

Sri Lanka Nocturnal cats and more! 11 days March 9th-19th 2024

Rusty-Spotted Cat



Two of us decided to visit Sri Lanka after reading many of the exciting trip reports here on mammalwatching. The main purpose of the trip was mammal watching (primarily the small cats), but we were also interested in birding, as well as spending some time on cultural sites.

After contacting a few different companies we eventually decided to go with Chinthaka De Silva of Wildlife Expeditions. He was responsive, promptly answering questions, knowledgeable, and able to accommodate any activities we were interested in adding onto the trip. Chinthaka has been giving wildlife watching tours in Sri Lanka for ~30 years and has connections all throughout the country. At each park he had contacts involved in helping us find our intended targets.

In the months prior Chinthaka kept us informed of what he was seeing on his current tours and kept track of sightings in case he needed to change our itinerary based on where sightings are most active.

Chinthaka was always high energy and determined to show us everything he could during our short stay. Chinthaka is somehow able to be spotlighting late into the night and then be ready for early morning activities just a few hours later. Most nights would start at 10 and end between 2 and 3:30.

Overall in 11 days we saw 49 species of mammals (not counting subspecies). This was with multiple days being dedicated to birding and cultural sites. In addition to mammals we also saw about ½ the endemic birds as well as many reptiles, amphibians, and butterflies.

The small cats were our main targets and we saw a lot of them during our 6 night drives. We saw ~10 jungle cats + numerous hybrids. Four rusty spotted cats. The highlight of the entire trip was a daytime sighting where we got to observe one as it watched us from a tree. The other three sightings were all at night and brief. Two fishing cats, but both were from a distance. The better sighting being an extended viewing through binoculars.

We also saw most of our other targets including four types of civet. The only targets we missed were the red loris and Indian pangolin. Neither of which were for a lack of trying.

Day 1- traveled from the airport to Marissa overnight.

Day 2- Whale Watching- Upon arrival there were Wet zone toque macaques in the trees around the dock. On the tour (5 hours) we saw Long-snouted spinner dolphins, bottlenose dolphins, and two fin whales (a mother and calf). After the whale watching we travelled to Sinharaja Rainforest. We got there in the late afternoon and went to see a Serendib Scops owl. Chinthaka had a contact find one's location before we arrived. After seeing the owl we hiked around the area before going to our accommodation at Martin's lodge. Saw a Layard's squirrel on the way to the lodge. At night we spent time outside Sinharaja looking for the Red-slender Loris. Saw greater short-nosed fruit bat and yellow-striped chevrotain. Heard the Loris but didn't see it.



Day 3-Hiked around Martins Lodge where we saw Layard's squirrel, dusky-striped Squirrel, and southern lowland wet zone purple-faced leaf monkeys. After lunch we travelled to Kitulgala. At night we hiked the forest in search of primarily red-slender loris which we again heard, but didn't see. We did see a wet zone golden zone palm civet towards the end of the night.



Day 4-We went to an area around Kitulgala where we saw intermediate giant grizzled squirrels, palm squirrels, and brown mongoose. As well as a chestnut-backed owlet, which was one of our birding targets. At night we tried again for Red-slender loris without success. We saw lesser short-nosed bats, as well as greater short-nosed bats, and brown bats.

Day 5- After breakfast we travelled to Sigiriya and arrived in time for a short hike. We saw dry zone purple-faced leaf monkeys, grey langurs, dry zone toque macaques, and dry zone grizzled giant squirrels. At night we spotted black-napped Indian hares, one fishing cat, and several jungle cats. We also saw white-spotted chevrotain, spotted deer and common palm civet.



Day 6- We took in some historical sites including hiking up Sigiriya Rock Fortress and visited Dambulla Cave Temple. More macaques, grey langurs, and dry zone grizzled giant squirrels. Prior to our drive we visited an arboretum where we got great views of grey-slender lorises.

