

For this summer 2023, my wife and I decided to visit Sri Lanka. Indeed, many trip reports posted on MammalWatching were very appealing and we discovered that this fairly small island was very rich in wildlife and a good place to easily see Asian elephants that we hadn't seen yet in the wild. The fact that we could also see several cat species and an impressive list of birds finished to convince us that we should definitely visit this country.

Due to other trips already planned for 2023, we had to visit Sri Lanka during summer, and we worked on a 3-week long itinerary that brought us to all the key places in Sri Lanka for wildlife watching. We were a bit concerned to go to Sri Lanka during summertime as most of the trip reports posted on the web took place in Spring (February-April). We contacted the highly recommended Bird and Wildlife Team to organize this trip and they assured us that summer would also be very good for mammal watching and that the only species we would miss during that period would be the migrant birds (not a problem) and also the whale watching part that is not good in summer (no problem as well since we already saw blue whales elsewhere). After coming back from our trip, I can say that August is definitely a good month to see mammals in Sri Lanka as we saw plenty and many species as I will describe later in this report. Having said that, if the number of mammal species we could see in the country is indeed quite impressive with many endemics, I found on the other hand the density of mammals to be quite low, even in parks like Wilpattu or even Yala. Nothing comparable to Africa of course but even to large parks in India. Only elephants were seen in large numbers in Kaudulla / Minneriya or water buffalos in Yala. We often had to drive or walk for long times before observing an animal, especially at night. A few species were very clear hard to find, which was expected for some, and we had to deserve them.

So we used the Bird and Wildlife Team for this trip and based on past reports, we specifically asked to have Dulan Ranga Vidanapathirana as our guide. A lot has already been said about him in previous reports and I can only concur with every word that has been written. Dulan is simply an amazing guide: so passionate about his work as a naturalist and researcher, a very nice person and full of energy. Indeed, during game drives or walks, whether during the day or at night, he would simply never stop, even after spending for example 7 hours spotlighting at night in Sigiriya! We had a few times to ask him to stop and go back to our hotel to rest 😊 His motto is: "I want to show you every animal that you can see here so that you don't have to come back to Sri Lanka" and indeed, he really worked hard to find us all our mammal and bird targets, and beyond. In addition to his deep knowledge of any kind of wildlife in Sri Lanka (not only mammal and birds but also reptiles, frogs, butterflies, and insects), he was also very keen to make us discover what the country had to offer in terms of culture or food, and he would not hesitate to stop along the road to buy us some local fruits or dish (like the wonderful curd) to please us. Really a great guy that for sure would probably win the best worldwide guide awards!

Doing this trip in August was also a good choice for the weather. We found out that August is very hot but one of the driest months in Sri Lanka, which was great, especially in the wet zones where the humidity level was already quite high although we only had rain during 2 or 3 days for the whole trip and even just for a couple of hours. I found the humidity level to be generally high throughout Sri Lanka even in the so-called dry zones. I don't support well heat and humidity and I think this is the trip where I sweat the most, especially during the long hiking hours in the forests of Sinharaja and Kitulgala. I cannot imagine what people have to endure during the wet season in Spring, not even mentioning the leeches! that were apparently very few in August according to Dulan but we got bitten a few times anyway...

Besides wildlife and weather, Sri Lanka is also a beautiful and very scenic country with various landscapes, nice mountains and falls and the flora and forest are very luxurious. The country is quite clean except in a few places near Colombo and around Tissa/Yala and definitely much better than its large Indian neighbor that is to me the dirtiest country in the world. The road network in Sri Lanka is also quite good but the roads are most often narrow and the traffic very slow. I was amazed many times by the driving time to go from one place to another although the distances are short. The roads to climb to Nuwara Eliya or Horton Plains are something, but they are gorgeous and the low driving speed allows us to really enjoy the landscape.

Accommodations booked by the agency were nice and comfy for most of them and the food served generally excellent. A final word about the people in Sri Lanka who are so nice, smiling all the time and willing to help anytime they could. Dulan knew many people where we would go to their garden to seek for some specific birds, bats or other small mammals. Very often during walks, we would ask people if we could access to their place because we saw an animal going there and they always accepted, happy to show us where to look for. To conclude, Sri Lanka is a very nice country with lovely people and we came back with many unforgettable memories.

Below some more detailed descriptions of the different places we visited and what we could see there.

