

2023 | Author: Jens Bokelaar



Travel report Sri Lanka 2022

Mammals

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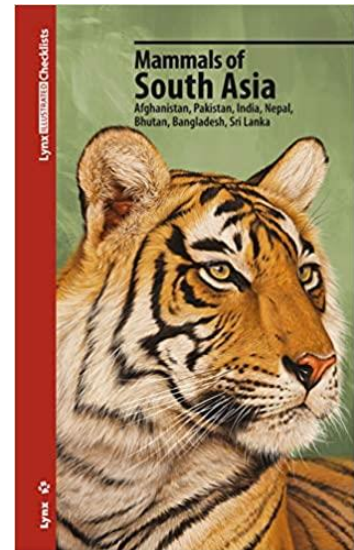
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Introduction

The new mammals of the south Asia is a very nice field guide to get acquainted with the species of the region. It provides good drawings of every species, including bats and carnivores, as well as good distribution maps, although descriptions are sometimes scant for the more difficult to ID species. It also would have been nice to have more specifics on distribution of subspecies.

Important on your pack list are of course your binoculars, a flashlight and heat scope. If you have one, pack your bat detector. What's not especially necessary is a scope.

Me and a friend travelled through Sri Lanka with a tuktuk, which was a fun way to travel the country. You can easily get everywhere you want at any time, which is a great advantage. You're not a lot quicker with a car because the maximum speed in most places is just 60 whereas tuktuks are allowed 40. Moreover it is almost never possible to drive 60 km/h for long stretches of road. So if you want to save a buck a tuktuk is a great way to move around the island.



If you are interested in any of the other species groups or want to see some more pictures you can go here:

My polarsteps:

[Polarsteps](#)

(Pictures and road map)

My observations:

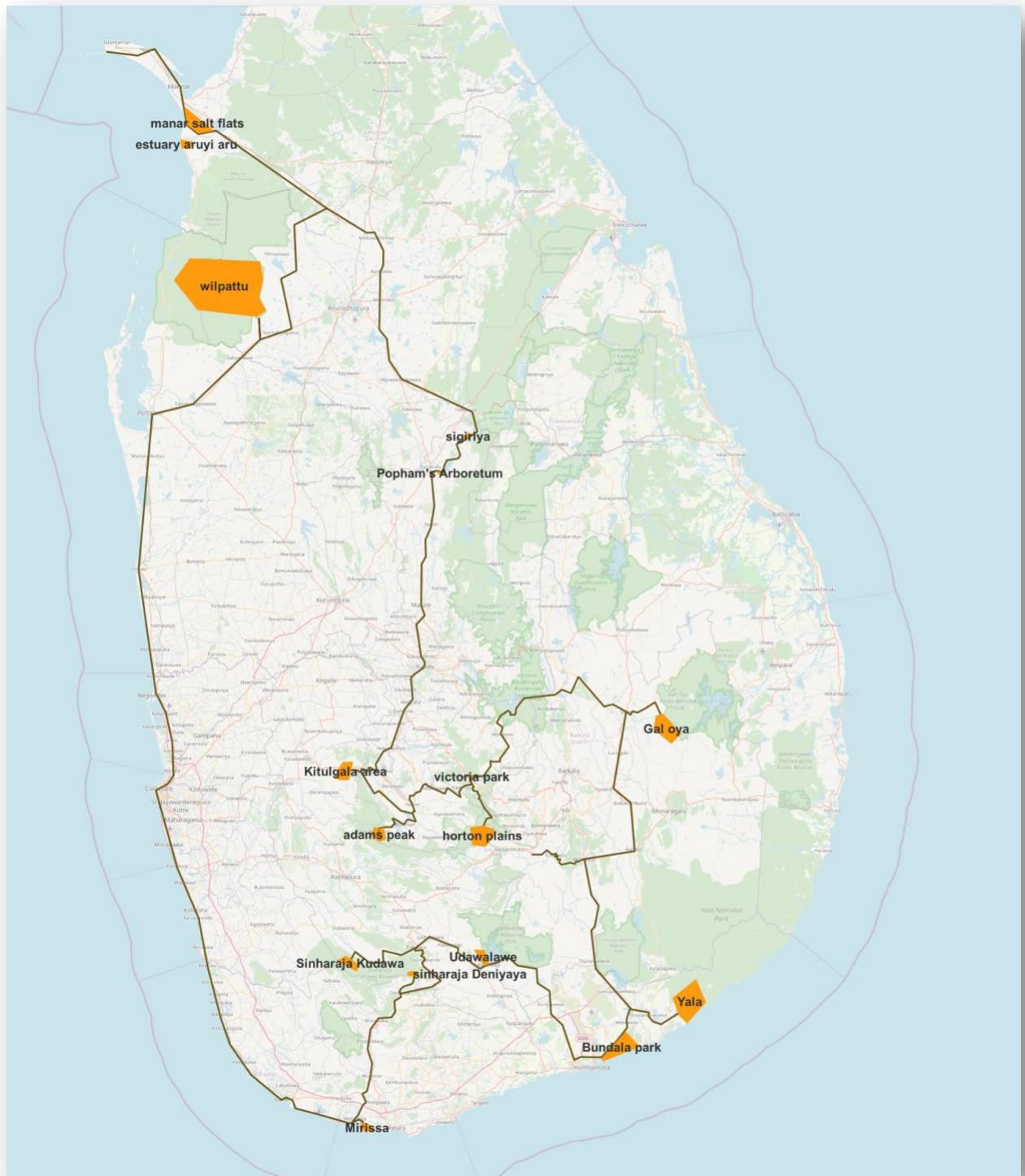
[Observation](#)

