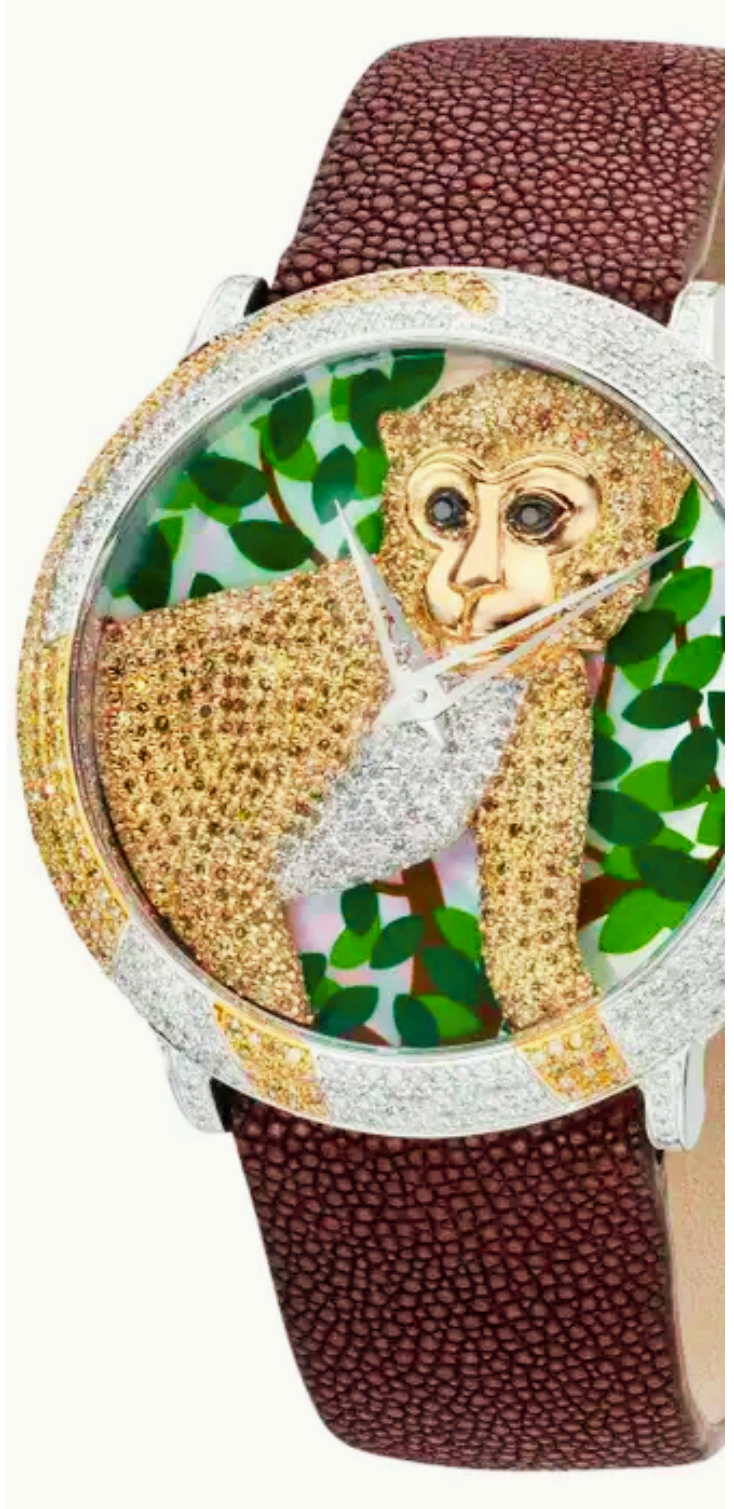


A CEYLON
PRESS TINY
GUIDE

A CHECKLIST
TO THE 41
ENDEMIC
LAND
MAMMALS
OF SRI LANKA

ENDEMIC MAMMALS



1 THE CEYLON HIGHLAND LONG TAILED TREE MOUSE

The Ceylon Highland Long Tailed Tree Mouse was discovered in 1929 by the Dutch tea planter, Adriaan Nolthenius. It is an increasingly rare creature, little more than 21 centimetres in length, nose to tail. It is found in Sri Lanka's hill country where it lives in trees, venturing out only by night. Like most mice, it has reddish brown fur, that occasionally grows darker but compared to its many cousins, presents small ears.

