

Sri Lanka - A Butterfly Tour

Naturetrek Tour Report

5 - 14 October 2013



Sri Lanka Tree Nymph © John Davison



Leopard © ChrisTracey



Red spot Duke © Tharanga Herath



Sri Lanka Tiger © ChrisTracey

Report compiled by Tharanga Herath

Images courtesy of Chris Tracey, John Davison & Tharanga Herath



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Day 1

Sunday 6th October

The group arrived at Colombo Airport in the afternoon. We headed towards Ratnapura for a one night stay. On the way we stopped for a brief first stop to watch butterflies in Amithirigala. That pleasant trek in the tropical sunny afternoon yielded Clipper, Plum Judy, Common Rose and some other common species, while a settled Common Pierrot allowed good photographic opportunities. Then after having some of the best Ceylon tea we arrived at Centauria Hills Hotel in Ratnapura in the evening for dinner and a good night's sleep.

Day 2

Monday 7th October

We left the hotel after breakfast to visit Gilimale Forest Reserve. Several species could be observed inside this patch of tropical rainforest. They included; Blue Mormon, Rustic, Tamil Yeoman, Chestnut- streaked Sailor and Pale Ceylon Six-line Blue. After spending time in the shady jungle we headed to Sinharaja Forest Reserve, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. We arrived there for a late lunch at the Blue Magpie Lodge, located beside the forest. We spent the late afternoon trekking through an open woodland area as well as a patch of dense rainforest. This led us to see lovely Jezebel, Blue Glassy Tiger, Angled Pierrot and some other common species. The day ended after enjoying a traditional dinner at this fine forest lodge.

Day 3

Tuesday 8th October

After an early breakfast we began our jungle walk through Sinharaja Forest Reserve. This walk yielded closer views of some interesting species. The graceful Tree Nymphs offered good views by settling on low bushes with good light. A Glassy Tiger did the same. Beautiful Red Helen swallowtails were around, and delighted us by settling on bushes. It was great to see the endemic Ceylon Rose that appeared a couple of times. The highlight was two individuals of the elusive Southern Duffer. The enormous Blue Mormons were seen throughout the day. The first Redspot Duke of the tour appeared once here. Brilliantly coloured Blue Bottles delighted us several times, while they were flying around at low level. Commanders, Clippers and Glad-eye Bush Browns made the day even more delightful. We returned to the lodge for lunch before we departed for the long journey to Kandy. Late in the evening we arrived at Hotel Suisse in Kandy.

Day 4

Wednesday 9th October

Today's plan was the excursion to Knuckles Mountain Range, a uniquely shaped range of peaks located in the central mountain massif. We left the hotel to get there at Corbett's Gap after a very early breakfast at Kandy.

We drove up there, and walked along the path through the forest in the late morning and afternoon. Up there we encountered some hill zone species including many Tree Browns, stunningly coloured Blue Admiral and the gorgeous Ceylon Tiger, which was the highlight today. We had our picnic lunch in the high altitude woods here. Thereafter we returned to Kandy with a stop at a dry scrubland, where we found some lycaenids including Red Pierrot.

In the late afternoon we visited one of the two most sacred Buddhist sites of the island – the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic, before we returned to the hotel for dinner and an overnight stay.

Day 5

Thursday 10th October

We left the hotel in Kandy after another early breakfast, having taken a picnic lunch with us in order to get to Wasgamuwa, located further north. Before leaving Kandy we didn't forget to visit the Royal Botanical Gardens and added a few species to our list, including the glorious Ceylon Birdwing.

We had to drive across the scenic Knuckles Range to get to the lowlands. We stopped at several places to watch some butterflies and had our picnic lunch up in the mountains. We managed to see some Lycaenids, Hesperids, Crows and some other species. The well named Dark Wanderers wandered away, but giving us glimpses all the time. Crimson Roses, and Dark Blue Tigers were also seen on the way. We arrived at the lodge, which is located close to the national park for a one night stay. We had dinner and enjoyed Peter's birthday cake!

