

Sri Lanka, via Dubai, October 2010

John Yates

As first time visitors to Asia and to get a flavour of this vast continent, we decided on Sri Lanka as our holiday destination, which we combined with a three night stay in Dubai, UAE. Although most of my birding would occur once we got to Sri Lanka, I always took my binoculars out in Dubai just in case anything was around in the city.

Literature

Harrison A Field Guide To The Birds Of Sri Lanka

18th October 2010

We took the five hour flight from London Heathrow to Dubai with Emirates airlines. Unfortunately we arrived just after dark so it was too late for any late afternoon birding in one of the city parks and so after checking in to the Novotel hotel in the old town we visited the locally situated City Centre Shopping Mall to cool down. Amazingly refreshing away from the 25°C heat.

19th October 2010

To try and see as much in as possible we left the hotel early and bought a two day bus pass from the Big Bus Company whose stand was situated at the other side of the Mall. The bus is partly covered and air conditioned. Today we decided to take the 'purple' bus route that would take us out to the Atlantis Hotel on the Palm. I think I was a little surprised at how big Dubai actually is. It took a good couple of hours to do the full circuit. On the way we drove over the Creek where I saw the extensive Creek Side Park along this inlet. We passed the Jumeirah Mosque and the incredible Burj Al Arab hotel before we disembarked at the Atlantis Hotel for lunch and to see the amazing Aquarium. As we were buying tickets for tomorrow's visit to the Atlantis water park I picked up White Cheeked & Red Vented Bulbuls. We then continued on our bus tour and stopped off at Dubai Mall, with its amazing aquarium, and took in views of the world's tallest building The Burj Kalifa. We also enjoyed the fountain experience (twice!!). Due to us wanting to see the Underwater Zoo we missed the last Big Bus to the hotel but we were able to get a local shopping bus that took us fairly close to our hotel. We found our way back to the hotel and tried the local delicacies in the food hall of the City Centre Mall where Thomas enjoyed a Toco Bell chessy burger.

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20th October 2010

Repeated yesterday's trip on the 'purple' route and spent a few hours at the water park. In the late afternoon we transferred to the 'red' bus route which included a boat trip down The Creek as the evening drew in. Got the last bus half way to the hotel and walked back.

Dubai bird list

Novotel Hotel

House Sparrow, Laughing Dove, Collared Dove, Indian Silverbill & Feral Pigeon

From bus

House Crow, Common Myna, Hoopoe, Indian Roller, Grey Francolin (5+), Snipe, Black Winged Stilt, Red Wattled Lapwing, Kestrel & Sand Martin.

Atlantis Hotel

White Cheeked Bulbul & Red Vented Bulbul

Docks

Striated Heron, Socotra Cormorant & Ring Necked Parakeet (in flight going to roost).

21st October 2010

Location – Ranweli Hotel, Negombo.

We took the early morning flight from Dubai to Sri Lanka and were picked up on time from the airport for our 30 minute transfer to the Ranweli Holiday resort. After settling in to our accommodation for the next week, we took a walk south to get our bearings. Once out of the resort we followed the river for 15 minutes before dinner and table tennis.

House Crow & Common Myna on route. Blue-Tailed Bee Eater, Ashy Prinia, Red Wattled Lapwing, Barn Swallow, Whimbrel & Common Sandpiper during the walk.



Ranweli Holiday Village's varied wildlife - White Bellied Drongo, Yellow Billed Babbler, Giant Squirrel, Red Backed Woodpecker, Mixed Tern flock (Gull-Billed, Crested and Common), Water Monitor

22nd October 2010

Location – Ranweli



We hired canoes for a few hours and made our way up the tributary on the opposite bank. Children were soon calling out for ‘bon-bons’ from the riverbank.

I took a late afternoon walk on the boardwalk and then across the river and along the access road.

Birds seen were,

Pied Kingfisher, Common Kingfisher, White Breasted Kingfisher, Stork Billed Kingfisher, Cattle Egret, Little Egret, Great Egret, White-Bellied Drongo, Scaly Breasted Munia, Thick Billed Flowerpecker, Purple Sunbird, Purple Rumped Sunbird, Long Billed Sunbird, Oriental White Eye, Plain Prinia, Yellow Billed Babbler, Oriental Magpie Robin, Red Vented Bulbul, Black Hooded Oriole, Asian Palm Swift, Barn Swallow, Brown Headed Barbet, Red Backed Woodpecker, House Crow, Ring Necked Parakeet, Asian Koel, Greater Coucal, Sanderling, Red Wattled Lapwing, Marsh Harrier, Brahminy Kite, Little Egret, Common Tern, Shikra & White Breasted Waterhen.