2

THE CEYLON HIGHLAND SHREW

Barely 7 centimetres long head to nose is the Ceylon Highland Shrew. Highly endangered and restricted to the central highlands of the country, it presents itself with an unapologetic style, being rat-like and grey.

3

THE CEYLON JUNGLE SHREW

Highly endangered and markedly restricted to just certain parts of the island, the Ceylon Jungle Shrew is determinedly nocturnal. It is barely twenty centimetres long, nose to nail, with grey fur and a preference for subtropical or tropical forests,

4

THE CEYLON LONG-TAILED SHREW

At little more than 6 centimetres nose to tail, the Ceylon Long-Tailed Shrew is so deeply threatened by habitat loss and logging that it has recently only been recorded in 5 highly fragmented areas in the Central and Sabaragamuwa provinces, despite its record of living as happily in the high mountain forests as much as the lowland ones. Covered in predictably modest brown fur with hints of grey, there is little about its appearance to help mark out the treasured and rare life it still attempts to cleave to.

5

THE CEYLON PIGMY SHREW

The Ceylon Pigmy Shrew takes its characterization to heart, being so tiny as to barely measure nine centimetres, nose to tail.

But though minuscule, it is a much more handsome shrew than many of its relatives and sports fur that is nicely chocolate brown to dark grey. Highly endangered, it has been recorded as living in the low mountain rainforests of the Sabaragamuwa and Central Provinces, with a possible third sighting in the Western Province.

6 THE CEYLON RUDDY MONGOOSE

The Ceylon Ruddy Mongoose (*Herpestes Smithi Zeylanicus*) is a mongoose that glows, not just by virtue of its colour but because of its marginal differences with its nearest Indian cousin leave it tethering on the favourable side of being declared endemic. Its grey brown fur is decidedly reddish in tone and comes with a tail that curves sharply upwards at its tasselled tip where the fur turns to a deep and even brown. Its closest relative is found in India, *Herpestes Smithii Smithii* with the Sri Lankan variant only being separated out in 1852.

7

THE CEYLON SPOTTED AXIS DEER

The endemic Sri Lankan Axis Deer is an increasing vulnerable species, its preferred habitats - lowland forests, and shrub lands – shrinking, and with it the grasses, leaves, and fruit it lives on. Living in groups of 10 to 60 animals, their numbers are now counted in just several thousands. Standing up to a hundred centimetres high, their delicately white spotted fawn coats present them as everything a perfect deer ought to be, as is appropriate for an animal that is part of the island's select few endemic mammals.

8

THE COMMON TOQUE MACAQUE

The Toque Macaque monkeys have evolved into three distinct endemic sub species on the island. The first of these, the Common Toque Macaque, favour the dry zone areas of the north and east.

Like its other endemic cousins, it weights up to twelve pounds with a head to tail length of almost a metre. Whilst they have been known to live for thirty five years, most die within five, victims to infant mortality or fights within troops for dominance.

9

THE DUSKY- STRIPED SQUIRREL

Despite being the smallest of the island's squirrels, the Dusky Striped Squirrel is, at 60-70 grams, larger than its Nilgiri cousin, and spots longer, thicker stripes. But it is rare, keeping to the wet zone rainforests of the southwest like Sinharaja, though the odd sighting has also been made on Horton Plains, and in Nuwara Eliya, and Kandy.

10 THE DUSKY TOQUE MACAQUE

The Pale-Fronted or Dusky Toque Macaque is the second of the distinct endemic toque macaques on the island and sticks to the wet zones in the southwest. Like its cousins, it is an accomplished scavenger, its vegetarian fancies best suited on fruit. Its capacious cheek pouches are specially adapted to allow it to store food for consuming later, a technical refinement that helps it steal, store, and run with pilfered bounty.

