

WILDLIFE FIELD GUIDE



Welcome to our property's natural sanctuary! This guide is designed to help you spot, identify, and learn about the diverse bird and wildlife species that call our hotel grounds home. Browse through the guide to discover key identification features, active times, and local folklore associated with each species. Please review the ethical wildlife interaction guidelines on the final page to help us keep our natural ecosystem safe and thriving.

01. Indian Peafowl

Pavo cristatus



Welcome to our hotel grounds! The Peacock—Sri Lanka's most magnificent and regal bird—is frequently spotted strutting across our sports playground, strolling through open lawn gardens, or perching high on rooftop ledges for a vantage view.

Key Features & Appearance

- **Iridescent Blue Neck & Crest:** Males (*peacocks*) feature a brilliant metallic-blue head and neck topped with a delicate fan-shaped feather crest.
- **Spectacular Train:** Adult males grow a long, shimmering train of over 200 tail feathers decorated with glowing “eye spots” (*ocelli*), which they fan out during courtship displays.
- **Females (*Peahens*):** Subtle brown plumage with a pale belly and iridescent green neck feathers, providing camouflage while nesting.
- **Acrobatic Roosting:** Despite their heavy train, peacocks fly to high vantage points—such as hotel rooftops, boundary walls, and tall trees—to sleep safely away from predators.

When & Where to Spot Them

Habitat	Hotel garden lawns, open playground fields, rooftop edges, and high tree branches around the property.
Active Times	Early Morning (6:00 AM–8:30 AM) foraging on lawns & Late Afternoon (4:30 PM–6:30 PM) before flying up to rooftops or tall trees for roosting. Listen for their iconic <i>may-we</i> call!

Seasons in Sri Lanka

Year-Round Resident: Present all year. Males showcase full tail plumage during the breeding season (October–May), after which they shed their train before regrowing it.

Sri Lankan Lore & Cultural Significance

Known locally in Sinhala as **Monara** (■ ■ ■ ■ ■).

- **The Sacred Steed of Lord Kataragama:** In Sri Lankan tradition and Hindu mythology, the peacock is venerated as the sacred *vahana* (divine vehicle or mount) of Lord Kataragama (Murugan), the powerful deity guardian of southern Sri Lanka. Harming a peacock is traditionally considered taboo and bringing bad karma.
- **The Rain Dancer Folklore:** Rural folklore holds that the peacock possesses a mystical connection to the monsoon. It is believed that when peacocks fan their grand tails and call out to the skies, their dance calls forth rain to nourish dry lands.

***Guest Birdwatching Tip:** Look up toward the roof ridges around sunset—you will often catch peacocks silhouetted against the evening sky as they settle into their high perches for the night!*

02. Indian Cormorant

Phalacrocorax fuscicollis



Welcome to our coastal water gardens! The Indian Cormorant—also known as the Indian Shag—is one of the most masterly aquatic hunters you will spot perching around our natural ponds, lakes, and water features.

Key Features & Appearance

- **Sleek Aquatic Silhouette:** A medium-sized waterbird featuring dark brownish-black plumage, a long slender neck, and striking emerald-blue eyes visible up close during breeding season.
- **Hooked Beak:** Possesses a long, thin bill with a sharp hooked tip designed specifically for gripping slippery fish underwater.
- **Sunbathing Pose:** Unlike ducks, cormorants lack fully waterproof feathers. After fishing, they perch on rocks or overhanging branches with their wings spread wide open to dry in the sun.
- **Master Diver:** Uses fully webbed feet to propel itself deep beneath the water surface, swimming effortlessly in pursuit of prey.

When & Where to Spot Them

Habitat	Natural ponds, lakes, estuaries, and open water channels within our hotel grounds.
Active Times	Mid-Morning (8:00 AM–11:30 AM) for foraging, followed by sunny afternoons when they perch on rocks to dry their outstretched wings.
Seasons in Sri Lanka	Year-Round Resident: Common across low-country wetlands in Sri Lanka, with breeding activity peaking between November and February.