#### **Wilpattu:**

This was our first stop in Sri Lanka. We spent 3 days / nights there with 1 afternoon game drive in the park on the first day, and then 2 full day safaris. We also did three night drives that typically took place between 9:30pm to 1-1:30am. Since the full day

safaris were starting at 6am, we didn't have much time for sleep 😊. We stayed at the Wilpattu Tree House Hotel, which was conveniently located since it was the closest accommodation to the park entrance. We could then enter the park among the first jeeps in the mornings, which was very nice! They booked us in the large and comfortable rooms in the tree houses, which had a terrace with nice views on the surrounding forest and rice fields. Food was good as well as the breakfast and lunch boxes they prepared for the full day safaris in the park. The lady owner was very welcoming and enquiring all the time if we were enjoying our stay.

I found the Wilpattu park beautiful, having various landscapes with forests and more open areas, and full of pools. On top of that, this park was not too crowded, which made the visit and animal sightings enjoyable. Mammals were quite scarce, but we could see many different species though and for example we saw **leopard** and **sloth bear** on each of our full day safaris, including one sloth bear observed early morning right next to our jeep for us only. Nice! In addition to these two iconic species, we could see the usual suspects like: **golden jackal**, **ruddy mongooses**, **Indian hares**, **Toque macaques**, **tufted grey langurs**, **wild boar**, **chital**, **Indian muntjac**, **wild buffalos** that didn't exhibit the truly wild attributes and even a glimpse of **sambar**. One evening before leaving the park, we also had a very cool observation of a lone **Asian elephant** male coming to drink in a large pool. As said earlier, finding mammals in the park was not so easy and we spent hours driving without seeing anything. The good thing is that there were always many cool birds to see while waiting for the next mammal. In the hotel garden, we could easily observe **Indian palm squirrels** and **grizzled giant squirrels**.

The night drives were quite rich and I would say probably the nicest ones we had during our whole trip in Sri Lanka. Indeed, we saw **fishing cat** on each night and very well, with prolonged views that gave us plenty of opportunity for cool photos! We also saw a **rusty-spotted cat** on the 2<sup>nd</sup> night, a nice observation but sadly he quickly hid in the tall grass making good photos impossible (but we have it in the box). We also saw many **jungle cats**, bearing in mind that there were also plenty of domestic or hybrid cats in the area, but some individuals clearly had the full wild attributes. As a matter of fact, we already saw the 4 cat species we could observe in Sri Lanka only after 2 days/nights spent in the country. How lucky!! Besides cats, we also observed during these night drives many **Indian gerbils**, one **greater short-nosed fruit bat**, one **small Indian Civet**, several **Asian palm civets** and one **white-striped chevrotain**. Palm civets and the mouse deer were actually even observed in the hotel premises: a very nice place to stay as I said! Dulan even spotted several times **grey slender lorises**, but I must say we didn't see anything more than eye shines or a shape moving in trees, which for me doesn't really count as a true observation.

#### **Sigiriya:**

This was our second stop in Si Lanka and given what was written in past reports about this place, we had high expectations about mammal watching there. We spent 4 days / nights in Sigiriya where we stayed in a lovely homestay. The housewife was the cook and the food served there was simply delicious. The room we had was comfortable, super clean and with A/C. We really liked this place. The mammal watching agenda in Sigiriya was basically the following: very long night drives and walks between 10pm to 5-5:30am! Sleep in the morning to recover from the night 😊 and afternoons spent in various places around the Lion's rock and moat or nearby like Pidurangala's rock and Popham's Arboretum to look for bats or Kaudulla NP to look for elephants.

Walks in the afternoons along the moat and in the Lion's rock area we could visit without paying the entrance tickets produced some nice observations of **Indian palm squirrels**, tame **toque macaques** and **tufted gray langurs** but also of a few **purple-faced leaf langurs** that were significantly more shy than the other monkeys. Numerous **least pipistrelles** were seen in the evenings flying over the moat. During our visit to Popham's Arboretum, we could see **rufous horse-shoe bats** and **lesser false vampire bats** roosting in abandoned houses and also several **white-striped chevrotains** in the late evening. In some rock formations close to Pidurangala, Dulan showed us **Long-winged tomb bats** and **Schneider's leaf-nosed bats**.

When we visited Kaudulla NP, we were shocked by how crowded this little park was: there were literally hundreds of jeeps full of people who came here (like us to be honest) to see the large concentration of Asian elephants that "migrate" in this park during the hot and dry months. Thanks to Dulan's and Shantha's knowledge of the park, we drove along tracks far from the crowd, which allowed us to see quietly and for ourselves several species like **chitals**, two **golden jackals**, several **Indian grey mongooses** (this would be the only place in Sri Lanka where we would see this mongoose) and **Indian hares**. Of course, we also observed plenty of **Asian elephants**, including two large herds with some cool interactions between young adults, water and mud baths, and some cute tiny baby elephants securely protected by the adults.