(Complete bird & mammal list)

[Inaturalist](#)

(I have some species on here I haven't uploaded to observation mostly plant species)

Feel free to ask any questions



Species specific information

Safari species



There are a multitude of species that can be mainly found on safari. Within this chapter are the species that can most easily be found on safaris in Yala national park or Udawalawe national park. **Asian elephant, Indian hare, Leopard, Ruddy mongoose, Golden Jackal, Sloth bear, Wild Boar, Chital, Indian Muntjac, Sambar and *Wild water Buffalo*.**

Golden Jackal and Indian Muntjac were only seen in Udawalawe and **Sloth bear** was only seen in Yala.

Asian elephant and **Sambar** were also seen outside the national parks.

In Udawalawe we booked our lodging and safari online via the website of the national park. For Yala we got a room and booked our tour online. Around Yala you will get asked loads of times if you want a safari.

Whale watching tour



From Mirissa there are loads of whale watching tours with the possibility to see whales and dolphins. On our tour we saw **Blue Whale, Risso's Whale & Spinner dolphins**. On our tour we got lucky and saw the Blue whale male jumping out of the water while chasing a female. Quite an amazing sight. I can highly recommend Raja & the whales. Why? First off all if you do not see whales the first day you get a second whale watching tour for free and if even the second day there was no whale you can try a third time for a highly reduced price. Why you need to pay the third time is because the tour operators need to pay the government for the permits to watch whales. The second and most important reason is that this company collects loads off data on the marine mammals around this area. They are a wealth off information and if someone wants the data for research, they offer it freely.



Primates (langurs & macaque)



Sri Lanka is a totally different experience for me than south east asia. Primates here are quite common and quite chill around humans. The **toque macaque** can be seen anywhere on your travels but mostly within human presence. I only saw the subspecies **opisthomelas** once just outside Nuwara Eliya. This was the location: <https://goo.gl/maps/17QwA8pR2AbAkG4G6>

The two species of langur are mainly in areas further away from human activity. The **tufted gray langur** we saw a few times in more agricultural areas and twice even around historical locations (one of which was Sigariya). Most interesting in Sigariya we saw a mixed species group: here was a single **purple faced langur** in a group of **tufted gray langur**. The **purple faced langur** is next to this one weird occasion, only found in nature reserves. This species is in most nature reserves easy to find. Most off the time they are very loud/vocal and can be tracked quite easily.

Gray slender loris (including some bats)



After giving it multiple tries, finding the **gray slender loris** was not very difficult, if you know where to go. The magic word is Popham's Arboretum. The first thing to know about Popham's arboretum is that it is a long term reforestation project and it is very cheap to stay there (but it is very basic). Also the night walk is not expensive at all and you get an amazing guide who searches for the **loris** for you. But not only the **loris** can be found here. It is also possibly an amazing place to try to find **pangolins**. I do not know how regularly they find them but they sell there night walks with as highlights the loris and pangolins.

They also have two buildings that are especially for bats. In these buildings are groups of the **Rufous horseshoe bat** & **Lesser false vampire bat**. These can be easily seen during the day or just before your night walk.



Squirrels



The **Indian palm squirrel** is a very common species that can be seen easily throughout the entire island, in reserves, but even more often in urban areas. This species is also very vocal and can be heard everywhere.

The **Dusky palm squirrel** is far rarer than the previously mentioned species. We saw them at the stairs all the way up to Adams peak. Here there was an individual that came quite close to people to eat some leftovers. Location: <https://goo.gl/maps/kRoS14RV2MkwsYwo7>

This species was also heard in Sinharaja rainforest from the Kudawa entrance.