Day 6

Friday 11th October

The purpose of being here was to do a safari in Wasgamuwa National Park. Here we encountered several species that are mainly found in the dry zone including Plain Tiger, Lime Butterfly and Peacock Pansy. Sri Lanka's National Parks harbour some amazing wildlife including mammals and water birds. Wasgamuwa is one of them and we had good opportunities of closer views of Lesser Adjutants, Woolly-necked Storks, Spot-billed Pelicans, and Oriental Darters, as well as raptors like White-bellied Sea Eagles, Grey-headed Fish Eagles and Crested Serpent Eagle. Loads of Grey Langurs and troops of Spotted Deer were seen and the sighting of Elephants was restricted to a single baby elephant only! Thereafter we left Wasgamuwa after lunch to get to Sigiriya for a two night stay. In the late evening we walked in the scrublands close to Sigiriya Rock.

Day 7

Saturday 12th October

Today's objective was to visit Kaludiya Pokuna, a dry zone forest associated with a Buddhist holy site. We departed from the hotel after breakfast on a sunny morning. Before entering the forest we stopped at several open woodlands that yielded a number of very good butterfly sightings. It was one of the best days of the tour as it allowed us to see many new species as well as very good views of those briefly seen earlier. The delighted group spent long hours this morning photographing loads of puddling butterflies; Tamil Yeomans, Redspot Dukes, Barons, Chocolate Soldiers...we could see them in all their glory under very good light. Blue, Common and Plain Tigers added more beauty, while shiny White-banded Awl delighted us time after time. In the afternoon we left to go back to the hotel to have lunch. Thereafter we visited several surrounding scrublands of Sigiriya Rock to explore the area further. Some common species came to notice, while a Jezebel appeared for those who didn't see it earlier. Blue Tigers and a few other species were seen too.

Day 8

Sunday 13th October

After breakfast we visited Ritigala Strict Natural Reserve. This is another dry zone forest that spreads out on an isolated mountain and has an ancient Buddhist monastery site. Here we saw some more forest species while the highlight was a beautiful elusive Black Rajah, which gave us brilliant views by settling still, for a long time. Several Albatrosses, Tailed Jays, Blue Bottles, and Redspot Dukes were seen too. We returned to the hotel for lunch. As the tour now is almost over we left Sigiriya to get to the Airport Garden Hotel in Katunayake. After logging the day's sightings as well as other important sightings of the tour we spent the last night of the tour at this hotel.

Day 9

Monday 14th October

As the departure of the flight was in the afternoon, we had enough time to explore the open woodland habitats around and in the garden of the hotel. Here too we could add three more species to the list and had very good views of a few species we had already seen briefly. Common Mime was a new species here and we were delighted to see this large and gorgeous butterfly as our final species of the trip.

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Species List

Butterflies (E = Endemic)

PAPILIONIDAE

1	<i>Troides darsius</i>	Sri Lanka Birdwing (E)
2	<i>Pachliopta hector</i>	Crimson Rose
3	<i>Pachliopta jophon</i>	Ceylon Rose (E)
4	<i>Pachliopta aristolochiae</i>	Common Rose
5	<i>Papilio demoleus</i>	Lime Butterfly
6	<i>Papilio belenus</i>	Red Helen
7	<i>Papilio polytes</i>	Common Mormon
8	<i>Papilio polymnestor</i>	Blue Mormon
9	<i>Papilio clytia</i>	Mime
10	<i>Graphium sarpedon</i>	Bluebottle
11	<i>Graphium doson</i>	Common Jay
12	<i>Graphium agamemnon</i>	Tailed Jay

PIERIDAE

13	<i>Leptosia nina</i>	Psyche
14	<i>Delias eucharis</i>	Jezebel
15	<i>Belenois aurota</i>	Pioneer
16	<i>Cepora nerissa</i>	Common Gull
17	<i>Appias albino</i>	Common Albatross
18	<i>Appias galene</i>	Lesser Albatross (E)
19	<i>Catopsilia pyranthe</i>	Mottled Emigrant
20	<i>Catopsilia pomona</i>	Lemon Emigrant
21	<i>Pareronia ceylanica</i>	Dark Wanderer
22	<i>Eurema hecabe</i>	Common Grass Yellow
23	<i>Eurema blanda</i>	Three Spot Grass Yellow

