

## Wilpattu National Park, Sri Lanka

Oct 27, 28, 29, 2018

I had a weekend free in Asia during a business trip and took the time to visit Sri Lanka for some mammal watching, with a focus on its small cat species. Having read several informative trip reports here (thank you!), I decided on Wilpattu National Park and went with Dulan from Bird and Wildlife Team Sri Lanka. They were easy to work with on scheduling, flexible to my changing schedule, and enthusiastic to accommodate my target species. I'd highly recommend them. Dulan in particular was a great spotter with knowledge of where, when and how to find the species I was most interested in.

I arrived Friday night, was met by a driver outside of customs, and slept in a nice hotel outside of Colombo. There happened to be a constitutionally challenging changing of the prime minister during our plane ride, so the city was abuzz with political change when I landed, and fireworks could be heard all night in the city. I figured if the situation headed south, going to a national park was a good bet for dodging the action anyway, so I slept soundly.

### Saturday 10/27

Saturday morning, we made the 4 hour drive to Wilpattu. All on good roads with a good stop for food and restrooms. Sri Lanka is an easy country to travel in. Just on the way in the park, we saw **Short-tailed Mongoose, Ruddy Mongoose and Giant Squirrel**.



**Giant Squirrel**



**Ruddy Mongoose**

After a quick meal, we went for an afternoon drive in the park. The drives are in an open-air jeep. The park isn't crowded like other parks in Sri Lanka or India. While there are other jeeps, there are also many miles of roads and no radios, so you can actually have sightings to yourself for a bit until another car happens to come along. We saw **Red Muntjak/Barking Deer, Black-Naped Hare**, a great look at an Indian Cobra crossing the road, **Spotted Deer, Sambhur, Water Buffalo, Palm Squirrel and Golden Jackal**.

Then it was back to the Wilpattu Safari Camp for a bit of dinner before a night drive. The night drive started out pretty typical with an **Indian Gerbil**, but then we had one of the best sightings of the trip – a **Rusty Spotted Cat** who ran up a tree right by the road as we drove up to it. We were able to get excellent views from a close distance while the cat simply went about doing cat things with some serious evening grooming

being the main focus. After 10 or 15 minutes, it decided it had enough of us, climbed down the tree, and immediately disappeared without a trace.



For the rest of the evening, we had quick views of a single **Jungle Cat**, a **Grey Slender Loris** or two, a couple **Indian Field Mouse**, black-naped hares, **Asiatic Long-tailed Climbing Mouse**, a probable but unconfirmed

glimpse of a Fishing Cat, and a few **Sri Lankan White-Spotted Chevrotain**. We were back by only 2am or so which was pretty reasonable.

### **Sunday 10/28**

Sunday, we got up for a full day game drive in the park. Just leaving our camp, we saw an **Indian Elephant** headed across a lake back into a park after a night of raiding the farmer's fields. All night long, you can hear the boom of fire crackers that the farmers use to keep elephants out of their fields. The electric fences used to try to keep elephants in the park seem to be wholly ineffective as we saw them flattened by elephants, and saw our elephant carefully stepping over the fence as he went back into the park.



We had a good sighting of a **leopard** sitting 25' or so off of the road on the way into the core of the park. This sighting was with other vehicles on their way in for the morning.



There is an enormous colony of **Indian Fruit Bats** that is near the bathrooms/lunch area. While watching them, a **White-billed Sea-Eagle** decided to have one for lunch.



**Indian Fruit Bat.** I'm no bat expert, so any gender ID help would be appreciated....



**Indian Fruit Bat** having a terrible day.

That afternoon, we saw **Grey Langur**, **Wild Boar**, **Toque Macaque**, and an excellent view of a **Sloth Bear**. The bear was head deep in a hole digging for grubs and enjoying it, giving us at least 15 minutes of good views before ambling off.





After dinner, we headed back out for a second night drive. This evening, we had great luck with the cats, seeing three **Jungle Cats** including an extended good view of one, and a great view of a **Fishing Cat** that we were able to approach on foot to within about 15 meters for a few minutes.





We also saw **Asian Palm Civet** raiding a papaya tree in someone's yard, and a **Small Indian Civet**.

### **Monday 10/29**

Monday, we went on a morning game drive and the highlight was an outstanding couple hours with a **Leopard** in the park who was quite active looking for a meal. We had numerous views over the couple hour period, and Dulan did a great job anticipating its behavior so that we were always "where the puck was going".



From there, it was off to the airport for my flight and a load of good memories. Our total list was 31 species, and we didn't focus on bats at all. Based on a prior trip to Sri Lanka, had we focused on bats, we may have been able to get to 40 I bet in a quick long weekend trip.