The **Layards palm squirrel** I only saw once and it was very very shy. It lived close to a house in Kudawa where it lives on the scraps. Its palm where it always runs back to if it gets spooked is right next to the house. Location: <https://goo.gl/maps/hpRMUmdmsvmecGon7>

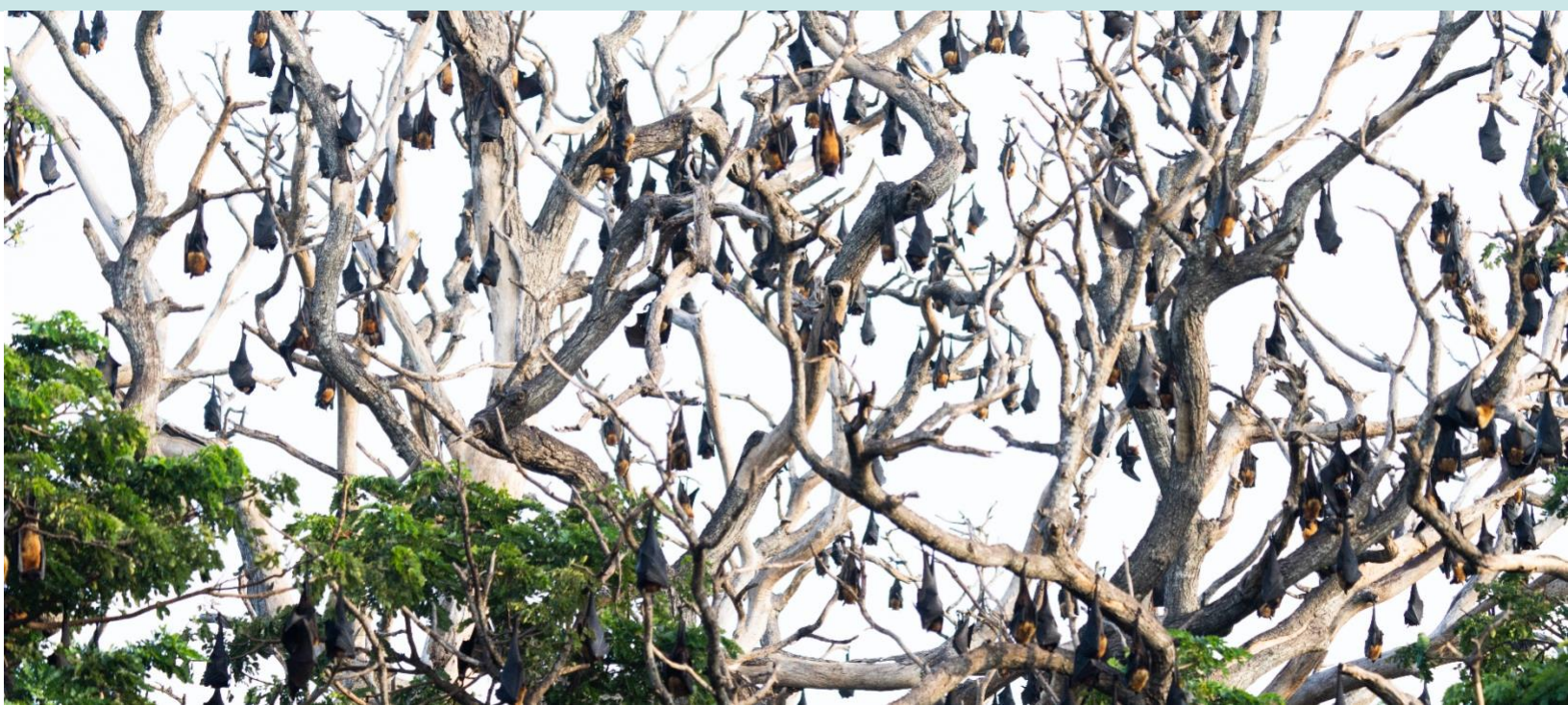
The **Grizzled giant squirrel** is just like the Indian palm squirrel really common around the island. They are even becoming a pest for mango growers. We have seen them both in nature reserves and in urban areas. If you stay a while in Sri Lanka you will definitely see them.

The **giant flying squirrel** is a nocturnal squirrel and thus far more difficult to see. We possibly heard one in Popham's arboretum. We heard the sound of something that sounded like a spot bellied eagle owl but it just did not match in pitch. On Wikipedia it says it sounds like an eagle owl, but I am still looking for this species' sound to confirm it. If someone has a recording that would be amazing.