We spent many hours spotlighting at night in Sigiriya, near the towns or in large forests nearby. I would not be able to say where we've been given the number of kms we did on small tarred or dirt roads and tracks in the forests. Most of the time we spent at night was actually fairly quiet. I think one problem we had is the weather was very windy on 3 days out of 4 we spent in Sigiriya; this may have impacted the mammal behavior. The first night was good though: we saw an **Indian crested porcupine** near a dam and while we were observing it and taking photos, all a sudden a **Eurasian otter** quickly ran down the dam to hide in thick grass. This was

a surprise and very quick observation that did not give us enough time to react and take photo. On the same night, we saw multiple **Indian gerbils**, a few **jungle cats** (trying our best to differentiate them from domestic cats or hybrids), **Indian hares**, one **white-striped chevrotain** and two observations of **grey slender loris** including a marvelous and very close encounter in the forest. The next two nights were on the other hand very slow with little seen: a few **jungle cats** and **golden jackals**, **Indian hares** and a couple of **Asian palm civets** but no Indian gerbil surprisingly and still no fishing cat. We saw once in the forest high in the trees one **Indian giant flying squirrel**. We were starting to get desperate to drive and walk for so long without seeing anything as this was much less productive compared to what I read in past trip reports for the Sigiriya area. I understand very well this is nature and there are ups and downs, but this was boring 😊. On the last day, the wind stopped and we had some heavy rain for a couple of hours in the evening. Dulan told us this was great weather for mammals and indeed, this fourth night was by far the best of them and we saw plenty: **jungle cats** and **golden jackals** again, one **fishing cat** finally (nice observation although not as good as the ones we had in Wilpattu), **Indian gerbils** everywhere, one **Asian palm civet**, our first **golden palm civet** in the forest, one **grey slender loris** and **white-striped chevrotains**. I finish the list with the star of Sri Lankan mammals, the one we were secretly hoping for after so many hours spent at night: a marvelous encounter with an **Indian Pangolin** somewhere deep in a forest. It took us more than 23h of spotlighting to finally see this beautiful creature but what a reward!! Compared to the Temminck's pangolin we saw in Africa, I was surprised by how large and fast moving this pangolin specie is. We could stay near him long enough to take great photos and precisely observe his weird body and cute face before he disappeared in the thick forest. What a night and such a great finish for our stay in Sigiriya!! I think Dulan was as happy and relieved as us to see the pangolin on the last night 😊

#### **Kandy:**

After Sigiriya, we spent one night and one morning near Kandy at the Tree of Life Nature resort. This hotel is quite luxurious with large rooms, swimming pool and impressive restaurant serving nice buffets, but the best is its large garden that is a heaven for birdwatching but also very interesting for mammals since a family of Indian giant flying squirrels is known to leave in the tall trees here. Our short evening and spotlighting sessions in the hotel garden were productive as we could see in very good conditions: **Indian palm squirrels** and **grizzled giant squirrels** during the day, both **golden and brown palm civets** and **giant flying squirrels** during the night, almost at eye level because of the steep terrain of the hotel garden. Very nice! I recommend spending one night in this place if you want to see very well giant flying squirrels in Sri Lanka.

The following morning, we did some bird watching but saw again **Indian palm squirrels**, **grizzled giant squirrels** as well as a family of **ruddy mongooses** with cute youngsters, some **Toque macaques** and a few **lesser woolly horseshoe bats** in the field nearby. On the drive to our next stop in the mountain, we saw tens of **Indian flying foxes** roosting in a large tree next to the Kandy Lake.

#### **Nuwara Eliya:**

The road to the mountains and Nuwara Eliya, our next stop in Sri Lanka, is very scenic with some beautiful landscapes and falls but is very, very long... After the heat in the Northern dry zones visited before, it was a real pleasure to have decent and cooler temperatures, even quite cold in the mornings since we are at elevations above 2000m in this area. What a relief for the couple of days we spent there 😊. We stayed at the Dewy cottage homestay that has some nice view on the town but is not well maintained and in poor shape. However, the owners are very friendly and the food served there excellent. Around Nuwara Eliya, we mostly did some birding but saw a few **Indian palm squirrels** and **Toque macaques** and at night, we went to the central market trash area where we saw **house rats** and one **greater bandicoot rat** that we could not take in picture unfortunately.