Sri Lankan Lore & Traditional Significance

Known locally in Sinhala as **Diyakawa** (Water Crow).

- **The Legend of the Cursed Fisherman:** In traditional Sri Lankan rural tales, the cormorant's relentless appetite inspired folklore about a greedy ancient fisherman who was cursed by river spirits for overfishing. He was transformed into a water bird condemned to dive endlessly into deep waters to feed, yet never truly satisfied.

03. Asian Paradise Flycatcher

Terpsiphone paradisi



Welcome to a truly magical guest experience! The Asian Paradise Flycatcher is one of the most breathtaking and graceful birds you can spot around our hotel's water garden and natural ponds.

Key Features & Appearance

- **Striking Tail Streamers:** Adult males possess two long, ribbon-like central tail feathers that float like silk ribbons behind them during flight.
- **Two Male Color Morphs:**
 - **White Morph:** Mature migrant males turn pure silvery-white with a contrasting glossy blue-black crest and head.
 - **Chestnut (Rufous) Morph:** Younger males and local resident males sport a rich reddish-brown body with a dark crest.
- **Females:** Petite with warm chestnut plumage, short square tails, and a subtle steel-blue eye-ring.
- **Flight Style:** They fly in undulating, wave-like swoops, darting off perches to catch flying insects mid-air before returning to a nearby branch.

When & Where to Spot Them

Habitat	Shaded forest patches, water gardens, and lush, damp foliage surrounding ponds.
Active Times	Early Morning (6:30 AM–9:00 AM) & Late Afternoon (4:00 PM–5:30 PM). They frequently visit water gardens near dusk for a quick plunge bath.
Seasons in Sri Lanka	Year-Round: Resident subspecies (<i>ceylonensis</i> , chestnut color). October to April: Migrant subspecies (<i>paradisi</i> , includes white males) arrives from India.

Sri Lankan Lore & Cultural Significance

Known in Sinhala as **Sudu Redi Hora**, or “White-Cloth Thief,” for the male's trailing white tail.

- **The Legend of the Royal Robe:** Local folklore tells a poetic myth about the white male paradise flycatcher. It is said that the bird was once an ordinary creature who admired the purity and quiet elegance of Buddhist monks and royals. One day, overcome by its desire for spiritual beauty, the bird “stole” a strip of pure white monastic silk cloth to wear as a royal mantle. As a consequence, it was destined to trail the long, stole-like white ribbons wherever it flies—a timeless symbol of runaway, ethereal beauty.

04. Red-wattled Lapwing

Vanellus indicus



Welcome to our open green spaces! The Red-wattled Lapwing—famously recognized as the watchful sentinel of open fields—is a strikingly handsome wader frequently seen strutting across our sports playground, open lawns, and near the banks of our natural pond.

Key Features & Appearance

- **Vibrant Facial Accents:** Features a brilliant crimson-red fleshy wattle right in front of its eyes, contrasting with a jet-black crown, chest, and red-tipped bill.
- **Long Yellow Legs:** Unmistakable long, bright yellow stilt-like legs designed for fast running across open grass and muddy shores.
- **Distinctive Plumage:** Light brown wings with a subtle iridescent sheen, pure white underparts, and broad white cheek patches.
- **Vigilant Behavior:** Extremely alert birds that run in short, jerky bursts, stopping abruptly to pick up insects, snails, and worms from the ground.

When & Where to Spot Them

Habitat	Open grassy fields, sports playgrounds, wet lawns, and muddy edges of the natural pond.
Active Times	Active Day & Night: Highly active during Early Morning (6:00 AM–9:00 AM) and Late Afternoon (4:00 PM–6:30 PM) . They are also famous for foraging and calling under bright moonlight!
Seasons in Sri Lanka	Year-Round Resident: Common across dry and wet lowlands throughout Sri Lanka. Breeding peaks between March and August when they nest directly on open ground.