### Mammal List

1. Indian Hare	<i>Lepus nigricollis</i>
2. Giant Squirrel	<i>Ratufa macroura</i>
3. Indian Palm Squirrel	<i>Funambulus palmarum</i>
4. Indian Field Mouse	<i>Mus booduga</i>
5. Asiatic Long-tailed Climbing Mouse	<i>Vandeleuria oleracea</i>
6. Indian Gerbil	<i>Tatera indica</i>
7. Small Indian Civet	<i>Viverricula indica</i>
8. Asian Palm Civet	<i>Paradoxurus hermaphroditus</i>
9. Leopard (2)	<i>Panthera pardus</i>
10. Fishing Cat (3)	<i>Prionailurus viverrinus</i>
11. Rusty Spotted Cat (1)	<i>Prionailurus rubiginosus</i>
12. Jungle Cat (4)	<i>Felis chaus</i>
13. Short-tailed Mongoose	<i>Herpestes edwardsii</i>
14. Ruddy Mongoose	<i>Herpestes smithii</i>
15. Golden Jackal	<i>Canis aureus</i>
16. Grey Slender Loris	<i>Loris lydekkerianus</i>
17. Sri Lanka Toque Monkey	<i>Macaca sinica</i>
18. Tufted Grey Langur	<i>Semnopithecus priam</i>
19. Sri Lankan White-Spotted Chevrotain	<i>Moschiola meminna</i>
20. Chital	<i>Axis axis</i>
21. Sambhur	<i>Rusa unicolor</i>
22. Red Muntjak	<i>Muntiacus muntjak</i>
23. Asian Elephant	<i>Elephas maximus</i>
24. Wild Water Buffalo	<i>Bubalus arnee</i>
25. Feral Water Buffalo	<i>Bubalus bubalis</i>
26. Greater Short Nosed Fruit Bat	<i>Cynopterus sphinx</i>
27. Indian Flying fox	<i>Pteropus giganteus</i>
28. Pygmy Pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus tenuis</i>
29. Schneider's Leaf-Nosed Bat	<i>Hipposideros speoris</i>
30. Sloth Bear	<i>Melursus ursinus</i>
31. Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>

### List of Bird Bycatch

1 White-naped Woodpecker	<i>chrysocolaptes festivus</i>
2 Common Iora	<i>aegithina tiphia</i>
3 Rose-ringed Parakeet	<i>psittacula krameri</i>
4 Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus balasiensis</i>
5 Painted Stork	<i>mycteria leucocephala</i>
6 White/Wolly-necked stork	<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>
7 Ashy Prinia	<i>prinia socialis</i>
8 Indian Peafowl	<i>pavo cristatus</i>
9 Little Green Beeeater	<i>Merops orientalis</i>
10 Asian Openbilled stork	<i>Anastomus oscitans</i>
11 Red wattle lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>
12 Greater Thick-knee	<i>Esacus recurvirostris</i>



13	Black hooded oriole	<i>Oriolus xanthornus</i>
14	Common Sandpiper	<i>actitis hypoleucos</i>
15	Emerald Dove	<i>Chalcophaps indica</i>
16	Green Imperial Pigeon	<i>ducula aenea</i>
17	Blue-Tailed Beeeater	<i>Merops philippinus</i>
18	Balck-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>
19	Orange-breasted Green Pigeon	<i>treron bicinctus</i>
20	Oriental Skylark	<i>alauda gulgula</i>
21	Spot-billed pelican	<i>pelecanus philippensis</i>
22	Oriental darter	<i>anhinga melanogaster</i>
23	Little cormorant	<i>microcarbo niger</i>
24	Asian Paradise Flycatcher	<i>terpsiphone paradisi</i>
25	Grey Heron	<i>ardea cinerea</i>
26	Sri Lankan Junglefowl	<i>Gallus lafayetii</i>
27	Indian Thickknee	<i>Burhinus indicus</i>
28	Indian Pita	<i>Pitta brachyura</i>
29	Crested Serpent Eagle	<i>spilornis cheela</i>
30	Wood Sandpiper	<i>tringa glareola</i>
31	Common Greenshank	<i>tringa nebularia</i>
32	Whiskered Tern	<i>chlidonias hybrida</i>
33	Gull-billed Tern	<i>gelochelidon nilotica</i>
34	White-billed sea-eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>
35	Lesser Sand Plover	<i>charadrius mongolus</i>
36	Little Stint	<i>calidris minuta</i>
37	Crested Hawk-Eagle	<i>nisaetus cirrhatus</i>
38	Lesser Adjutant Stork	<i>Leptoptilos javanicus</i>
39	White-rumped munia	<i>lonchura striata</i>
40	Pacific Golden Plover	<i>pluvialis fulva</i>
41	Common Redshank	<i>tringa totanus</i>
42	Chestnut-Headed Bee-eater	<i>merops leschenaulti</i>
43	Common Kingfisher	<i>alcedo atthis</i>
44	White-throated Kingfisher	<i>halcyon smyrnensis</i>
45	Brown Shrike	<i>lanius cristatus</i>
46	Kintish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>
47	Long-billed/Northern Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris lotenius</i>
48	Pintail Snipe	<i>Gallinago stenura</i>
49	Yellow-crowned woodpecker	<i>dendrocopos mahrattensis</i>
50	Red-backed Woodpecker	<i>Dinopium psarodes</i>
51	Malabar Pied Hornbill	<i>anthracoceros coronatus</i>
52	Indian Cuckoo	<i>cuculus micropterus</i>
53	Fan-tailed Flycatcher	<i>Rhipidura albicollis</i>
54	Lesser Whistling Duck	<i>dendrocygna javanica</i>
55	Forest Wagtail	<i>dendronanthus indicus</i>
56	Paddy Field Pipit	<i>Anthus rufulus</i>
57	Black-headed Ibis	<i>Threskiornis melanocephalus</i>
	Brown-capped pygmy	
58	woodpecker	<i>dendrocopos nanus</i>

Some More Wilpattu N.P Pics