From Nuwara Eliya, we drove and spent a full day in Horton Plains NP. What a nice place this is! The road to get there is going through landscapes that reminded me more European alpine ones than the tropics. Closer to the park, the road starts to become very curvy and steep, this was something and I was actually wondering if our car would manage to climb there but we could, thanks to the skill of our driver. En route to Horton Plains, we came across one **Indian muntjac**, a few **Purple-faced leaf langurs** and a couple of **Dusky-striped squirrels** but too briefly to allow us to take any photos. Just a few meters before the entrance gate, we had a wonderful observation of two **stripe-necked mongooses** who made the show for long minutes: sleeping, yawning, stretching, grooming and walking a bit in the open, fully aware of our presence, before disappearing in the thick forest. What a great observation not even being yet in the park! This was a good start for the day. We then spent the whole day driving back and forth along the main road crossing the park in search of mammals, birds and reptiles, with several stops at the park offices to look for short-tailed (brown) mongooses that are regularly seen there according to Dulan but we saw none. In terms of mammals, we could see along the road multiple **sambar**s, some being very tame. While taking pictures of a beautiful male with big antlers, we saw a **Nilu rat** crossing the road not far from us. We saw **Indian palm squirrels** at the park offices and finally a **dusky-striped squirrel** who stayed still long enough for a photo. This was the only time we could take a photo of this squirrel specie during the entire trip. We also saw several **wild boars** and a **short-tailed mongoose** near the Maha Eliya Wildlife Bungalow but quite in a distance. We were hoping for leopards and stayed in the park

as long as we could but with no luck. We came back to Nuwara Eliya at night stopping in the Pattipola village where is located the highest train station in Sri Lanka. A nice place and train station to visit. After a good sleep and long night with no night / spotlighting session, we drove down to the heat and South of the Island.

#### **Tissa / Yala:**

We spent 2 days and a half in the Tissa (Tissamaharama in full) area to visit the Yala National Park and the buffer zones nearby for the night sessions. Another place where we did not sleep much between the full day safaris spent in the park from 6:30am and the spotlighting sessions held between 10pm to around 1:30am 😊 We stayed at the beautiful and luxurious Chaarya Resort & Spa: very nice rooms with A/C, super clean and nice buffet at the restaurant. In Yala NP, we spent ½ day visiting the Block 5 sector and 2 full days visiting the more renowned Block 1 sector. I found the park landscape in Block 1 very scenic and diversified with nice ponds, forest and open areas and also interesting to see wild animals so close to the Indian Ocean beaches. Block 5 was more forestry, hence more difficult to see animals although we had some nice sightings there. Unlike what was written in many past reports or on websites, I did not find the density of mammals to be so impressive in Yala. Even the leopard sightings were not so numerous. Indeed, we saw **2 leopards** on the first day, which was great, but we saw none on the following day. Maybe the season? Maybe the crowd? because this park is indeed very crowded with insane numbers of jeeps packed near interesting sightings and as such, I preferred Wilpattu that I found had a better balance scenery / number of animals / crowd than Yala. That is just my opinion.

In ½ day spent in Block 5, we saw **Chitals**, two **Asian elephants**, **Toque macaques** and **tufted gray langurs**, one **ruddy mongoose**, **wild water buffalos** that looked much more like the pure wild breed than in Wipattu and **Indian hare**. Our most interesting sighting though was a beautiful **sloth Bear** that we saw late evening just before the park closure. Very nice observation just for ourselves with no other jeeps around. Besides leopards, in 2 full days spent in Block 1, we also saw multiple **wild buffalos** in pools including some individuals with very long horns, several **Asian elephants** with babies and most of the time drinking in pools, a few **ruddy mongooses** and **golden jackals**, many **chitals** and two very skittish **sambars**, **toque macaques** and a few **tufted gray langurs**, **Indian palm squirrels** and a large family of **wild boars** playing and drinking in another pool. Outside of the park, we went to see a colony of **Indian flying foxes** roosting in a large tree in Tissa and we also observed **Schneider's leaf-nosed bats** in the field.

The night drives and spotlighting sessions were not very productive although we could see several **Indian hares**, **Indian gerbils** and **jungle cats** every night. More sporadically, we also observed very well one cute **small Indian civet**, one **white-striped chevrotain** and a couple of **golden jackals**. We did not see any exciting species like porcupine or rusty-spotted cats for example. Dulan told us that this area used to be excellent for rusty-spotted cat sightings several years ago but not anymore nowadays due to the expansion of Tissa town and increase traffic/noise at night.

#### **Udawalawa:**

Our next stop was the Udawalawa National Park that we reached after a 1h30 short drive from Tissa/Yala. We stayed at another great hotel: the Centuria Wild, very comfortable with large AC rooms, a swimming pool and 2 restaurants but it was empty. We found out later that this destination is popular during the wet season when large populations of Asian elephants are concentrating there but in August most of the elephants are gone and the park is less visited. As a consequence, the main restaurant of the hotel was closed, and we had all our meals in the smaller restaurant normally used for breakfast. We didn't have the best food there during our entire trip. We only spent an afternoon to visit the park and had a spotlighting session in the evening. The following morning was spent for birding only before we drove to Sinharaja.