Travel experience

Yala area (night drive)



Species list

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Small Indian civet | <i>Viverricula indica</i> |
| 2. White spotted Chevrotain | <i>Moschiola meminna</i> |
| 3. Indian Gerbil | <i>Tatera indica</i> |
| 4. Indian flying fox | <i>Pteropus giganteus</i> |
| Bat sp. roost | |

Travel log

Location: <https://goo.gl/maps/UFggfAj9EMDF8kLA7>

We went to drive this road at night and found 2 **small Indian civets**. There was quite a lot of time between both sightings. Both of them crossed the road in front of the car. One was really close to the vehicle.

The location is at a field where there are quite a lot of **gerbils** walking around. If you go there, I do not think you can miss them. Another interesting fact is that there is a **bat roost** at this location in a culvert. I do not know the species but it smelled and looked like they already roosted here for quite some time.

Lastly we saw a **white-spotted chevrotian** during this night drive on the road. It was quite close to where Yala park begins and where there is a little guard house to make sure no one enters the park at night.

Close to Tissamaharama there is a giant **Indian flying fox** roost:

<https://goo.gl/maps/zDKokk6PWQCQeVpz6>

Horton Plain



Species list

1. Sambar
 2. Sri Lankan Mountain Rat
 3. Purple-faced Langur
- Otter
Leopard

Rusa unicolor
Rattus montanus
Semnopithecus vetulus
Lutra lutra
Panthera pardus

Travel log

Horton Plains is a unique place in Sri Lanka, because it is the only indo-malayan montane grassland. When we went to this park it was sadly enough very cold and storming with winds of 6-7bft. This was because of a storm in the Bay of Bengal. Horton Plains are known for the **Sambar** that is very easy to see here. You will probably see them when you drive from the entrance to the park museum/ranger station. The coolest sighting in the park was the **sri lankan mountain rat**. Sadly enough I think that the sighting was just a lot of luck. We saw a dark long rat with a black hairy tail walking across the path. Location was <https://goo.gl/maps/y7vn9CZdvUqvECUg7>

During this walk from the ranger office to worlds end we also encountered some footprints that I am not sure about yet. For pictures: <https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/147722670>

On the first stretch of forest from the entrance to the open plains we heard a groups of **Purple face langur**.

One of the other things I heard from the locals here is that a lot of locals that want to see leopards go to horton plains. The strategy off finding the **Leopards** here is driving from the entrance to the plains area and back. The hope is that one will cross the road in front off your car. I have heard off people that where successful the first day but also off people that had been trying for three days without success.

Last thing we heard from all the locals is that they had seen **Euroasian otters** in the pools right next to the road if you come from the entrance and go into the park.

Sinharaja



Travel log

Some tips on Sinharaja nature reserve.

If you go to the Kudawa entrance the guides are a lot cheaper than the other entrances, because they are not only paid by the visitors, but also they are on the payroll by the government. You get your guide at the ticket booth so that is easy. But the lodges are expensive. I still would recommend everyone's travel plans of Sri Lanka to include Sinharaja. The Kudawa entrance is beautiful and nature is amazing. We went on quite a few night walks in the surrounding area of Kudawa. On one of them we found a **common palm civet** chilling on a electricity line on the north side of the bridge. Otherwise we did not see any mammals at night. Our guides told us that **Yellow striped chevrotain** should be quite common in the area. They have also seen **golden palm civet**, **red slender loris** and tracks of **pangolins** at the Kudawa entrance. For information on the **Palm squirrels** read the species account. Also the **purple faced langur**

is in the forest here and can be seen easily. One tip for night drives, the road to go from Weddagala to Kudawa seems a promising location.

The Deniyaya entrance is also nice to see, but your guide needs to be fixed in advance to your visit if you want to start early. Most hotels/hostels know or have their own guides. We got some great views of **purple faced langurs** in the park here. At this location you could walk along the edge off the forest at night to search for **red slender loris**. On iNaturalist at least there are some observations and our guide says it is possible to find them here. The other amazing information our guide gave us: **golden palm civet** can be found in the area. It is not too rare and they are sometimes also active during the day.

Estuary Aruyi Aru

Travel log

At this location we walked at night and saw an **Indian hare** and loads of bats. I have no clue which species, but I got some recordings.

Victoria Park

Inside Victoria Park we saw some rodents we have not identified yet. Pictures can be found here:

<https://www.mammalwatching.com/community-post/sri-lanka-id-2-rats-mice-and-tracks-of-rusty-spotted-cat/>