forest.

Late afternoon, we will reach a mid-elevational forest adjoining a tea and spice plantations to look for Spot-bellied Eagle Owl and Brown Wood Owl. These two large owls have been shown on two back to back tours done in March, and April, 2010.

I have shown these two large owls on two back to back tours done in March, and April, 2010. Here, I have also had a lot of success Crimson-backed Flameback—showing it as the last endemic of the 33-endemics on two serious birding tours.

Birding: Spot-bellied Eagle Owl, Brown Wood Owl, Brown Fish Owl, Hill Swallow, Lesser Hill-myna, Rufous-bellied Hawk Eagle (seen sometimes during the descent to Kandy), Common Hawk Cuckoo, Sri Lanka Small Barbet, Yellow-fronted Barbet, Layard’s Parakeet, Sri Lanka Scimitar Babbler, Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon, Black-naped Monarch, White-browed Fantail, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike, Black Eagle, Crested Hawk Eagle, Besra, and Plum-headed Parakeet.

Overnight: A cosy star class hotel close to the birding sites.

**Day 13** We will check out after breakfast, and visit the Royal Botanical Gardens in Kandy. This magnificent garden covers an area of 147 acres, and is an absolute botanical paradise. The main purpose of visiting this park is to look for the uncommon resident Common Hawk Cuckoo, and to get improved views of Sri Lanka Small Barbet, Alexandrine Parakeet, Sri Lanka Green Pigeon, and Lesser Hill Myna.

A giant fig tree covering an area of 2,500 sq.m. would be a sure botanical distraction.



As we approach the drunken pine avenue—a road running parallel to the Mahaweli River flanked by rows of Cook's Pine from Australia that are all tilted and bent—a noisy colony of Giant Fruit bats would be hard to ignore with their quarrelsome arguments over landing rights. You will be able to see them in their thousands laying claim to several large trees.

A secluded spot under some towering Dipterocarps holds a territory of an Indian Pitta, and we will try to get our last views of this superb winter visitor.

After enjoying a farewell buffet lunch, we will drive down to Katunayake to reach there by 5.00 p.m. for departures, overnight stays, or extensions to Sigiriya.

Birding: Common Hawk Cuckoo, Sri Lanka Small Barbet, Sri Lanka Green Pigeon, Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot, Sri Lanka Swallow, Lesser Hill Myna, Orange Minivet, Alexandrine Parakeet, and Tickell's Blue Flycatcher.

Non-birding highlights: Dragonflies including Dawn Dropwing, Spine-legged Redbolt, Blue Pursuer, Dingy Duskfly, Indian Duskhawker, Elusive Adjutant, Sri Lanka Forktail, Pale-faced Forestskimmer; Mammals: Giant Fruit Bat aka Flying fox; Botany: including Giant Jawa Fig, which covers an area of 1,600 sq.ft, Double coconut, Drunken Pine avenue, Cannon-ball tree & orchid house in the Royal Botanical Gardens.

Overnight: A transit hotel just 5 minutes from the airport.



[A Leopard male patrolling its territory in Oct. 2009.](#)

**Day 14** Departure.





## Sigiriya Extension

This tour can be amended to include an additional site fitted into day 13 in the form of Sigiriya.

Sigiriya Rock Fortress and the surrounding Sigiriya Sanctuary offer superb birding. Species recorded on previous tours include Orange-headed Thrush, "Fork-tailed" Drongo Cuckoo, Spot-bellied Eagle Owl, Oriental Scops Owl, Jerdon's Nightjar, "Shaheen"—local race of Peregrine, Black Eagle, Sri Lanka Small Barbet, Crimson-backed Flameback, and Greater Racket-tailed Drongo.



**Sigiriya Rock Fortress**—a pleasure capital of a single king named Kashyapa in the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D. This is one of the 7 cultural 'World Heritage' sites in Sri Lanka. The Sigiriya Sanctuary, which envelopes this inselberg is great for birding.

This location is 4 ½ hours away from the airport; thus will ideally suit for inclusion if your departure flight fall on the evening of day 14, or early next day. Change rooms/overnight accommodation will be provided as required.

### Tour Leader: Amila Salgado



Amila holds a record as the first birder from Colombo to visit Sinharaja rain forest in a tuktuk—a feat achieved to bag the ultra-secretive Bay Owl in a daytime roost in Jan., 2007. He got hooked on birds in 1989 after a school project in St Peter's College, and made his first trip to Sinharaja the following year with a group of schoolmates, which earned him his first glimpses of the rare birding jewels, and a host of birdie nicknames. He joined YZA, a local nature club at an early age, which was the beginning of the road to turn him into an all-round naturalist. Amila is a certified "National Guide" under Sri Lanka Tourist Board. Apart from birds and natural history, Amila enjoys thrashing his clients at Scrabble.

He blogs his exploits at [Gallicissa.blogspot.com](http://gallicissa.blogspot.com)

For rates and to book this directly as a private tour for dates of your choice e-mail:

[amila@birdwingnature.com](mailto:amila@birdwingnature.com) or phone: 0094-777-591155

Back up e-mail: [Gallicissa@gmail.com](mailto:Gallicissa@gmail.com)

Skype ID: amila.salgado

For a tour report of an "Absolute Birding" in Jan-Feb, 2008, click [here](#).

For a tour report of "Birding in Style" (a birder with his family) in Dec, 2009 click [here](#).

For other bird and natural history posts visit my blog:

<http://gallicissa.blogspot.com>

For details of other tours visit my Website:

[www.birdwingnature.com](http://www.birdwingnature.com)



## Birdwing Nature Holidays

"Best value Birding and Natural History Holidays in Sri Lanka"

### Availability

I will be leading an Absolute Birding tour from **7 to 20 Nov., 2010**.

Two birders with a special interest also in Entomology have confirmed participation for this already. And There's room for two. For details, e-mail: [amila@birdwingnature.com](mailto:amila@birdwingnature.com)

Immediately after this, I will be leading another Absolute Birding tour from **21 Nov.–3 Dec 2010**. Again, 2 people can join this.

Thereafter, I will be leading a 2-day birding trip to Sinharaja from **4–5 December, 2010**

**7-9 Dec., 2010**, I will be back at Sinharaja leading another short tour.

Next, I will be engaged on private tours from **19-22 Dec.**, and **26 and 27 Dec., 2010**

I am available for tours from 28 Dec., 2010 to 16 Jan., 2011 during the Peak birding season.

I will be guiding an Absolute Birding tour in **17-30 Jan., 2011**.

Two birders will already be confirmed for this already, and two are invited to join.

For details, e-mail: [amila@birdwingnature.com](mailto:amila@birdwingnature.com)

I will be engaged with a single world lister from **5-12 Feb. 2011**.

I run a 10-day abridged Absolute Birding tour as a group tour from **16-25 Feb., 2011**. Price: US\$1,535 (£990) per person sharing double/twin, and Single supplement: US\$250 (£160); Group size: 6 persons plus local tour guide Amila Salgado; Target: 215 species of birds including all endemics, most S. Asian specials and nine night birds. For details, e-mail: [amila@birdwingnature.com](mailto:amila@birdwingnature.com)

It's likely that there will be an Absolute Birding tour in **March** with a single British birder. No dates have been fixed yet.

Thereafter, I have another confirmed Absolute Birding tour from **9-24 April, 2011** (both private tours with exclusive arrangements).



Small Pratincole at Bundala National Park.