

Sandwich Bird Tours – [www.sandwichbirdtours.co.uk](http://www.sandwichbirdtours.co.uk)  
Contact: through website or Email: [john@sandwichbirdtours.co.uk](mailto:john@sandwichbirdtours.co.uk)

## Detailed Itinerary:

### 2007/2008 – *Birdwatching & Wildlife Holiday*

**Day 01** Arrive in Bandaranaiyake International Airport in Katunayake, Sri Lanka and transfer to the lush lowlands of Kithulgala for endemics & sub-continental specialties. A 2 hour drive is in prospect to reach our overnight retreat at Kithulgala Resthouse, which overlooks the Kelani River. This was the setting for the Hollywood blockbuster 'Bridge of the river Kwai' filmed here in the 50's and the photographs of the actors & the impressive wooden bridge constructed & later blasted off for the film are on display in the restaurant area.

**Birding:** Black-capped Bulbul, Yellow-fronted Barbet, Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot, Layard's Parakeet, Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill, Sri Lanka Green Pigeon, Green-billed Coucal, Chestnut-backed Owlet, Crimson-backed Flameback, Sri Lanka Crested Drongo, Brown-capped Babbler, Sri Lanka Scimitar Babbler, Orange-billed Babbler, Serendib Scops Owl, Sri Lanka Frogmouth, Malabar Trogon, Brown-headed Barbet, Southern Coucal, Black-backed Dwarf Kingfisher, Crested Serpent Eagle, Jerdon's & Gold-fronted Leafbird, Dark-fronted Babbler, Orange Minivet, Square-tailed Black Bulbul, Lesser Hill Myna, Yellow-browed Bulbul, Indian Pitta, Forest Wagtail, Purple-rumped & Long-billed Sunbirds, Pale-billed Flowerpecker, Brown-breasted Flycatcher, Oriental White-eye, Lesser Yellownape, Rufous Woodpecker, Black-rumped Flameback, Asian Palm & House Swifts, Indian Swiftlet, Crested Treeswift, House Asian Paradise Flycatcher, Tickell's Blue Flycatcher, Green Imperial Pigeon, Brown Hawk Owl, Black Eagle & Rufous-bellied Hawk Eagle.

**Non Birding Highlights:** Dragonflies and Damselflies such as Red-headed Skimmer, Black Velvet-wing, Black-tipped Demoiselle, Asian Pintail & Shiny Gossamerwing. Butterflies such as Sri Lanka Birdwing, Clipper, Cruiser, Glad-eye Bushbrown, Plum Judy, Blue Bottle, Red Helan & Blue Mormon. Mammals such as Grizzly Giant, Palm & Layard's Squirrels.

**Accommodation profile:** Kithulgala Resthouse is situated in the lush lowlands of Kithulgala overlooking the picturesque Kelani River & bird-rich Kithulgala Forest Reserve. The comfortable rooms provide a peaceful setting for resting after a long flight as it is situated along a stretch of Kelani River with no rapids. The amply furnished rooms come with a fan & ensuite bathroom with hot & cold water. This Resthouse is excellent for trying Sri Lankan meals such as rice and curry, string hoppers, but if it is too early for curry, you can also opt for western type meals.

**Day 02** Full day explore Kithulgala for lowland endemics & specialties with a midday break.

**Day 03** Drive to Sinharaja Rainforest for endemics. 2 nights at Blue Magpie Lodge, Sinharaja.

**Birding:** Highlight of birding in Sinharaja is seeing mixed species bird flocks, which is a unique strategy adopted by birds in the tropics to maximize feeding efficiency and to reduce the risk of predation. Studied since 1981, Sinharaja's bird flocks are the world's longest studied bird flock. On average, 12 species occur in the flocks comprising of 42 individuals. Orange-billed Babbler and Sri Lanka Crested Drongo are found 92 % & 89 % respectively of the flocks and they jointly form the 'nuclear-species' of the flock. Other highlights will include plus Red-faced Malkoha, Legge's Flowerpecker, Sri Lanka Blue Magpie, Ashy-headed Laughingthrush, White-faced Starling, Sri Lanka Myna, Sri Lanka Spurfowl, Sri Lanka Junglefowl, Sri Lanka Scaly Thrush, Spot-winged Thrush, Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon, Sri Lanka Swallow, Hill Munia, Besra, Crested Hawk Eagle, Crested Goshawk, Black-naped Monarch, Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike, Indian Cuckoo, Brown-backed Needletail, Alpine Swift & Red-winged Crested Cuckoo.

**Non Birding Highlights:** Butterflies such as Giant King Crow, Red-spot Duke, Five-bar Swordtail & Tree Nymph, Botanical highlights such as Ant plant, 45m canopy giants such as Dipterocarps & Shoreas & Bamboo orchid. Mammals such as Purple-faced Leaf Monkey, Slender Loris & Dusky-striped Squirrel.