The Udawalawa NP is quite small and not very scenic except in the surroundings of the huge lake that sits in the center of the park. If the park is full of elephants during the wet season as explained earlier, we just saw a few of them during our visit. Besides **Asian elephants**, we only saw the other usual suspects, that is to say: **chitals**, **water buffalos**, **Toque macaques** and **tufted gray langurs**, **ruddy mongooses**, **Indian palm squirrels** and a few **Indian hares**. This park is said to be a good place in Sri Lanka to see jungle cats during the day but we saw none. The night drive done nearby the park was not very productive either with only Indian hares, one **Asian palm civet** and one **jungle cat** observed.

Udawalawa was not the most memorable place during our trip in Sri Lanka and based on what we saw elsewhere throughout the island, I think this place can be skipped during a trip itinerary done in the dry months.

#### **Sinharaja:**

Our next stop was the pristine (for what remains) Sinharaja forest reserve that lies in the Southwest wet zone of Sri Lanka. This was primarily a birding place to be honest but there are a few cool mammals we could expect to see there. The road from Udawalawa to the northern section of the forest where most tourists go didn't look very long on the map but it took us several hours to get to the Weddagala village down the valley just before the forest due to the terrain with small and very winding roads. The last

few kilometers to the Martin's simple lodge where we stayed was done with a 4x4 jeep due to the very steep and terrible state of the road that goes there. I was wondering if going there on foot wouldn't have been faster 😊 This lodge is famous among birders because of its location deeper in the forest right next to the park entrance, which allows you to see more easily some key bird species early mornings or late afternoons when most visitors are gone. Although the lodge is indeed basic as mentioned in several reports, it was actually much better than I expected with large and clean rooms (no AC and only fans but no big deal), warm showers and the food served by the owner's family was plentiful and very tasty. On top of that, the view of the rain forest from their main terrasse is simply gorgeous. As mentioned earlier, we came to Sinharaja for birding most of the time but there were a few iconic mammal species that we were targeting to see as well. We spent 3 days/nights in the area to give us enough time and maximize our chance to see mammals and the star bird of the forest: the Serendib scops owl that was only discovered and described to science in 2001!

At the Weddagala village down the valley is located the Blue Magpie lodge where brown mongooses are reported to be regularly seen feeding to their garbage area. We went there twice but with no luck although we saw a couple of **ruddy mongooses** and a **house rat** there. On the other hand, we came across a **brown mongoose** along the road towards the village and it ran straight into a house backyard. Our guide Dulan asked the owner if we could enter and she accepted. We found the mongoose in their garbage area but it ran away too quickly to take a photo. Damned! At the Martin's lodge feeder and in another house nearby, we could observe a few **Layard's palm squirrels** but I was actually surprised we could not see more of them during our stay in Sinharaja. We saw many **Indian palm squirrels** on the other hand. **Toque macaques** were easily seen during our walks along the forest tracks as well as several **purple-faced leaf langurs** but they were always skittish and high in the trees making good photo opportunities difficult. Dulan organized with a tracker the search of the famous Serendib owl and thanks to them we managed to see one in its roost area during the day. What a cool bird!... however as soon as we got out of the tracks to look for the owl we were attacked by leeches! Leeches are a pain in the wet forests in Sri Lanka, which we knew, and this is part of the experience 😊 but with good leech socks and appropriate clothing the risk with them is very limited. Of course, I did not pay enough attention and I was bitten once on the stomach and did not remove the leech until realizing it after a while, which caused lots of bleeding. I was surprised but you actually feel nothing, no pain nor itching when a leech is pumping your blood. Yuk!.

It is not allowed to walk and spotlight at night inside the forest so options are limited but we could roam a bit at night around the village, which allowed us to see another Serendib owl, and even a Bay owl! but no mammals... We saw some eye shines that Dulan said belonged for sure to a red slender loris but since we could not even identify a body shape I did not count it. We also went to a place where it was reported that a **Travancore flying squirrel** could be regularly seen. We made two attempts to finally see one very well with nice photos. At the same place, we were also able to see our only **yellow-striped chevrotain** of the trip. Cool!.

Beside mammals and owls, we of course saw hundreds of birds during these 3 days. This forest is really a heaven for birders.