Sri Lankan Lore & Cultural Significance

Known locally in Sinhala as **Kiralagoya (කිරලගොයා)**.

- **The Legend of the Sleeping Sentinel:** In Sri Lankan folklore, it is widely believed that the lapwing sleeps flat on its back at night with its long yellow feet raised high toward the sky. According to local myth, the bird fears the heavens might collapse while it sleeps, so it holds its legs up to catch the falling sky—a symbol of ultimate vigilance and protection.
- **“Did-He-Do-It” Call:** Their loud, piercing alarm call sounds remarkably like “*Did-he-do-it? Pity-to-do-it!*” Rural Sri Lankans historically viewed the lapwing as the countryside’s natural alarm system, alerting farmers and animals

05. Rock Pigeon

Columba livia



Welcome to our property grounds! The Rock Pigeon—commonly known as the Rock Dove—is one of the most familiar and highly adaptable birds spotted congregating around hotel rooftops, balcony ledges, pathways, and outdoor dining areas.

Key Features & Appearance

- **Iridescent Neck Sheen:** Typically bluish-gray with two dark bars on the wings, featuring a shimmering emerald-green and magenta-purple metallic sheen around the neck.
- **Compact & Sturdy Body:** Built with a plump body, short pinkish-red legs, orange or reddish eyes, and a small dark bill with a white fleshy swelling (*cere*) at the base.
- **Cliff-Nesting Instincts:** Descended from wild coastal cliff-nesting ancestors, they naturally view building ledges, roofs, window sills, and open beams as comfortable artificial cliffs.
- **Persistent Flock Behavior:** Exceptionally social and bold around humans, frequently gathering in large, energetic flocks that bob their heads rhythmically while walking.

When & Where to Spot Them

Habitat	Hotel roof ridges, balcony edges, courtyard pavements, open arches, and garden walkways throughout the premises.
Active Times	All-Day Activity: Most active from Morning (7:00 AM–10:30 AM) through Late Afternoon (3:30 PM–6:00 PM) as they forage for food scraps and grains on open ground.
Seasons in Sri Lanka	Year-Round Resident: Present continuously throughout the year with no seasonal migration; they breed continuously whenever shelter and food are available.

Sri Lankan Lore & Cultural Significance

Known locally in Sinhala as **Paravaya** (පරාවයා).

- **The Legend of the Royal Messenger:** In ancient Sri Lankan history and folk tales, pigeons were prized as swift, loyal messengers (*Sandesha Karayo*). Royal kingdoms relied on homing pigeons to carry vital secret letters across long distances. Because of their remarkable “homing instinct”—the ability to navigate back to their roosting site using magnetic fields and landmark memory—they were held in high regard as symbols of faithfulness and return.
- **Symbols of Peace & Prosperity:** In Sri Lankan cultural tradition, white and gray pigeons are frequently released at formal festivals and religious celebrations as enduring symbols of peace, harmony, and good fortune.

06. White-breasted Waterhen

Amaurornis phoenicurus



Welcome to our garden wetlands! The White-breasted Waterhen is a curious and vocal rail bird, commonly seen stepping boldly around our natural pond edges, water gardens, and venturing out onto sports playgrounds—especially during wet weather and rainy days.

Key Features & Appearance

- **Striking White Face & Chest:** Features a stark, clean white face, neck, and breast contrasted sharply against a dark slate-gray back and upperbody.
- **Cinnamon Undertail:** A distinct patch of rusty-cinnamon red underneath its short, cocked tail, which jerks up and down rhythmically as it walks.
- **Bright Yellow Bill & Legs:** Possesses a yellowish bill with a tiny red frontal spot at the base, along with long, slender yellow legs and unwebbed toes designed for walking over floating vegetation and soggy grass.
- **Rain-Loving Explorer:** Known for stepping out into open grounds and lawns during heavy downpours or overcast weather to feed on worms and insects flushed out by the rain.