23rd October 2010

Day trip to Kandy with Lincoln De Silva (email - Nihal408@hotmail.com)

Ranweli - Pinnewela Elephant Sanctuary - Spice Factory with a massage - Visit to a Tea Factory - Kandy Botanical Gardens - Sacred Temple of The Tooth Relic - Ranweli.

All the following birds were seen from the minibus - Asian Openbill, Indian Roller (at Elephant Sanctuary), White Breasted Waterhen, Indian Pond Heron, Cattle Egret, House Sparrow, White Bellied Sea Eagle (over Kandy), Little Cormorant, Spotted Dove (at the tea factory), Little Swift, Stork Billed Kingfisher, Forest Crow, Alexandrine Parakeet & Rock Dove.

23rd – 24th October 2010

Sinharaja with Amila Salgado (email - amila@birdwingnature.com)

We were picked up from Ranweli at 5am and travelled south to Colombo where we picked up Amila from his home. The journey down to Sinharaja took about 3 hours. We had two birding stops where we picked up,

Ashy Wood Swallow, Scaly Breasted Munia, White Rumped Munia, Crested Serpent Eagle, Oriental Honey Buzzard, **Sri Lanka Swallow**, Brown Headed Barbet, Striated Heron, Intermediate Egret, Great Egret, Forest Wagtail & Hill Myna.



Crested Serpent Eagle and Brown Headed Barbet

After picking up our permits at the park headquarters, where an Asian Brown Flycatcher was seen, we headed up a long bumpy road to Martins Lodge where we were to stay for the night. The room was basic but adequate for our needs.

On arrival at Martins Lodge we put on leech socks (provided by Amila) and went for an afternoon walk along an access path into the forest. This was repeated the following morning with a 5am start for the Magpies.

Orange Minivet, **Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill**, **Legge's Flowerpecker**, **Sri Lanka Junglefowl**, **Red-Faced Malkoha**, **Sri Lanka Crested Drongo**, Malbar Trogon, **Sri Lanka Scimitar Babbler**, **Orange Billed Babbler**, **Ashy Headed Laughing Thrush**, Black Naped Monarch, Black Bulbul, **Black Capped Bulbul**, **White Faced Starling**, Sri Lanka White Eye, **Crimson-backed Flameback**, Pale Billed Flowerpecker, Yellow Browed Bulbul, **Sri Lanka Myna**, Sri Lanka Frogmouth, Indian Swiftlet, Jungle Crow, Brown Breasted Flycatcher & Asian Brown Flycatcher.

Sri Lanka Blue Magpie, **Spot Winged Thrush**, Layards Parakeet (flight), **Serendibs Scops Owl**, Velvet Fronted Nuthatch, Common Iora, Bright Green Warbler, Large-Billed Leaf Warbler, Dark Fronted Babbler, Brown Shrike, **Brown Capped Babbler** & Indian Pitta.



We left Martins after lunch and made our way back to Ranweli. On the way back we did roadside birding and stopped off at a wetland near to Amila's house. Traffic in Colombo was congested and we arrived back just in time for a late dinner.

Black Eagle, Purple Swamphen, Little Cormorant, Indian Cormorant, Spot Billed Pelican, Black Crowned Night Heron & Purple Heron.

25-27th October 2010

The last two days of the holiday were spent relaxing at Ranweli eating and playing both pool and table tennis.

Additional birds seen were -

Lesser Sand Plover, Common Redshank, Gull Billed Tern, Crested Tern, Whiskered Tern, Collared Dove & White Browed Bulbul

On the last day we did a local bird trip with the hotel naturalist Mahinda Ekanayake (email - ranwelieco@yahoo.com)

Although I had seen the majority of the birds already, new birds were Whiskered Tern, Common Tailorbird and Asian Paradise Flycatcher.



Indian Pond Heron, Blue Tailed Bee Eater, Pied Kingfisher, Great Egret, Red Wattled Lapwing,

Lesser Sand Plover

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