

A CEYLON  
PRESS TINY  
GUIDE

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A CHECKLIST  
TO THE 7  
MONGOOSES  
OF SRI LANKA

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# MONGOOSES



1

# THE COMMON CEYLON GREY MONGOOSE

The Common Ceylon Grey Mongoose, or Indian Grey Mongoose, is fearless with snakes, its kill strategy focused on tiring the snake by tempting it to make bites it easily avoids. Its thick grizzled iron-grey fur and neuro transmitting receptors leave it immune to snake venom. Each individual hair is beautifully ringed with creamy white and black markings. It is little more than 32 inches nose to tail and it lives right across the island, often in pairs, eating fruit, roots, and small animals. It lives for around seven years, breeding twice yearly and producing up to four cubs, who emerge from eggs, like all mongoose babies.

2

THE COMMON  
CEYLON GREY  
LANKA  
MONGOOSE

There are 5 sub species of grey mongoose living in India and other parts of South Asia; and whilst *Herpestes Edwardsii* is the one most seen in Sri Lanka, a second variant, *Urva Edwardsii Lanka*, has been identified as sufficiently different as to merit its classification as a subspecies unique to the island. Whilst its Indian cousin lives almost anywhere, the Sri Lankan variant has a marked preference for jungle, shrublands and riverbanks habitats of 2000 meters or more.

# 3

## THE BROWN MONGOOSE

At around 30 to 34 inches nose to tail, the Ceylon Brown Mongoose (*Herpestes Fuscus Maccarthiae*), is found in both Sri Lanka and India. One of three brown mongoose species here, it shares with the others a body covered in dark brown fur, black legs, and long black tufted tails. All are often third to spot as they have a marked preference for deeper cover, dark forests; and being left alone.

4

THE HIGHLAND  
CEYLON BROWN  
MONGOOSE

The Highland Ceylon Brown Mongoose  
(*Herpestes Fuscus Flavidents*) is so alike the  
Ceylon Brown Mongoose that only a close  
comparison of skull size can truly tell the two  
apart.

# 5

## THE WESTERN CEYLON BROWN MONGOOSE

The Western Ceylon Brown Mongoose (*Herpestes Fuscus Rubidior*). Is a heavily bodied mammal, with marginally more tawny specks along its fur than other brown mongooses.

# 6 THE CEYLON RUDDY MONGOOSE

The grey brown fur of the Ceylon Ruddy Mongoose (*Herpestes Smithi Zeylanicus*) is reddish to the point of glowing and comes with a tail that curves sharply upwards at its tasselled tip where the fur turns to a deep and even brown. Like all mongooses it feeds day and night on anything smaller than moves – and often on larger creatures too – like land monitors. Its closest relative is found in India, *Herpestes Smithii Smithii*, named for the Victorian zoologist, John Gray in 1837, with the Sri Lankan variant only being separated out in 1852 by another zoologist, Oldfield Thomas. Although happily widespread, it is pathologically shy, hiding out in forest and paddy.

# 7

## THE STRIPED NECKED MONGOOSE

The Striped Necked Mongoose is one of the island's most striking mammals. A dark grey head morphs to reddish brown and grey on its neck- before blooming into a heady grizzled covering of bouffant fur that gets redder and longer the further down the body it goes. A pink nose, black legs and a reddish tail that ends in a curved tuft of black hair make up the rest of this most alluring of beasts. Widespread across Sri Lanka and southern India, it has sturdy frame and often measuring over 35r inches nose to tail – is the largest mongoose on the island. Its proclivity for calling forests its home can make sighting it a challenge.

# DISCOVER MORE

## A HISTORY LIKE NO OTHER

Contrary & creative, Sri Lanka built a tropical Versailles as the West constructed in wattle & daub. When the Cold War ebbed, its own began. The Ceylon Press *History of Sri Lanka* - in eBook and Podcast - unpicks its serpentine history.

## BEHIND EACH GREAT STORY

*Island Stories: The Sri Lanka Podcast* and the Press's *Complete Audio Books* explore the things that make Sri Lanka, Sri Lankan.

## OFF PISTE

The Ceylon Press' *Alternative Guides* concern themselves with subjects and places without crowds; forgotten as they are by most academics, historians, and modern travellers.

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## COMPANIONABLE LOOK-UPS

The Ceylon Press's subject *Companions to Sri Lanka* makes visible the whole island – from its arts, wildlife, & landmarks to religion, food, & history.

## A LITTLE LIGHT RELIEF

And least it gets too serious, enjoy the off-grid *Jungle Diaries* blog & Podcast; and *Archaeologies*, the blank verse diaries of an occasional hermit.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Swarbrick is a publisher, planter, hotelier, hermit, and writer.

He was born in Colombo and raised, with few concessions to modernity, in India, Singapore, and the Middle East. Cornish, he gained his degrees on the Celtic fringe: at the Universities of Wales, and Stirling, prolonging an introduction to accepted working hours for as long as was decently possible.

Having worked at News Corp's HarperCollins UK as board director for various otherwise homeless departments including sales, art and marketing; and HarperCollins India, he ran Hachette's consumer learning division. Prior to this, he launched Oxford University Press's first commercial online business, Oxford Reference Online.

When the doubtful charms of boardroom bawls, bottom lines, and divas diminished, he returned to Sri Lanka, the land of his birth hundreds of years earlier, to rescue a spice plantation and set of art deco buildings that had gone feral in the jungle.

Today, as The Flame Tree Estate & Hotel, it has become one of the country's top ten boutique hotels, run by the kindest and most professional of hospitality teams; and overseen by several small schnauzers.

It also helps fund The Ceylon Press, set up to make Sri Lanka's rich and complicated story, a mystery to many, and a secret to most, more accessible. The Press' books, companions, podcasts, blogs, and guides are freely available at [theceylonpress.com](http://theceylonpress.com). The Press also publishes Poetry from the Jungle, a podcast that recasts the orthodox view of the world's best poets and poems.

# ABOUT THE FLAME TREE ESTATE & HOTEL

*"It's absolute paradise," wrote one guest recently; "I would fly back to Sri Lanka simply to stay in this place for a couple more days."*

Centered on a 25-acre organic spice and timber plantation, The Flame Tree Estate & Hotel has been renovated and furnished with art & antiques; its healthy menus fusing street food with fine dining.

Its 1,000 high rocky hills stalled the Dutch army in 1765; and until the civil war the estate stretched over 100 acres with 3 working elephants.

Today its restored plantations grow cardamom, turmeric, ginger, cloves, pepper, cocoa; rubber, coffee, vanilla; cinnamon, coconuts - and scores of trees from ebony to sapu – best enjoyed from the vantage point of the hotel's infinity pool. Visit [www.flametreeestate.com](http://www.flametreeestate.com).

It also houses and funds The Ceylon Press whose books, companions, podcasts, blogs, and guides are freely available at [theceylonpress.com](http://theceylonpress.com).

## A GIFT FOR READERS

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[GeneralManager@flametreeestate.com](mailto:GeneralManager@flametreeestate.com)