When & Where to Spot Them

Habitat	Dense reed beds, water garden vegetation, natural pond margins, and open playground turf on wet, overcast days.
Active Times	Early Morning (6:00 AM–9:00 AM) & Late Afternoon (4:00 PM–6:30 PM). They become exceptionally active and vocal during rain showers throughout the day!
Seasons in Sri Lanka	Year-Round Resident: Common across all low-country wetland habitats in Sri Lanka. Breeding activity peaks during the southwest monsoon season (May–September).

Sri Lankan Lore & Cultural Significance

Known locally in Sinhala as **Korawakka** (කරවකක).

- **The Legend of the Rain Herald:** In Sri Lankan village folklore, the Waterhen's loud, roaring call—sounding like a repetitive “*kru-ak, kru-ak, korowak-korowak*”—is believed to directly welcome the arrival of rain. Villagers historically treated its calls during overcast mornings as a sign of approaching monsoon showers that would replenish agricultural paddy fields.
- **Folk Tale of the Lost Nest:** Traditional rural stories describe the bird as an anxious parent continually searching for its hidden nest in the reeds, constantly calling out its name (“*Korowak!*”) in worried anticipation whenever dark storm

07. Common Kingfisher

Alcedo atthis



Welcome to our hotel's aquatic sanctuary! Known for its electric color and lightning-fast fishing precision, the Common Kingfisher—also called the Small Blue Kingfisher—is a spectacular jewel frequently spotted perching low over our natural ponds and hotel water gardens.

Key Features & Appearance

- **Jewel-Toned Plumage:** Dazzling iridescent metallic turquoise-blue upperparts and a bright cobalt stripe down its back, beautifully contrasted by a rich orange-chestnut belly.
- **Compact & Dagger-Like Bill:** Petite, sparrow-sized body with a long, sharp, black dagger-like bill engineered for high-speed underwater diving.
- **Gender ID:** Males feature an all-black bill, while females have a touch of orange-red on the lower mandible (often joked about as “wearing lipstick”).
- **Bullet-Fast Flight:** Flies extremely low over the water surface like a glowing blue streak, accompanied by a sharp, high-pitched “pip-pip” call.

When & Where to Spot Them

Habitat	Overhanging branches, wooden stakes, and low perches surrounding our natural ponds and quiet water garden channels.
Active Times	Early Morning (6:30 AM–9:30 AM) & Late Afternoon (3:30 PM–5:30 PM) when the water surface is calm for hunting small fish and tadpoles.
Seasons in Sri Lanka	Year-Round Resident & Winter Visitor: Resident subspecies (<i>taprobana</i>) is present all year. Numbers swell between October and April as migrant individuals arrive from continental Asia.

Sri Lankan Lore & Cultural Significance

Known locally in Sinhala as **Mal Pilihuduwa**, “Flower Kingfisher,” due to its blooming floral colors.

- **The Legend of the Sapphire Arrow:** In traditional Sri Lankan rural tales, the Kingfisher was once an ordinary brown bird who prayed for a way to feed its family during a severe drought. The sky deities granted it the blue light of the morning sun and the orange glow of the setting sun to wear on its back, turning it into a divine “sapphire arrow” capable of piercing the water without making a sound to capture fish.
- **Folk Symbol of Precision & Patience:** Local fishermen historically respected the kingfisher as a symbol of quiet focus and patience, observing its still perch before every swift, successful strike.

08. White-throated Kingfisher

Halcyon smyrnensis



Welcome to our lush resort sanctuary! The White-throated Kingfisher—also known as the Smyrna Kingfisher—is a large, bold, and brilliantly colored bird commonly seen perched on low tree branches, light posts, and fence posts across our hotel gardens, open lawns, and natural pond edges.

