

Sri Lanka tour report 2 – 31 Marts 2014

Gitte + Allan Kruse

After spending nearly 2 weeks, perfectly relaxing holiday at Unawatuna Beach Resort, enjoying beach, children and grandchildren, time was coming to do some concentrated birding.

We meet with our Walk With Jith guide Upali early morning 16 of Marts in a hotel in Kandy. Upali was to be our driver and guide for the next 2 weeks. We immediately drove the short distance to Udawata Kelle a reserve close to Kandy. Here we had a nice morning walk and saw our first endemics.

Some of the birds: Crested Serpent-eagle, Layard's Parakeet, Yellow-fronted Barbet, Ceylon Swallow, Orange Minivet, Gold-fronted Leafbird, Tickell's Blue Flycatcher, White-rumped Shama, Lesser Hill-myna etc.

Later in the morning we drove to Kitulgalla where we stayed 2 nights. We did several walks in the area and an afternoon/ we crossed the river and had a walk in the rainforest. Of course the main purpose was to look for the Serendib Scops Owl. Despite Upali's effort with no luck.

Some of the birds: Openbill Stork, White-bellied Sea-eagle, Emerald Dove, Green Imperial-pigeon, Southern Coucal, Chestnut-backed Owlet, Dwarf Kingfisher, Ceylon Grey Hornbill, Brown-headed Barbet, Pygmy Woodpecker, Lesser Yellownape, Black-rumped Flameback, Black-naped Monarch, Yellow-browed Bulbul, Black-capped Bulbul, Ceylon Rufous Babbler etc.

On the 18 we drove to Nuwara Eliya highland where we spend 3 nights. Here we visited Victoria park (where we had the only rain on the tour), Botanical gardens, a roadside ditch to look for whistling thrush and of course Horton plains.

Some more birds: Shaheen Falcon, Ceylon Junglefowl, Indian Pitta, Forest Wagtail, Grey Wagtail, Yellow-eared Bulbul, Pied Ground-thrush, Ceylon Whistling-thrush, Dusky Blue Flycatcher, Ceylon Scimitar-babbler, Sri Lanka Warbler, Ceylon Hill White-eye, Ceylon Hill-myna etc.

From Nuwara Eliya we drove to Tissamaharama where we also had 3 nights. One full day was spend in Yala national park. We did a lot of driving in search for leopard and at the end of the day we finally succeeded. Apart from leopard Yala has a lot of birdlife to offer and fortunately we had good driver and guide to find it.

Bundala wetland was seen on a morning jeeptour. We saw a good deal of waders but many of the migrants had left.

The rest of the time we spend birding around Tissamaharama. Here is lots of good wetland to explore. Some of the birds: Chestnut Bittern, Yellow Bittern, Black Bittern, Whistling-duck, Garganey, Glossy Ibis, Black-headed Ibis, Spoonbill, Honey-buzzard, Grey-headed Fish-eagle, Crested Hawk-eagle, Pheasant-tailed Jacana, Great Thick-knee, Brown Fish-owl, Crested Treeswift, Indian Roller, Coppermith Barbet, Bushlark, Ceylon Woodshrike, White-browed Fantail and among other a good deal of the possible waders.

On the 24 we drove the short distance to Uda Walawe, here we had 2 nights. It is easy to see elephants here, but the treat here was a jungle cat, who kindly walked across the road allowing us to see it. We also found Uda Walawe interesting for birds of prey.

Some of the birds: Black-winged Kite, Indian Stone-curlew, Alexandrine Parakeet, Rose-ringed Parakeet, Plum-headed parakeet, Indian Scops-owl, Stork-billed Kingfisher, Ashy-crowned Finch-lark, Paradise Flycatcher, Tawny-bellied Babbler, Baya Weaver etc.

Our tour ended in Sinharaja rainforest. We stayed 3 nights at Martins lodge. A wonderful place right at the edge of the rainforest. That is if you can manage the very basic accommodation the lodge has to offer. We had 2 days walking both inside the rainforest and around the outskirts. We saw many interesting birds just walking from the parking area and up to the lodge. A trip on 1-2 hours. Due to the reputation for leeches, we were well prepared, but due to the dry time of the year it wasn't an issue. Neither was mosquitoes or other biting insects. Again here we search for the Serendib Scops Owl. Upali had even arranged some of the locals to help searching for it. Despite all Upali's effort with no luck.

Some of the birds: Black Eagle, Ceylon Spurfowl, Ceylon Woodpigeon, Ceylon Green-pigeon, Ceylon

Hanging-parrot, Green-billed Coucal, Malabar Trogon, Ceylon Small Barbet, Small Minivet, Pied Flycatcher-shrike, Spot-winged Ground-thrush, White-throated Flowerpecker, Ashy-headed Laughingthrush, Ceylon Blue Magpie, Red-faced Malkoha, Ceylon White-headed Starling, Ceylon Crested Drongo etc.

On the 29 we were driven back to a hotel in Colombo. All together it had been a very exiting birdtour. We saw 213 species of birds and 30 of the 33 endemics. This wouldn't have been possible without the help of Upali's long experience as a birdguide.

I think I will recommend birders to go birding earlier than we did. According to a local birder, many birds were nesting and therefore more secretive and also feeding parties are not common in the dry season.



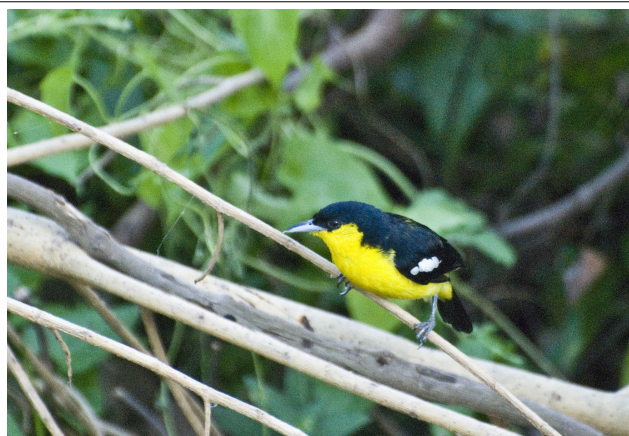
Crested Hawk-eagle having raided a Fantail nest



Leoprd in Yala



Coucal



Common Iora (male)



Great Thick-knee



Refreshments on the road

Any comments to Gitte and Allan Kruse
Krusepost@gmail.com