11 THE GOLDEN PALM DRY ZONE CIVET

Like all the island's endemic palm civets, the Golden Palm Dry Zone Civet measures 40 to 70 centimetres nose to bottom; and, like a large cat, weighs in from 3 to 10 pounds. Its fur marks it out as the civet with the most striking golden reddish-brown markings.

12
THE GOLDEN
PALM
MOUNTAIN
CIVET

Although the island's endemic palm civets are hard to tell apart, the Mountain Golden Palm Civet is, to the trained eye, a little darker all round.

13
THE GOLDEN
PALM WET ZONE
CIVET

Keeping to the wetter parts of the island, the Golden Palm Wet Zone Civet is, like its cousins a mild, secretive, forest loving creature, living on trees and in high hollows, solitary and very nocturnal.

14

THE GREY SLENDER HIGHLAND LORIS

The second distinct endemic grey loris species, the Highland slender loris, *Loris lydekkerianus grandis*, weighs barely 100 grams. It can be distinguished by its shorter ears, its face – more like a love heart than that of the Northern Ceylonese slender loris – and hair that, at its very root, is more black than white. It keeps, as its name implies, to the highland areas of Sri Lanka.

15

THE GREY SLENDER
NORTHERN
CEYLONESE LORIS

The grey slender loris (*Loris lydekkerianus*) has evolved in Sri Lanka into two distinct endemic sub species. The first of these, the Northern Ceylonese slender loris, *Loris lydekkerianus nordicus*, lives in the dry northern and eastern forest regions of the island. A slow moving midget, its body measures barely 200 mm , and weighs little more than 250 grams.

16 HANUMAN'S THERSITES LANGUR

The Hanuman langur, also called the Tufted Gray langur - is one of three *Semnopithecus priam* variants, all of which are found in India; but only *Semnopithecus priam thersites* lives in Sri Lanka. Up to sixty inches long head to tail with a weight that can hit close to fifteen kilos, its black face is framed in a wispy white beard that runs from forehead to chin. It is a light grey in colour, and lives as readily in dry forests as urban areas. Once settled, they tend to stay put, having little of the gypsy tendency within them. Eagerly vegetarian, they live in troops of up to 50 members, the larger ones being curiously non-sexist - with leadership shared between a male-female pair.

17

THE HIGHLAND TOQUE MACAQUE

The Highland Toque Macaque, the third of the island's endemic Toque Macaques, favours the hilly centre of the island. Like its cousins, it is easy to spot for it is active during daylight hours, appearing in groups of 20 members led by an alpha male, with half the group comprised of infants or juveniles. Young adult males wisely leave the group on attaining maturity, for fear or otherwise being chased out. But they also have a reputation for being very matey with other species – the family dog, for example. And they talk to one another. Naturalists have recorded over thirty different sounds, each conveying a very specific meaning.

18 LAYARD'S PALM SQUIRREL

The island's second endemic squirrel is Layard's Palm Squirrel. It is sometimes known as the Flame Striped Jungle Squirrel for the beautiful markings that run along its back. It is about thirty centimetres nose to tail, with black fur that fades to reddish brown on its stomach and can be seen all around the central highlands. By day they forage for fruit and nuts; by night they chatter from tree to tree, living, like swans, in pairs that bond for life. With their natural forest habitat eroded steadily, they are categorised as Vulnerable.

19

THE LEOPARD

Strictly speaking, the Ceylon Leopard is not endemic – but it almost is. Unlike other leopards, notably the ones that inhabit India, it has no other rival predators, and this has inspired so great a degree of evolution that Sri Lanka's leopards are almost considered to be a distinct sub species. This lack of competition has probably helped account for their size - averaging six feet in length, head to tail, and weighing anything up to two hundred and twenty pounds, making it larger than other leopard species. It is differentiated from other leopards too in its rosettes which are closer-set and smaller than any other species.

20
MAYOR'S SPINY
MAYORI MOUSE

The endemic Mayor's Spiny Mouse inhabits the smaller end of the mouse spectrum and comes in two (still quite widespread) variants. *Mus Mayori Mayori* inhabit the hill country.

21
MAYOR'S SPINY
POCOCKI
MOUSE

The endemic Mayor's Spiny Pococki Mouse prefers the low wetlands. And, like its counterpart, has a notable capacity to carry many creatures on it: from mites, ticks, and sucking louses to small scorpions.