#### **Kitulgala:**

The last place we visited during our trip to Sri Lanka was Kitulgala where there is another large forest rich in wildlife: birds, mammals but also frogs, snakes, insects etc... The good thing with this forest is there is no restriction at night so we could spend ample time to look for nocturnal species. We visited the area for 2 days/nights and stayed at the Rest House hotel that was built and used in 1957 for the shooting of The Bridge on the River Kwai movie. An historical place that luckily has been renovated since then. The rooms there were once again very comfortable and clean, and the old-style restaurant was superbly located with nice views on the Kelani river. The food proposed in the restaurant was excellent. I really liked this place, very scenic with this large rain forest and river we had to cross each time (on a very small suspension bridge or with a small boat) to reach the forest. The tracks within the forest were well maintained till some nice falls and rivers. A nice stop for the last days of our itinerary.

In terms of mammal observations, we saw one **purple-faced leaf langur** in a large tree along the road towards Kitulgala. This was our best observation of this specie during the entire trip and some nice photos could be taken. Dulan knew a place in Kitulgala where we could see brown mongooses. We went there for a last try for nice photos of this mongoose since our observations in Horton Plains and Sinharaja were either too furtive or too far. It was again in a garbage area near Dulan's friend house that we managed to see very well two **brown mongooses** looking for food and not very shy. While waiting for the brown mongoose we observed several **Indian palm squirrels**. Dulan brought us to another place where several **greater short-nosed fruit bats** were roosting under large palm leaves. Within the Rest House hotel premises, we saw **Toque macaques**, more **Indian palm squirrels** and Kelaart's pipistrels in the evening.

During our long night walks in the forest (typically from 9pm until 2-3am!) we could see several mammals, some of them very well: **Indian muntjac**, **house rat**, **brown palm civet**, **golden palm civet** and **brown bats** flying just above the river surface. We also

observed several eye shines that Dulan attributed to red slender lorises but they were either too far away or moving too fast to manage to see any clear body.

After a 6-hour long walk on the last night and still no lorises, we decided to stop and go back to the hotel but we clearly saw that Dulan was a bit frustrated that we missed the red slender loris. Therefore and although this was not planned, he proposed us for the very last day of our trip to bring us to a patch of forest not far from the Colombo international airport for a last chance. The Dikkele forest reserve was according to him very rich in mammals and he saw there lorises several times. We of course accepted and after a long drive from Kitulgala to Dikkele, we arrived at the forest in the late afternoon. We started with a couple of hours birding in the forest and waited until dark before starting the spotlighting session for nocturnal mammals. This was a very easy walk since the terrain was totally flat and the tracks within the forest fairly large and well maintained. After only a few minutes we indeed realized that the forest was rich in wildlife, which was surprising to me considering how close to Colombo and surrounded by crowded villages this forest is. In less than 2 hours we saw an **Indian small civet** quickly crossing the road, one **Asian palm civet**, both **brown** and **golden palm civets** and again some eye shines that Dulan believed to belong to red slender loris but again we could not really see the beast. How frustrating but at some point, it was really time to leave the forest and drive to a rest house to freshen up before going to the airport on time for our flight back to France.

This trip to Sri Lanka was enjoyable and a great experience for multiple reasons: nice weather, visits to multiple places with various biotopes and scenic landscapes, an amazing wildlife diversity, whether for mammals or birds but also reptiles, frogs and insects. Aside bats and rodents that we are not real big fans, we actually saw all the mammals Sri Lanka could offer except for the red slender loris. We saw a total of 50 different mammal **species** (and I don't count all the subspecies we saw for monkeys, cats or civets), which I find very good considering that we did not do any whale watching nor systematic search of bat caves. We saw well all our main targets, that is to say: the four cat species, Asian elephants, all the civets and cherry on the cake: a great observation of Indian pangolin!! We liked this country a lot and I would recommend any wildlife enthusiasts to pay a visit to Sri Lanka. Finally, I would like to thank a lot the Bird and Wildlife team for organizing so well this trip, the Sri Lankan people for their welcome and kindness and again Dulan, our guide, for his passion and effort to show us as much wildlife as possible. He did a great job and sometimes pushed us to our limits but it was worth it and thanks to him we could see everything we dreamed of, and even more 😊.

