

Sri Lanka: Fishing cat and Rusty Spotted cat trip: 13-17 April, 2018

My overall aim was to try for these two cats with the additional bonus of multiple bats and other species that have been regularly seen and reported in other trip reports. In 4 nights we saw all 4 cat species found in Sri Lanka (Fishing, Jungle, Rusty Spotted and Leopard) and recorded 41 mammal species.

Fishing cat was seen on the first night in Sigiriya with two different animals in distinctly different locations. One fled almost immediately and the other crossed the road twice which allowed me to take a very shaky video for a few brief seconds. The third sighting was on a night drive outside Wilpattu National Park, a large adult walking across a marsh area. The Rusty Spotted cats appeared on the last night in Sigiriya, a large adult walking away from the road into scrub and a juvenile sitting on the road. Both moved away quickly but allowed for clear views. The jungle cat was seen once in Sigiriya and once in Wilpattu on night drives. The leopard was seen on the last afternoon drive in Wilpattu.

The trip of course is built around the local knowledge of the best sites provided by the Bird and Wildlife Team and the expert spotting and identification skills of my guide (Diluksha). So it is possible, within a very short period of time to see these elusive cats. The key was becoming nocturnal with night drives starting at 10 or 11 pm and ending at 5am. Sleeping through to lunchtime and then going out in the late afternoon to a number of bat roosts which ensure that the spotting tally keeps going up. The accommodation at Sigiriya was very good but a bit commercialized for my liking and always felt I had to change out of my camo gear before eating in the massive dining hall. The tented camp at Wilpattu was perfect (only 4 safari type tents) and right on the edge of the park, so wildlife is your only neighbour.

- **The Bird and Wildlife Team** www.birdandwildlifeteam.com
- www.wilpattusafaricamp.com

Itinerary

- 13 April Late afternoon pick-up from Colombo arriving at Sigiriya. Night drive from 11 pm to 5am.
- 14 April Slept during the morning, afternoon looking for bats and night drive 11pm to 5am in Sigiriya.
- 15 April Afternoon walk and drive and then night drive from 10 pm to 4 am in Sigiriya.
- 16 April Early afternoon departure to Wilpattu National park, afternoon and night drive until 1am.
- 17 April Late morning and afternoon drive in Wilpattu. Depart to airport.
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MAMMAL SEEN

1	Indian Hare <i>Lepus nigricollis</i>	Several animals seen on each night drive in Sigiriya
2	Sri Lankan Giant Squirrel <i>Ratufa macroura</i>	Seen in hotel grounds in Sigiriya and Wilpattu
3	Indian Palm Squirrel <i>Funambulus palmarum</i>	Seen in hotel grounds in Sigiriya and Wilpattu
4	Little Indian Field Mouse <i>Mus booduga</i>	Seen in Wilpattu
5	Asiatic Long-tailed Climbing Mouse <i>Vandeleuria oleracea</i>	One or two seen each evening while spotlighting around Sigiriya
6	Brown Rat <i>Rattus norvegicus</i>	One seen crossing the road in Sigiriya
7	Indian Gerbil <i>Tatera indica</i>	Several animals crossing the road in Sigiriya
8	Indian Crested Porcupine <i>Hystrix indica</i>	Very brief sighting by the side of the road whilst spotlighting in Sigiriya
9	Small Indian Civet <i>Viverricula indica</i>	Seen several times while spotlighting around Sigiriya
10	Asian Palm Civet <i>Paradoxurus hermaphroditus</i>	One recorded on night drives around Sigiriya
11	Sri Lankan Brown Palm Civet <i>Paradoxurus montanus</i>	Good views on the first night in Sigiriya
12	Jungle Cat <i>Felis chaus</i>	Seen one night in Sigiriya and outside Wilpattu on a night drive
13	Rusty-spotted Cat <i>Felis rubiginosa</i>	Two different animals (adult and juvenile). Very quick views of a large adult moving into scrub from 5 meters away and a juvenile sitting in the middle of the road before running into the roadside

vegetation (10 m)

14	Fishing Cat <i>Felis viverrina</i>	First night two different animals. Brief but clear views of one large adult sitting at 10 meters but ran as I reached for my camera and another crossing the road S at a range of 5 meters. Also seen on the final night in a field outside Wilpattu
15	Leopard <i>Panthera pardus</i>	After several attempts a beautiful animal seen in the late afternoon which seems to be the best time in Wilpattu National Park
16	Indian Grey Mongoose <i>Herpestes edwardsii</i>	One crossed the road on the way out of Sigiriya
17	Ruddy Mongoose <i>Herpestes smithii</i>	Small family group seen in Wilapattu
18	Golden Jackal <i>Canis aureus</i>	A pair seen a couple of consecutive nights while Spotlighting in Sigiriya
19	Greater Short-nosed Fruit Bat <i>Cynopterus sphinx</i>	One seen on night drive around Sigiriya
20	Long-winged Tomb Bat <i>Taphozous longimanus</i>	Three animals seen roosting in rocky crevice at Buddhist temple near Sigiriya
21	Lesser False Vampire Bat <i>Magaderma spasma</i>	A few seen in abandoned buildings in Sigiriya
22	Indian Woolly Horseshoe Bat <i>Rhinolophus beddomei</i>	Found roosting in several abandoned buildings and Caves around Sigiriya.
23	Rufous Horseshoe Bat <i>Rhinolophus rouxii</i>	Found roosting in several buildings around Sigiriya
24	Dusky Roundleaf Bat <i>Hipposideros ater</i>	Several seen around Sigiriya
25	Fulvous Roundleaf Bat <i>Hipposideros fulvus</i>	Several seen around Sigiriya
26	Dekhan Roundleaf Bat <i>Hipposideros galeritus</i>	Found roosting in several abandoned buildings Around Sigiriya
27	Schneider's Roundleaf Bat <i>Hipposideros speoris</i>	Found roosting in several abandoned buildings Around Sigiriya

28	Indian Pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus coromandra</i>	Common in Sigiriya
29	Least Pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus tenuis</i>	Several seen in Sigiriya
30	Brown (Hasselt's) Myotis <i>Myotis hasseltii</i>	Commonly seen hunting over water in Sigiriya
31	Sloth bear <i>Melursus ursinus</i>	One feeding in a tree in Wilpattu during the afternoon
32	Grey Slender Loris <i>Loris lydekkerianus</i>	One spotted at the arboretum in Sigiriya and on the Night drive outside Wilpattu
33	Toque Macaque <i>Macaca sinica</i>	Common in Sigiriya
34	Tufted Grey Langur <i>Semnopithecus priam</i>	Common in Sigiriya and Wilpattu
35	Asian elephant <i>Elephas maximus</i>	One individual seen in Wilpattu
36	Sambar deer <i>Cervus unicolor</i>	Seen in Wilpattu
37	Red Muntjak <i>Muntiacus muntjak</i>	Seen in Wilpattu
38	Eurasian Wild Boar <i>Sus scrofa</i>	Seen in Wilpattu
39	Sri Lankan White-striped Chevrotain <i>Moschiola meminna</i>	Seen at the arboretum and on the roads around Sigiriya
40	Chital <i>Axis axis</i>	Several herds seen in Sigiriya and Wilpattu
41	Wild water buffalo <i>Bulbalus arnee</i>	Seen in Wilpattu