22

THE NILLU RAT

The endangered Nillu Rat is today only found in restricted highland locations such as the Knuckles, Horton Plains, Nuwara Eliya, and Ohiya. Little more than thirty nine centimetres length nose to tail, its fur tends to be slightly redder than the typical grey of many of its relatives. Its name – Nillu, which means cease/settle/ stay/stand/stop - gives something of a clue about its willingness to get out and about.

23

THE OHIYA RAT

Thirty centimetres in length, nose to tail, with steel grey fur and white undersides, the Ohiya Rat is named after a small village of barely 700 souls near Badulla. It lives quietly in forests and has gradually become ever scarer in counts done by depressed biologists.

24
PEARSON'S
LONG-CLAWED
SHREW

Modest, and nocturnal, Pearson's Long-Clawed Shrew. is found in forests and grasslands – habitats that are now so embattled as to render the endemic creature highly endangered. It is at the petite spectrum of island shrews, measuring just twelve centimetres nose to tail and sporting rather mundane grey brown fur.

25 PHILLIP'S LONG- FINGERED BAT

In 2022 a new medium sized endemic bat was declared in Sri Lanka - Phillip's Long-Fingered Bat, which, until more eagle-eyed observers got to work was long thought to be a run-of-the-mill Eastern Bent-Winged Bat.

26

THE PURPLE FACED DRYZONE LANGUR

The Dryzone Purple-Faced Langur is the biggest of the purple faced langurs in Sri Lanka - with arresting white cheeks and an exceptionally long tail. Like all the island's purple faced langurs, it is threatened by habitat loss that has noticeably eroded its numbers. Vegetarian, with a tendency to opt for leaves ahead of other foods, it is shy and slightly smaller than Hanuman langur but easy to tell apart for its darker colouring, the black brown fur of its body contrasting with the mop of wispy white fur that surrounds its face and sit atop its head.

27

THE PURPLE FACED
MONTANE
LANGUR

The Montane Purple-Faced Langur, sometimes called the Bear Monkey comes with extra shaggy fur, all the better to keep it warm on the higher mountains on which it prefers to live.

28

THE PURPLE FACED
SOUTHERN
LOWLAND WET
ZONE LANGUR

The Southern lowland wet zone purple-faced langur stands out for its more varied markings – a black upper torso and lavish white whiskers. Occasionally all-white versions are spotted.

29

THE PURPLE FACED
VETULUS HARTI
LANGUR

Excited taxologists from Jaffna have also called for the recognition of a fifth langur sub species - *vetulus harti*. Although there are no reliable recorded sightings of it as a living mammal, its pelts have been found around Jaffna and Vavuniya – strikingly yellow gold.

30
THE PURPLE FACED
WESTERN
LANGUR

The Western Purple-Faced Langur - also confusingly named the north lowland wet zone purple-faced langur is the smallest of the purple faced langurs, its fur a dark greyish brown.

31

THE RED SLENDER GRANDIS LORIS

The second main loris species – the red loris, more commonly known as the Ceylon Red Slender Loris (or *Loris tardigradus*), has no family connections in India being rooted firmly, only, and entirely in Sri Lanka alone. Rare though it is, it too has nevertheless been busy evolving itself into several distinct varieties. The first of these, *Loris tardigradus grandis* is found in slightly hilly areas – up to about 1000 meters. As its Latin names implies, this loris sub species is larger than most other lorises. It can also be singled out in other ways too - its limbs are more heavily furred and, according to it its less charitable observers, it presents a less delicate appearance than that of its cousins. It can weigh up to 227 grams and has been known to extend 256 mm from head to body.

32

THE RED SLENDER
MOUNTAIN
LORIS

The rarest of the three red slender lorises - *Loris tardigradus nycticeboides*, the mountain loris - noticeable for its shorter limbs and thicker fur and almost only seen in the high cloud forests of Horton Plains. It is known locally as *kada papa* or "baby of the forest".