On the night drive we saw two jungle Cats, many small Indian civets, several white-spotted chevrotains, black-napped Indian Hares, greater false vampire bats, rufous horseshoe bats, lesser woolly horseshoe bats, pouched Tomb bats, fulvous fruit bats and Indian flying foxes. Tried for Pangolin at Chinthaka's special location but no luck.



Day 7- Slept in late and in the evening Chinthaka took us to a theater for a dance performance. An Asian Elephant was along the road as well as more macaques, a dry zone grizzled giant squirrel, and palm

squirrels. During the night drive we saw an Indian giant flying squirrel, another Jungle cat, small Indian civets, black-napped hares, and Painted Bats. Tried again for Pangolin without success.

Day 8-After breakfast we travelled to Wilpattu and in transit we passed a wild Elephant on the road. We stayed at the Wilpattu Tree House Hotel which we loved! On our afternoon game drive we saw a sloth Bear near the side of the road. We also saw Indian Grey mongoose, wild boar, red muntjac, spotted deer, Indian buffalo, water buffalo, Asian elephant, macaques, and grey langurs. On our night drive we saw a fishing cat closer than in Sigiriya. More black-napped hares, white-spotted chevrotain, and small Indian civets.



Day 9- Morning drive in Wilpattu we saw a mother leopard with 2 cubs. More macaques, grey langurs, ruddy mongoose, red muntjac, spotted deer, one Sambar Deer, Indian buffalo, water buffalo, wild boar, and golden jackal. Our highlight was a daytime viewing of a Rusty spotted cat. Chinthaka had a tip about where one had been seen hanging out during the daytime so we decided to check the spot out. Surprisingly the cat was right there and it ran up into a tree upon seeing us. Where it stayed and observed us back. On our night drive we saw more white-spotted chevrotains, two more jungle cats, two rusty-spotted cats, small Indian civets, common palm civet, brown civet, Indian gerbil, and more black-napped hares.



Day 10- Visited the Capital City Ruins in the morning where we saw more macaque/grey langurs and Indian flying foxes. Near our lodge we saw another dry zone grizzled giant squirrel, as well as more palm squirrels. On our final night drive we saw another Indian gerbil, more black-napped hare, spotted deer and white-spotted chevrotain, long-tailed climbing mouse, Indian flying fox, 1x rusty-spotted cat, 2x jungle cats, Asian palm civet, small Indian civets, and two different herds of Asian Elephants As well as a leopard in the distance, which are rare outside of the park.

Day 11- dryzone giant grizzled squirrel and palm squirrels at the lodge. Drove to the airport after breakfast.

1	Gray Slender Loris
2	Asian Elephant
3	Purple-faced Langur
4	Tufted Grey Langur
5	Toque Macaque
6	Grizzled Giant Squirrel
7	Indian Giant Flying Squirrel
8	Palm squirrel
9	Flame-striped squirrel
10	Dusky-striped squirrel
11	Indian Gerbil
12	Sri Lanka spiny mouse
13	Black/Common house rat
14	Asiatic Long-tailed climbing mouse
15	Black-napped hare
16	Fulvous Fruit bat
17	Indian Flying fox
18	Lesser short-nosed fruit bat
19	Long-eared false vampire bat
20	Rufous Horseshoe bat
21	Lesser woolly horseshoe bat
22	Pouched Tomb bat
23	Brown bat/Lesser large-footed bat
24	Painted bat
25	Rusty-spotted cat
26	Fishing cat
27	Jungle cat
28	Leopard
29	Asian Palm Civet
30	Golden wet-zone palm civet
31	Sri Lanka brown palm civet
32	Small Indian civet
33	Indian grey mongoose
34	Indian brown mongoose
35	Ruddy mongoose
36	Golden Jackal
37	Sloth Bear
38	Wild Boar
39	Yellow-spotted chevrotain
40	White-spotted chevrotain
41	Red muntjac

42	Spotted deer
43	Sambar deer
44	Indian crested porcupine
45	Indian buffalo
46	Fin whale
47	Long-snouted spinner dolphin
48	Bottlenose dolphin
49	Water Buffalo