Mammals with photos or well seen (lifers in green)				
Species	Espèces	Latin Name	Where seen	Pic
Asian elephant	Éléphant d'Asie	<i>Elephas maximus</i>	Quite common in Sri Lanka and seen in all parks. Some impressive herds in Kaudulla NP	X
Gray slender loris	Loris gris	<i>Loris lydekkerianus</i>	Several observations at night in Wilpattu and Sigiriya including a great encounter	X
Toque macaque	Macaque couronné	<i>Macaca sinica</i>	Observed everywhere in Sri Lanka	X
Tufted gray langur	Entelle de Ceylan	<i>Semnopithecus priam</i>	Observed in the main national parks and Sigiriya	X
Purple-faced leaf langur	Semnopithèque blanchâtre	<i>Trachypithecus vetulus</i>	Very shy monkey observed in various places throughout Sri Lanka	X
Greater bandicoot rat	Rat bandicoot indien	<i>Bandicota indica</i>	One individual seen at night at the marketplace in Nuwara Eliya	
Nillu rat	Rat de montagne sri-lankais	<i>Rattus montanus</i>	One seen crossing the road in Horton Plains while we were observing a Sambar deer	
House rat	Rat noir	<i>Rattus rattus</i>	Few individuals observed in various places	X
Indian gerbil	Gerbille d'Inde	<i>Tatera indica</i>	Commonly observed during our night drives in Wilpattu, Sigiriya and Tissa	X
Grizzled giant squirrel	Écureuil géant de Ceylan	<i>Ratufa macroura</i>	Observed in various places but mainly in Wilpattu and Kandy	X
Layard's palm squirrel	Écureuil palmé de Layard	<i>Funambulus layardi</i>	Surprisingly very few observed with only 2 individuals seen in Sinharaja forest	X
Dusky-striped squirrel	Écureuil rayé sombre	<i>Funambulus obscurus</i>	Similarly, only a few observed in Horton Plains with only 1 opportunity for a decent photo	X
Indian palm squirrel	Écureuil indien	<i>Funambulus palmarum</i>	Very common. Seen everywhere.	X
Indian crested porcupine	Porc-épic indien	<i>Hystrix indica</i>	1 individual seen at night in Sigiriya near a dam	X
Indian giant flying squirrel	Écureuil volant géant indien	<i>Petaurista philippensis</i>	One observed in a forest in Sigiriya and then several very well in the Tree of Life Resort Garden in Kandy	X
Travancore flying squirrel	Petit écureuil volant	<i>Petinomys fuscicapillus</i>	One observed very well in Sinharaja	X

Indian hare	Lièvre indien	Lepus nigricollis	Not so common but observed in various places throughout the country	X
Greater short-nosed fruit bat	Cynoptère à nez court	Cynopterus sphinx	One observed in Wilpattu at night and a group roosting in palm trees in Kitulgala	X
Indian flying fox	Renard volant d'Inde	Pteropus giganteus	Hundreds seen in roosting trees in Kandy and Tissa	X
Kelaart's pipistrelle	Pipistrelle de Kelaart	Pipistrellus ceylonicus	Several observed flying around the Rest House hotel in Kitulgala	
Least pipistrelle	Pipistrelle minuscule	Pipistrellus tenuis	Several observed flying above the Sigiriya Lion Rock moat	
Long-winged tomb bat	Taphiens à longues ailes	Taphozous longimanus	Observed in rock formations in Sigiriya	X
Lesser false vampire bat	Petit faux vampire	Megaderma spasma	Observed them roosting in a small tower in Sigiriya (Popham's Arboretum)	X
Schneider's leaf-nosed bat	Phyllorine de Schneider	Hipposideros speoris	Observed them roosting in caves in Sigiriya	X
Rufous horse-shoe bat	Rhinolophe roux	Rhinolophus rouxii	Observed them roosting in a small house in Sigiriya (Popham's Arboretum)	X
Lesser woolly horseshoe bat	Rhinolophe de Beddome	Rhinolophus beddomei	Observed them roosting in an abandoned house in Kandy	X
Lesser large-footed bat / Brown bat	Murin à pattes larges	Myotis hasseltii	Observed them flying very close to the river water surface in both Sigiriya and Kitulgala	
Indian pangolin	Grand pangolin d'Inde	Manis crassicaudata	One marvelous encounter in a forest in Sigiriya	X
Golden jackal	Chacal doré	Canis aureus	Several seen days and nights in Wilpattu, Kaudulla, Sigiriya and Tissa/Yala	X
Jungle cat	Chat des marais	Felis chaus	Several seen during our night drives in Wilpattu, Sigiriya and Tissa/Yala	X
Rusty-spotted cat	Chat rubigineux	Prionailurus rubiginosus	Only one seen, but well, in Wilpattu at night	X
Fishing cat	Chat pêcheur	Prionailurus viverrinus	3 observations in Wilpattu and 1 observation in Sigiriya, all at nights	X
Leopard	Léopard	Panthera pardus	2 individuals seen in Wilpattu and 2 others in Yala (Block 1)	X
Indian grey mongoose	Mangouste indienne grise	Herpestes edwardsii	Observed only (several individuals) in Kaudulla	X
Short-tailed mongoose	Mangouste à queue courte	Herpestes brachyurus	A tough animal to see: 1 in Horton Plains, 1 during our drive to Sinharaja and 1 observed very well in Kitulgala	X
Ruddy mongoose	Mangouste rousse	Herpestes smithii	Quite common and often observed during our game drives in the parks	X
Stripe-necked mongoose	Mangouste à col rayé	Herpestes vitticollis	Fantastic observation of a pair early morning just at the entrance gate of Horton Plains	X
Eurasian otter	Loutre européenne	Lutra lutra	One briefly observed running down a dam in Sigiriya while watching the crested porcupine	
Sloth bear	Ours lippu	Melursus ursinus	Two individuals observed in Wilpattu and another one in Yala (Block 5)	X
Small Indian civet	Civette indienne	Viverricula indica	A few observed at night in Wilpattu and Tissa	X
Asian palm civet	Civette palmiste commune	Paradoxurus hermaphroditus	Several observed at night in Wilpattu and Sigiriya	X
Golden palm civet	Civette palmiste de Ceylan	Paradoxurus zeylonensis	One observed in Sigiriya and several others in Kitulgala and Dikkele forests, all at nights	X
Brown palm civet	Civette palmiste brune	Paradoxurus montanus	Observed in the Tree of Life Resort Garden and in the Dikkele forest, both at night	X
Chital	Cerf axis	Axis axis	Quite common, observed in the national parks	X
Indian muntjac	Muntjac indien	Muntiacus muntjak	A few observed in Wilpattu, Yala and one at night in the Kitulgala forest	X
Sambar deer	Sambar	Rusa unicolor	One briefly observed in Wilpattu, 2 individuals in Yala and numerous in Horton Plains	X
Sri Lankan yellow-striped chevrotain	Chevrotain à rayures jaunes	Moschiola kathygre	Only one observed, but well, at night in the Sinharaja forest	X
Sri Lankan white-striped chevrotain	Chevrotain indien	Moschiola meminna	Several observed at night in Sigiriya and Wilpattu	X
Wild water buffalo	Buffle sauvage d'Asie	Bubalus arnee	Observed in Wilpattu and Yala, the ones in Yala looking more like wild breeds (long horns)	X
Wild boar	Sanglier	Sus scrofa	Several observed in Wilpattu, Yala and Horton Plains	X
		<b>Total Species Recorded = 50</b>		