33

THE RED SLENDER NORDICUS LORIS

Arguments still rage over the possibility of a further sub species of red loris – the Loris Tardigradus Nordicus. Discovered as far back as 1932 in the Knuckles Range, subsequent reports emerged of it appearing in such different areas as Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Kurunegala, Puttalam, Trincomalee and Matale. It is said to have a very distinctive facial stripe, a greyish coat of thin fur and can weigh in at 293 grams. Scientists are divided as to whether this possible variant belongs best to the red or grey loris family.

34

THE RED SLENDER TARDIGRADUS LORIS

Loris tardigradus tardigradus keeps itself to the wet, lowland forests in southwest Sri Lanka. It weighs in at up to 172 grams and a body that extends to little more than 17 centimetres. It has dense reddish brown fur and the classic slender hands and legs of all its species, an evolutionary peculiarity that enables it to climb easily through treetops to gather the fruits, berries, leaves on which it feasts. By day they sleep in leaf covered tree holes, a habit that must help account for their relatively long life span (15-18 years). Its mothers are not to be crossed and have the intriguing habit of coating their offspring in allergenic saliva, a toxin that repels most predators.

35

THE SINHARAJA WHITE-TOOTHED SHREW

In 2007 an entirely new endemic species of Sri Lankan shrew was agreed upon: the Sinharaja White-Toothed Shrew. The result of extensive research carried out by a handful of remarkable scientists, it was discovered that what had been masquerading in Sinharaja as the Ceylon Long-tailed Shrew was actually a quite different shrew species, and one that had, till then, not been properly recognised or identified. A closer study of its bone structure, taken with the simple observation that it had a shorter tail, resulted in the formal recognition of this new endemic species. However, the resulting Sinharaja White-Toothed Shrew is so restricted in distribution as to be almost entirely invisible – and has been found in only two areas of the edge of the Sinharaja Forest.

36

THE SRI LANKAN LEAF-NOSED BAT

Little is known about the Sri Lankan Leaf-Nosed Bat as it was only identified as a new endemic species in 2025, its existence until then having been clumsily muddled up with other cousins and near cousins. Its tell-tale giveaways were its extra board nose, unusual ear shape, and the marginally different set to the bone structure of its tiny head.

37

THE SRI LANKAN
MOUNTAIN
MOUSE
CHEVROTAIN

Recent reports highlight the existence of a possible third endemic version of the chevrotain – this one from Horton Palins. It was found to be much larger than other chevrotains and studies of its skull validated the status that it was a new chevrotain evolution. But blood tests and other research are still being carried out in order to properly determine if this Mountain Mouse Deer, known as Meeminna in Sinhala, is a new endemic species.

38

THE SRI LANKAN SPINY MOUSE

The ultra-rare Sri Lankan Spiny Mouse is now so endangered that it can be seen in a few locations. A mere maximum of 18 centimetres length, from nose to tail, its reddish grey back, and sides morph into white underparts, with huge, gorgeous smooth scooped out ears that stand like parasols above large dark eyes. It is a mouse to fall in love with.

39

THE SRI LANKAN WHITE-SPOTTED CHEVROTAIN

The distinct and endemic identity of the Sri Lankan White-Spotted Chevrotain - *Moschiola meminna* - was only confirmed as recently as 2005. White spots trail down its sides and back and three white bands cross its rump. Although it can be seen right across the island and in good numbers, it is so secretive and nocturnal that actually spotting one is a challenge.

40

THE SRI LANKAN WOOLLY BAT

The Sri Lankan Woolly Bat is a tiny creature, barely 50 mm from head to body, and was first described in 1932. It is said to enjoy sleeping in curled up banana fronds on hills between 500 to 1000 metres, though its sightings are so rare that it has not been properly assessed for a score on the IUCN list of endangered animals.

41

THE SRI LANKAN YELLOW-SPOTTED CHEVROTAIN

The endemic Sri Lankan Yellow-Spotted Chevrotain - *Moschiola kathygre* - is smaller than the White-Striped Chevrotain. Its colouration is golden brown rather than whiteish brown. Several horizontal rows of yellow spots run along its flanks, with bolder stripes on its haunches. It sticks mostly to the wetter parts of southwestern Sri Lanka, preferably rainforest, plantations, and rice paddies.

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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.

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