Key Features & Appearance

- **Vibrant Color Contrast:** Features a rich chocolate-brown head, neck, and lower belly contrasted sharply by a bright white throat and bib patch.
- **Electric Blue Back & Wings:** Displays a dazzling turquoise-blue back, tail, and wing shoulders that gleam intensely in full sunlight and during flight.
- **Heavy Coral-Red Bill:** Possesses a prominent, thick, coral-red dagger-like bill designed for capturing a wide variety of prey both on land and in water.
- **Versatile Land & Water Hunter:** Unlike its smaller fishing-only relatives, this species hunts small fish as well as garden lizards, frogs, beetles, and small crabs on open garden lawns.

When & Where to Spot Them

Habitat	Garden trees, lamp posts, open sports field boundaries, water garden margins, and natural pond edges.
Active Times	Morning (7:00 AM–10:30 AM) & Late Afternoon (3:30 PM–5:30 PM). Often heard making a loud, laughing cackle (“kil-kil-kil”) from elevated perches.
Seasons in Sri Lanka	Year-Round Resident: Widespread and extremely common across all wet and dry lowlands of Sri Lanka throughout the year.

Sri Lankan Lore & Cultural Significance

Known locally in Sinhala as **Loku Pilihuduwa** (“Large Kingfisher”) or **Layi Pilihuduwa** (“Red-breasted Kingfisher”).

- **The Legend of the Laughing Watchman:** In traditional Sri Lankan village folklore, the bird's ringing, laughter-like call is considered the voice of a jovial garden sentinel. It is said that the kingfisher was gifted its fiery red bill by forest spirits so it could light up dark garden corners, and its loud call acts as a joyful warning to garden creatures whenever dawn arrives.
- **Symbol of Versatility & Good Fortune:** Rural communities view this kingfisher as a symbol of adaptability and resourcefulness because it thrives near both water and land. Spotting one sitting close to a home or garden post is

09. Grey Heron

Ardea cinerea



Welcome to our hotel's tranquil aquatic spaces! The Grey Heron is a tall, stately, and patient wading bird often seen standing motionless as a statue near the edges of our natural ponds and water gardens.

Key Features & Appearance

- **Tall & Regal Stature:** Stands nearly 1 meter (3 feet) tall with long stilt-like legs, a slate-grey body, a pure white head decorated with a black crest plume, and dark shoulder patches.
- **Dagger-Like Bill:** Features a formidable, sharp yellow-orange bill engineered to spear fish, frogs, and small aquatic prey with lightning speed.
- **S-Curved Neck:** In flight or while resting, it retracts its long neck into a distinct "S" shape, setting it apart from storks and cranes that fly with necks outstretched.
- **Patient Hunter:** Renowned for standing completely still in shallow water for long periods, waiting with incredible focus for prey to swim within striking distance.

When & Where to Spot Them

Habitat	Shallow margins of natural ponds, quiet water garden edges, and marshy banks across the hotel grounds.
Active Times	Early Morning (6:00 AM–9:00 AM) & Late Afternoon (4:00 PM–6:30 PM) during prime foraging hours; often rests quietly during mid-day heat.
Seasons in Sri Lanka	Year-Round Resident: Common resident breeder in Sri Lanka's lowlands, with resident populations supplemented by winter migrants arriving from Northern Asia.

Sri Lankan Lore & Cultural Significance

Known locally in Sinhala as **Alu Koka** ("Grey Egret/Heron") or **Kalapu Koka** ("Lagoon Heron").

- **The Legend of the Meditating Ascetic:** In traditional Sri Lankan village folklore, the heron's still, statue-like hunting posture inspired stories comparing it to a meditating hermit monk or ascetic (*Thapasa*). Rural villagers joke about "Heron's Meditation" (*Koka Ge Thapasya*)—a gentle cautionary fable reminding people that silent stillness can sometimes mask deep focus and hidden intent!
- **Symbol of Patience & Harmony:** Local fishermen and elders traditionally revere the heron as a symbol of tranquility and calculated grace, viewing its quiet presence along water channels as a sign of clean, healthy waters full of aquatic life.