NYMPHALIDAE

24	<i>Idea iasonia</i>	Sri Lanka Tree Nymph (E)
25	<i>Ideopsis similis</i>	Blue Glassy Tiger
26	<i>Tirumala limniace</i>	Blue Tiger
27	<i>Tirumala septentrionis</i>	Dark Blue Tiger
28	<i>Parantica aglea</i>	Glassy Tiger
29	<i>Parantica taprobana</i>	Sri Lanka Tiger (E)
30	<i>Danaus chrysippus</i>	Plain Tiger
31	<i>Danaus genutia</i>	Common Tiger
32	<i>Euploea core</i>	Common Crow
33	<i>Euploea phaenareta</i>	King Crow
34	<i>Euploea klugii</i>	Brown King Crow
35	<i>Cupha erymanthis</i>	Rustic
36	<i>Phalanta phalantha</i>	Leopard
37	<i>Cirrochroa thais</i>	Tamil Yeoman
38	<i>Kaniska canace</i>	Blue Admiral
39	<i>Junonia atlites</i>	Grey Pansy
40	<i>Junonia iphita</i>	Chocolate Soldier
41	<i>Junonia almana</i>	Peacock Pansy
42	<i>Hypolimnas bolina</i>	Great Eggfly
43	<i>Neptis hylas</i>	Common Sailor
44	<i>Neptis jumbah</i>	Chestnut Streaked Sailor
45	<i>Moduza procris</i>	Commander
46	<i>Parthenos sylvia</i>	Clipper
47	<i>Dophla evelina</i>	Redspot Duke
48	<i>Euthalia aconthea</i>	Baron

49	<i>Charaxes solon</i>	Black Rajah
50	<i>Acraea violae</i>	Tawny Coster
51	<i>Discophora lepida</i>	Southern Duffer
52	<i>Melanitis leda</i>	Common Evening Brown
53	<i>Lethe drypetis</i>	Tamil Treebrown
54	<i>Orsotriaena medus</i>	Nigger
55	<i>Mycalesis perseus</i>	Common Bushbrown
56	<i>Mycalesis patnia</i>	Gladeye Bushbrown
57	<i>Ypthima ceylonica</i>	White Four-ring
58	<i>Elymnias hypermnestra</i>	Common Palmfly

LYCAENIDAE

59	<i>Tajuria cippus</i>	Peacock Royal
60	<i>Rapala manea</i>	Slate Flash
61	<i>Nacaduba sinbala</i>	Pale Ceylon Six Lineblue (E)
62	<i>Prosotas nora</i>	Common Lineblue
63	<i>Jamides bochus</i>	Dark Cerulean
64	<i>Jamides coruscans</i>	Sri Lanka Cerulean (E)
65	<i>Jamides lacteata</i>	Milky Cerulean (E)
66	<i>Catochrysops panormus</i>	Silver Forget-me-not
67	<i>Catochrysops strabo</i>	Forget-me-not
68	<i>Lampides boeticus</i>	Pea Blue
69	<i>Leptotes plinius</i>	Zebra Blue
70	<i>Castalius rosimon</i>	Common Pierrot
71	<i>Caleta decidia</i>	Angled Pierrot
72	<i>Zizeeria karsandra</i>	Dark Grass Blue
73	<i>Zizina otis</i>	Lesser Grass Blue
74	<i>Zizula hylax</i>	Tiny Grass Blue
75	<i>Talicauda mysens</i>	Red Pierrot
76	<i>Everes lacturnus</i>	Indian Cupid
77	<i>Acytolepis puspa</i>	Common Hedge Blue
78	<i>Neopithecops zalmora</i>	Quaker
79	<i>Euchrysops cnejus</i>	Gram Blue
80	<i>Chilades pandava</i>	Plains Cupid
81	<i>Chilades lajus</i>	Lime Blue

RIODINIDAE

82	<i>Abisara eberius</i>	Plum Judy
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HESPERIIDAE

83	<i>Badamia exclamationis</i>	Brown Awl
84	<i>Choaspes benjaminii</i>	Indian Awl King
85	<i>Hasora chromus</i>	Common Banded Awl
86	<i>Hasora taminatus</i>	White Banded Awl
87	<i>Tagiades litigiosa</i>	Water Snow Flat
88	<i>Ampittia dioscorides</i>	Bush Hopper
89	<i>Suastus gremius</i>	Indian Palm Bob
90	<i>Suastus minutus</i>	Sri Lanka Palm Bob
91	<i>Iambrix salsala</i>	Chestnut Bob
92	<i>Udaspes folus</i>	Grass Demon
93	<i>Notocrypta curvifascia</i>	Restricted Demon
94	<i>Spialia galba</i>	Indian Skipper
95	<i>Cephrenes trichopepla</i>	Yellow Palm Dart
96	<i>Borbo cinnara</i>	Wallace's Swift
97	<i>Pelopidas mathias</i>	Small Branded Swift