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**Accommodation profile:** Blue Magpie Lodge is a comfortable base to explore Sinharaja rain forest and bird rich patches in the periphery of the reserve such as the Sri Lanka Bay Owl roost discovered in January 2007. All rooms come with ensuite bathroom, fan & private balcony. The hotel offers excellent Sri Lankan rice & curry meals for lunch and dinner and English type breakfast.

**Day 04** Full day birding in Sinharaja for lowland endemics/mixed species bird flocks.

**Day 05** Morning explore several patches in the periphery of the reserve before driving to Udawalawe where a totally different avi-fauna await us. We will explore this excellent national park comprising of open grasslands interspersed with shrubs & trees in open-top safari jeeps. Our overnight retreat is Safari Village Hotel, Udawalawe, which is just 15 minutes from the park's entrance.

**Birding:** Blue-faced & Sirkeer Malkohas, Malabar Pied Hornbill, Green Bee-eater, Coppersmith Barbet, Yellow-eyed & Tawny-bellied Babblers, White-rumped Shama, Brown Fish Owl, Rosy Starling, Orange-breasted Green Pigeon, Jungle Prinia, Baya & Streaked Weavers, Black-headed Munia, Indian Silverbill, Plum-headed Parakeet, Oriental Darter, Paddyfield & Blyth's Pipits, Lesser Cuckoo, Grey-bellied Cuckoo, Orange-headed Thrush, Barred Buttonquail, Oriental Skylark, 'Indian' Red-rumped Swallow, Jerdon's Bushlark, White, Yellow & Citrine Wagtails, Pied Kingfisher, Woolly-necked Stork, Lesser Adjutant & Painted Stork, Pallid & Marsh Harriers, White-bellied Sea Eagle, Crested Hawk Eagle, Common Kestrel, Black-shouldered Kite & Grey-headed Fish Eagle.

**Non Birding Highlights:** Mammals including Asian Elephant, which is present in fair numbers in this park, Golden Jackal, Wild Boar, Wild Buffalo, Ruddy Mongoose & Spotted Deer. Butterflies such as Tawny Coster, Common Cerulean, Grey Pansy, Lemon Emigrant & Tailed Jay.

**Accommodation profile:** Situated just 15 minutes from the entrance of Udawalawe Park, Safari Village Hotel is the perfect base to retreat after an enjoyable game drive. The hotel rooms come with fan, en suite bathroom with hot & cold water & private balcony. The mainly Chinese style meals will provide a welcome change from the Sri Lankan meals we have been having so far. The hotel's well-wooded garden offers good birding.

**Day 06** Drive to Tissamaharama for wetland birds. En route pause at a local restaurant for lunch and some dry zone forest birding on foot. Thereafter we will proceed to Priyankara Hotel, Tissamaharama for one night. Later afternoon we will visit a combination of local wetlands in Tissamaharama for waterbirds.

**Birding:** Cotton Pygmy-goose, Pheasant-tailed Jacana, Yellow and Black Bitterns, Purple Swamphen, Purple Heron, Painted Stork, Cotton Pygmy-goose, Watercock, Black-winged Stilt, Indian Pygmy Woodpecker, Ashy Woodswallow, White-naped Woodpecker, Jungle Owlet, Indian Scops Owl, White-rumped Shama, Spot-billed Pelican, Stork-billed Kingfisher, Oriental Honey Buzzard, Indian Reed Warbler & Yellow-wattled Lapwing.

**Non Birding Highlights:** Lizards such as Common & Green Garden Lizards, Land & Water Monitors & Mugger Crocodile.

**Accommodation profile:** Priyankara Hotel is a comfortable base to explore the bird-rich wetlands of Tissamaharama & Bundala National Park. The amply furnished A/C rooms come with ensuite bathroom with hot & cold water, fan & TV. The hotel offers excellent choice of food. The hotel has a well stocked bar. A pool will be available by summer 2007.

**Day 07** Morning visit Bundala National Park, which is the first RAMSAR wetland in Sri Lanka comprising of large extents of dry forests & mud flats for shorebirds. Thereafter proceed to Yala Village Hotel, Yala for 3 nights. Afternoon visit Yala National Park, which is the premier national park in Sri Lanka.

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**Birding:** Western Reef Egret, Red-necked Phalarope, Black-tailed Godwit, Small Pratincole, Little Heron, Garganey, Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveller, Caspian, White-winged, Whiskered, Common, Large-crested & Little-crested & Little Terns, Indian Cormorant, Brown-headed Gull, Greater Flamingo, Great and Indian Thick-knees, Curlew, Marsh, Wood & Green Sandpipers, Lesser & Greater Sand Plovers, Little-ringed Plovers, Black-necked Stork, Common Hoopoe, Ashy-crowned Sparrow-lark, Woolly-necked Stork, Lesser Adjutant, Yellow-crowned Woodpecker & Ashy Drongo

**Non Birding Highlights:** Yala Block 1 comprising of 141 sq.km has close to 40 individual Leopards identified by their unique facial spot patterns, which represent the highest density of Leopards anywhere in the world. Also noteworthy are Spotted deer, Mugger Crocodile, Wild buffalo, Wild Boar, Hanuman Langur, Toque Macaque, Stripe-necked & Ruddy Mongooses & Jackal.