10. Purple Heron

Ardea purpurea



Welcome to our hotel's wetland haven! The Purple Heron is a slender, vividly colored wading bird known for its secretive nature and striking chestnut-purple tones, frequently seen skulking along the tall reeds and vegetated borders of our natural ponds and water gardens.

Key Features & Appearance

- **Rich Chestnut & Violet Tones:** Features a dark reddish-chestnut neck striped with black lines, rich slate-grey upperparts, and deep purplish-chestnut flanks and underparts that glow under golden sunlight.
- **Slender & Snake-Like Neck:** Possesses an unusually long, thin neck and a long yellowish dagger-like bill designed for spearing fish, frogs, and water snakes hiding in dense cover.
- **Elongated Toes:** Equipped with exceptionally large feet and long toes, allowing it to walk over floating aquatic vegetation and soft mud without sinking.
- **Secretive Stance:** Unlike the bold Grey Heron, the Purple Heron prefers to remain camouflaged within tall reeds, often standing vertically with its neck outstretched to blend seamlessly into surrounding grasses.

When & Where to Spot Them

Habitat	Dense reed beds, lily pads, tall grass fringes, and quiet vegetated corners of our natural pond and water gardens.
Active Times	Dawn (5:30 AM–8:00 AM) & Dusk (5:00 PM–6:30 PM). They are crepuscular hunters, becoming most active as light begins to change.
Seasons in Sri Lanka	Year-Round Resident: Widespread resident across Sri Lanka's low-country wetlands, with breeding activity peaking from December to May.

Sri Lankan Lore & Cultural Significance

Known locally in Sinhala as **Boru Koka** ("Deceptive/False Heron") or **Pura Koka**.

- **The Legend of the Serpent Sentinel:** In Sri Lankan folklore, the Purple Heron's snake-like neck and striped markings led ancient villagers to believe it was a guardian bird endowed with immunity against water snakes. Myth says that water spirits painted the heron with the rich colors of the sunset to reward it for keeping the village water channels clear of dangerous serpents.
- **Folk Symbol of Stealth:** Villagers traditionally used the phrase "*Boru Koka*" to refer to someone who pretends to be absent or invisible while secretly keeping a sharp eye on everything, inspired by the heron's uncanny ability to melt

11. Little Egret

Egretta garzetta



Welcome to our serene resort waters! The Little Egret is a delicate, snow-white wading bird renowned for its elegant presence and energetic feeding dance along the shallow edges of our natural ponds and hotel water gardens.

Key Features & Appearance

- **Pure White Plumage:** Dazzling all-white feathers, often developing two long, slender crest plumes at the back of the nape during the breeding season.
- **Black Bill & Legs with “Golden Slippers”:** Features a sharp, jet-black bill and long black legs ending in bright yellow feet—a key field mark that makes it look like it is wearing yellow socks or slippers!
- **Active “Foot-Stirring” Hunter:** Unlike still herons, the Little Egret actively dances through shallow water, shuffling its yellow feet in the mud to startle small fish, frogs, and aquatic insects into moving.
- **Slender Profile:** A compact, highly graceful egret with a slender neck and a lightweight, agile frame.

When & Where to Spot Them

Habitat	Shallow margins of natural ponds, water garden streams, lily pools, and wet lawn edges across the property.
Active Times	Early Morning (6:30 AM–9:30 AM) & Late Afternoon (4:00 PM–6:00 PM) during peak foraging periods in shallow waters.
Seasons in Sri Lanka	Year-Round Resident: Common resident breeder throughout Sri Lanka’s lowlands, with numbers boosted by migratory winter visitors between October and April.

Sri Lankan Lore & Cultural Significance

Known locally in Sinhala as **Podi Koka** (“Small Egret”) or **Suwanda Koka**.