Below another specie that I don't count given the observation circumstances

Red slender loris	Loris grêle	Loris tardigradus	Although Dulan tried hard to find and show us one, this loris eluded us and we only saw eye shines (clearly though) at night in Kitulgala forest. It was too distant to allow us to see a clear animal shape and actually count it
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I'm adding to this report pictures of some of the species we observed during that trip, especially those new to me.



Fishing cat



Rusty-spotted cat



Jungle cat



Leopard



Indian Palm squirrel



Grizzled giant squirrel





Layard's palm squirrel



Dusky-striped squirrel



Tufted gray langur



Purple-faced leaf langur



Gray slender loris



Toque macaque



Greater short-nosed fruit bat



Indian flying fox



Asian elephant



Wild water buffalo



Indian hare



Indian gerbil



Indian giant flying squirrel



Travancore flying squirrel



Indian grey mongoose



Short-tailed (brown) mongoose



Ruddy mongoose



Stripe-necked mongoose



Golden jackal



Sloth bear



Sri Lankan yellow-striped chevrotain



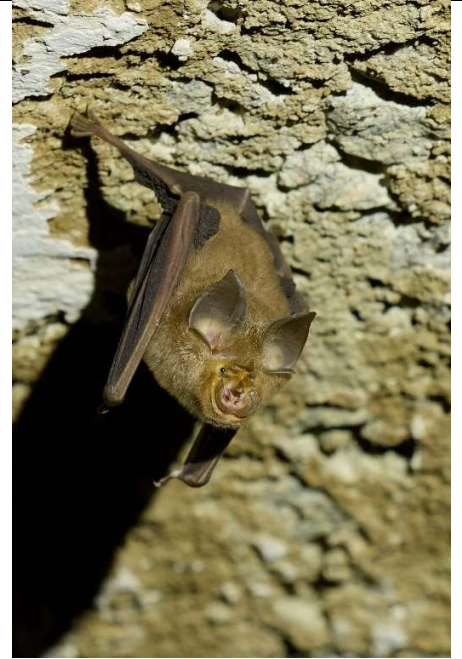
Sri Lankan white-striped chevrotain



Long-winged tomb bat



Lesser false vampire bat



Rufous horse-shoe bat



Schneider's leaf-nosed bat



Indian crested porcupine



Sambar



Indian muntjac



Small Indian civet



Asian palm civet



Golden palm civet



Brown palm civet



Indian pangolin



Honorary mammal: Serendib scops owl