**Accommodation profile:** Yala Village Hotel is bordered by the turquoise Indian Ocean & forested coastal plains and is our luxurious base to explore Yala. The hotel offers sixty one chalets spread over 10 acres of well wooded area with each featuring an animal design element in its interior décor. The air-conditioned chalets come with a spacious bathroom, a private verandah, satellite TV, well stocked mini bar, telephone/IDD, tea and coffee making facilities and hair dryer. The hotel also has facilities such as laundry, babysitting, safe deposits, souvenir shop and internet/email. The restaurant offers a good choice of eastern and western cuisine. The roof top bar & observation deck provide great views of the Indian Ocean and the surrounding well wooded landscape dotted by rock outcrops that are at times visited by Leopard for prime time viewing over cocktails.

**Day 10** Drive to Alpine Hotel, Nuwara Eliya. Later afternoon visit Victoria Park which is a fine urban park established in 1897 to commemorate the 60th coronation jubilee of Queen Victoria.

**Birding:** Kashmir Flycatcher, Pied Thrush, Indian Blue Robin, Forest & Grey Wagtails, Great Tit, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher & Slaty-legged Crane.

**Accommodation profile:** Alpine Hotel is situated just 10 minutes walking distance from Victoria Park, which is a popular birding site in Nuwara Eliya. The well furnished hotel rooms offer a heater, TV & ensuite facilities. The hotel offers excellent food & friendly service.

**Day 11** Horton Plains National Park for montane endemics & specialties. Afternoon local birding.

**Birding:** Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush, Sri Lanka Bush Warbler, Yellow-eared Bulbul, Sri Lanka White-eye, Jerdon's Baza, Zitting Cisticola, Pied Bushchat, Blyth's Reed Warbler, newly spit Himalayan Buzzard & the potential splits Indian Blackbird.

**Non-birding highlights:** Mammals such as Sambar & Bear Monkey the montane race of the vegetarian Purple-faced Leaf Monkey of lowlands, Botany: Dwarf Bamboo, endemic variety of Rhododendron, Reptiles: Rhino-horned Lizard, Black-lipped Lizard & Dwarf Chameleon.

**Day 12** After an enjoyable birding breakfast, we will drive to Kandy (477m), the cultural-epicentre where age-old rituals continue at the Temple of the sacred Tooth Relic. Kandy is the second largest city & the last Sinhalese kingdom in Sri Lanka, which was ceded to the British in 1815. We will visit the above historic temple, which houses the sacred Tooth Relic of the Buddha and the Royal Botanical Gardens founded by the British in 1821. After exploring this historic city, we will return to our colonial style base Hotel Suisse Hotel, Kandy for dinner and overnight stay.

**Birding:** We will seek for improved views of Common Hawk Cuckoo, Sri Lanka Small Barbet, Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot, Southern Hill Myna, Sri Lanka Green Pigeon, Alexandrine Parakeet & Tickell's Blue Flycatcher in the botanical gardens.

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**Non-birding highlights:** a vast day roost of Flying fox & botanical attractions including Giant Jawa Fig, Double coconut, Cannon-ball tree & orchid house.

**Accommodation profile:** Hotel Suisse is situated right at the centre of Kandy, the 2nd largest city of Sri Lanka. It is situated minutes away from the Temple of The Sacred Tooth Relic, Kandy which is one of the most important pilgrimage site for Buddhist world over. The well furnished A/C rooms come with fan, ensuite bathroom & TV. The hotel has a swimming pool.

**Day 13** Optional city tour in Kandy which is the 2nd largest city in Sri Lanka. Thereafter drive to our final hotel Taj Airport Garden Hotel which is a 5 star transit hotel just 10 minutes from the Airport.

We will make our final log of the checklist and before enjoying our farewell dinner in the hotel's specialty Chinese restaurant. We will be transferred to the Airport late this evening or early hours of the following day for departure.

**Accommodation profile:** Taj Airport Garden Hotel is a 5 star transit hotel situated just 10 minutes from the Bandaranaiyake International Airport and is our preferred retreat after a long flight. Standard rooms provide satellite television, safety lockers, e-mail and internet connections, 24 hour room service, a mini bar and in-house & laundry facilities. The hotel offers a 24-hour Coffee Shop, business centre & 2 restaurants which include a specialty Chinese one. The hotel gardens and a small wetland adjoining offers decent birding.

### **Day 14 Departure.**

**Tour Leader:** Amila got hooked for birds in 1989 after a school project in St Peter's College, Colombo. He joined Young Zoologists Association, a local nature club at an early age and gained his field craft. Before turning a tour leader, Amila was a manager of a wildlife tour company. He is a certified 'national-guide' under Sri Lankan Tourist Board. He holds memberships in several local and overseas bird clubs and contributes articles to their ornithological publications. Amila loves digi-scoping, scrabble & reading.

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Bay Owl in a day roost discovered in Jan, 2007*