- **The Legend of the Golden Slippers:** According to traditional Sri Lankan folklore, the Little Egret was once chosen as the royal messenger for the king of the water spirits. To allow the bird to walk across muddy waters without leaving a trace of dirt, the water spirits gifted it a pair of magical golden slippers. Villagers say the yellow feet remain today as a reminder of its royal duties!
- **Folk Symbol of Purity & Good Omen:** In rural agricultural culture, white egrets visiting paddy fields or village ponds are seen as symbols of purity, prosperity, and healthy, fertile waters. Spotting a Little Egret dancing in the morning light is traditionally considered a sign of a peaceful and fortunate day.

12. Cattle Egret

Bubulcus ibis



Welcome to our resort grounds! The Cattle Egret is a common and familiar sight around Sri Lanka's coastal, wetland, and grassy areas. Guests will often spot these elegant white birds foraging peacefully in the resort gardens, sprawling lawns, or accompanying nearby grazing livestock.

Key Features & Appearance

- **Commensal Forager:** They often follow large mammals—or lawnmowers—to catch insects and small animals flushed out by their movement.
- **Global Traveler:** Originally native to parts of Asia, Africa, and Europe, Cattle Egrets naturally expanded their range across the globe, reaching almost every continent.
- **Pest Control:** Their diet mainly consists of grasshoppers, beetles, flies, frogs, and lizards, making them valuable natural pest controllers.
- **Roosting Habit:** At sunset, groups of Cattle Egrets often gather together to roost safely in high tree branches near water bodies.
- **Seasonal Colors:** Their yellow beaks and legs can temporarily turn vivid orange-pink during peak breeding courtship.

When & Where to Spot Them

Habitat	Open lawns, grassy gardens, wetland margins, pasture-like areas, and places where livestock or lawnmowers disturb the ground.
Active Times	Morning (6:30 AM–10:00 AM) & Late Afternoon (3:30 PM–6:00 PM) , especially when insects are active or vegetation is disturbed.
Seasons in Sri Lanka	Year-Round Resident: Common throughout Sri Lanka, with local movements and seasonal changes in numbers depending on food and water availability.

Sri Lankan Lore & Cultural Significance

Known locally in Sinhala as **Gomu Koka** (■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■), a familiar egret associated with open fields, cattle, and wetlands.

- **The Legend of the Field Companion:** In rural folklore, the Cattle Egret is seen as a faithful companion of farmers, following cattle across grasslands and sharing the benefits of the animals' movements. Its presence around grazing fields is traditionally welcomed as a sign of active, healthy countryside.

13. Oriental Magpie-Robin

Copsychus saularis



Welcome to our garden pathways! The Oriental Magpie-Robin is one of Sri Lanka's most charming and familiar songbirds, famously noted for its melodious tunes and friendly presence around hotel garden lawns, verandas, and shaded water features.

Key Features & Appearance

- **High-Contrast Plumage:** Males feature a glossy jet-black head, back, and throat paired with a clean white belly and prominent white wing bars.
- **Female Tones:** Females share the same distinct pattern but sport a subtle slate-grey head and upper body instead of solid black.
- **Upright Tail Cocking:** Famous for constantly cocking its long tail upright while hopping on lawns and perching on low branches or veranda railings.
- **Virtuoso Songbird:** Exceptional vocal abilities; males produce rich, varied, complex whistles that may include imitations of other bird calls during territorial displays.

When & Where to Spot Them

Habitat	Hotel garden lawns, open verandas, shaded shrubbery, and damp ground near water garden borders.
Active Times	Dawn (6:00 AM–8:30 AM) & Late Afternoon (4:00 PM–6:00 PM). Renowned as one of the loudest and most cheerful morning songsters on the property.
Seasons in Sri Lanka	Year-Round Resident: Common resident breeder throughout the island, with territorial singing peaking during its breeding season (March–July).

Sri Lankan Lore & Cultural Significance

Known locally in Sinhala as **Polkichcha** (■■■■■■■■■■).

- **The Legend of the Dawn Herald:** In traditional Sri Lankan village folklore, the Polkichcha is celebrated as the joyful "clock of the countryside." It is believed that the bird was blessed with sweet musical melodies so it could greet the first light of day and awaken gardens and farmers alike.
- **Folk Symbol of Domestic Good Luck:** Rural Sri Lankans have traditionally regarded a magpie-robin nesting near a household or garden veranda as a welcome sign associated with peace, harmony, and good news.

14. Indian Black Turtle / Park Terrapin

Melanochelys trijuga



Welcome to our hotel’s aquatic garden sanctuary! The Indian Black Turtle—commonly referred to in Sri Lanka as the “Gal Ibba” or freshwater turtle—is an amphibious species frequently spotted swimming in our natural ponds, resting on aquatic vegetation, or sunbathing on low rocks and muddy banks.

Key Features & Appearance

- **Dark Carapace with Yellow Ridges:** Features a smooth, dark brown or black shell (carapace) with three distinct raised longitudinal keels or ridges running along its back.
- **Distinctive Head Markings:** The head is dark grey to black, adorned with characteristic yellow or orange spots and streaks around the sides of the face and neck.
- **Semi-Aquatic Adaptations:** Equipped with slightly webbed feet and sharp claws, allowing it to navigate between water garden channels and damp land banks.
- **Basking Behavior:** Frequently hauls itself out of the pond onto half-submerged logs, flat stones, or grassy margins to warm its body in the morning sun.

When & Where to Spot Them

Habitat	Natural ponds, water garden channels, lily pools, and damp grassy edges across the hotel grounds.
Active Times	Morning (7:30 AM–10:00 AM) for sunbasking on rocks or logs, and Late Afternoon (4:00 PM–6:00 PM) as they actively swim and forage in shallow water.
Seasons in Sri Lanka	Year-Round Resident: Found in freshwater wetland habitats across Sri Lanka throughout the year, with activity often increasing during wet weather and monsoon periods.

Sri Lankan Lore & Cultural Significance

Known locally in Sinhala as **Gal Ibba** (“Rock Turtle/Terrapin”) or **Ganga Ibba**.

- **The Legend of the Stone Guardian:** In traditional Sri Lankan village folklore, the Gal Ibba is celebrated as an ancient keeper of clean water. It was believed that water spirits placed these dark, rock-like turtles in village ponds to help keep the water beds clear by feeding on fallen leaves and algae.
- **Folk Symbol of Persistence:** Rural tales often depict the freshwater turtle as an emblem of quiet resilience—a creature that retreats into its protective “stone armor” whenever danger approaches, enduring storms and predators with calm patience.

Responsible Wildlife Viewing

To maintain a safe, peaceful environment for both our guests and our resident wildlife, please observe the following practices:

- **Maintain a Safe Distance:** Always observe birds and animals from a respectful distance. Do not attempt to approach, touch, corner, or chase any species, especially during roosting or nesting periods.
- **Do Not Feed the Animals:** Refrain from offering human food or bread to any birds or wildlife. Feeding disrupts their natural foraging habits, causes nutritional harm, and creates unsafe dependencies.
- **Keep Noise to a Minimum:** Avoid sudden loud noises, shouting, or playing music near ponds, water gardens, and vegetated areas to prevent startling or stressing the animals.
- **No Flash Photography:** Avoid using camera flashes or artificial spotlights when photographing wildlife—particularly birds in their evening roosts or crepuscular species at dawn and dusk.
- **Dispose of Trash Properly:** Ensure all food scraps, plastic waste, and packaging are disposed of in secure, covered bins to prevent animals from ingesting harmful materials.
- **Stay on Designated Pathways:** Stick to paved walkways, lawns, and established trails. Avoid walking into dense reed beds, nesting zones, or water garden edges where animals rest or lay eggs.

THANK YOU!