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A Bird in the Bush: Dillon Ripley, Sálim Ali and the transformation of ornithology in Sri Lanka*

Arjun Guneratne

The two most important figures in the history of South Asian ornithology during the second half of the twentieth century were an American, Sydney Dillon Ripley, and an Indian, Sálim Ali, who collaborated during that period to shape the ornithology of the region and produce the major texts that defined it. Both men headed major research institutions in their respective countries; Ripley was Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution from 1964–1984 and Ali was the driving force behind the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) from the time the British left India until well into the 1980s. The two differed somewhat in their approach to ornithology, for Ali was primarily an ecologist, while Ripley's main interest was in avian taxonomy. Their collaboration helped revive the fortunes of the BNHS, which the British had abandoned when they left in 1947; the Smithsonian became a source of 'funding, collaboration and technical expertise', laying the foundations for the emergence of the BNHS as the premier wildlife research institution in India (Lewis 2004: 53). Both men believed firmly in the value of collecting specimens for research; as Ali observed, "…but for the methodical collecting of specimens in my earlier years—several thousands, alas—it would have been impossible to advance our taxonomical knowledge of Indian birds …nor indeed of their geographic distribution, ecology, and bionomics" (Ali 1985: 195).

* Revised version of the lecture delivered at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 5 February 2015.

Dillon Ripley's association with Sri Lanka began long before Ali's. The latter arrived in the island for the first time in 1980 to inaugurate a bird-ringing project; Ripley, however, made at least three visits to Sri Lanka, and they framed a major transformation that took place in Sri Lankan ornithology in the interim. The basis of this transformation is a shift in the kind of people who birded, from British colonialists who dominated the birding establishment at the time of his first visit to members of Sri Lanka's English-educated middle classes who, with some exceptions, constituted the birding community at the time of Ripley's (and Ali's) last expedition to the island. I argue in this paper that as the social basis of the birding community changed, the nature of birding, including what constituted acceptable methods for the study of birds, shifted also, in accordance with the values and attitudes that amateur birders brought to their hobby.

Ripley first arrived in Sri Lanka in 1943 as a member of the Office of Strategic Services (the precursor to the CIA). He had only recently joined the Smithsonian as assistant curator of birds, and although he had left that post to work in wartime intelligence, he had not abandoned his passion for ornithology. In his free time from his duties, Ripley spent weeks roaming the country with a shotgun, often accompanied by a taxidermist from the Colombo museum, collecting specimens and recording the birds he saw. By the time the war ended, he had added 240 species of birds to his personal list, and collected 432 specimens(Hellman 1950). Of these, 291specimens belonging to 106 species survive in the Smithsonian's bird collection.[1]

The success of Ripley's initial ornithological work in Sri Lanka may have led him to expect a similar successful outcome when he returned in February 1981, this time accompanied by Sálim Ali.[2] Sri Lankan ornithology, however, had changed, and Ripley and Ali abandoned their expedition in the face of local

[1] Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, USNM Birds Catalog, http://vertebrates.si.edu/birds/birds_collections.html (Accessed May 5, 2015).
[2] Ripley had made a short visit in 1951.

opposition to collecting—an 'ignominious retreat', as Ali later put it.[3] Ripley's indifference to the local ornithological community in Sri Lanka undermined his enterprise.[4] His disregard of local sensibilities and regulations was not new; shortly after the war, he had slipped into Nepal to collect birds by passing himself off to the Rana regime as a friend of Nehru's—which infuriated Nehru when he learnt of it from an article in *The New Yorker* (Lewis 2004: 86).

Ripley and Ali ran afoul of both the postwar regulatory regime that had been established to oversee Sri Lanka's wildlife and a newly established ornithological organization—the Field Ornithology Group of Sri Lanka (FOGSL)—for which the study of birds was deeply intertwined with a conservation ethos. Their enterprise also foundered because ornithology was changing throughout the world. Both men were vigorous advocates of the ornithological survey, which depended on large scale collecting of specimens in the field—a practice for which there was now little support worldwide.

Ripley was helped on his first visit by two factors: when he arrived in 1943, in what was then known as Ceylon, as a member of the OSS, the island was still a British colony and it was at war. As a privileged member of the wartime establishment, he enjoyed a great deal of leeway in conducting his affairs. Secondly, it was still quite normal for ornithological inquiry to be conducted through the barrel of a shotgun; 35 years later, when Ripley returned with the intention of pursuing his research in the manner to which he was accustomed, Sri Lanka was no longer a colony and collecting birds as a means to study them had fallen into disfavour among ornithologists and birders in the island, who were almost all amateurs.

[3] Letter from Sálim Ali to Dillon and Mary Ripley, 13 March 1981, in Sálim Ali Papers, File 26 (i), p. 23. Nehru Memorial Museum & Library (NMML).
[4] See his letter to Ali, December 31, 1980 in Sálim Ali Papers, File 26(1), p. 8. (NMML)

To fully understand why Ripley and Ali's enterprise failed in 1981, it is necessary to examine the factors shaping the ornithological practice and worldview of Sri Lankan birders, which produced a context in which this enterprise could not succeed. Although the Sri Lankan experience is an instance of a more general transformation in the nature of ornithology as a science, and although the factors present in reshaping ornithological work in Sri Lanka are present elsewhere—new technologies, changing social contexts of birding, cultural values and new regulatory regimes governing the exploitation of nature—they have different force and different ways of interacting in different settings, so that the outcome everywhere is not identical.

The importance of amateurs in ornithology

Ornithology is probably the only major science that has been extensively shaped by the contributions of amateurs—"birdwatchers" or "birders". This has been true throughout its development; the small number of nodal figures in nineteenth century museums whose work on taxonomy laid the foundations for the behavioral and ecological studies that came later, depended on an army of collectors including military officers, colonial officials, and coffee planters, almost all of whom were professionals in other fields (Mearns & Mearns 1998). These taxonomists exemplify what the French sociologist and philosopher of science Bruno Latour (1987) calls centres of calculation, a term describing the individuals and institutions that amass, collate and 'produce' the knowledge (in the sense of its inscription in texts) that is abstracted from data (such as specimens, sight records, observations of habits, etc) that is gathered up elsewhere and fed to these centres via networks of data collectors—including the casual birder who uploads her data to an electronic database or publishes her observations in some other form. Although collecting is no longer fashionable, and our understanding of scientific ornithology has expanded in scope (cf. Johnson 2004), ornithology continues to depend on the records kept by the millions of people who watch birds as a hobby.

Because ornithology is so dependent on amateurs, it is much less insulated from the cultural and political factors shaping the attitudes of its practitioners than say, a field like physics or chemistry.

During the early decades of the twentieth century, ornithology remained much as it had been during the nineteenth, when the focus was on taxonomic and distribution studies and the favoured method the collecting of specimens. For the ornithology of that time, a bird in the hand constituted a hard scientific fact; the study of avian evolution, adaptation or behaviour, on the other hand, belonged to 'the philosophical side of ornithology' (Lowe 1922, quoted in Johnson 2004: 523). There were no field guides (in the modern post-Peterson sense) to aid identification in the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth, and binoculars (which were expensive when available) were scarce. Although telescopes were occasionally used, they were good only for watching very distant birds. The nineteenth century ornithologist depended on his unaided dvision, his knowledge of bird-calls and his shotgun. The descriptions in nineteenth century bird books were intended to identify birds in the hand, and were generally written by museum specialists who worked from skins and had never seen the birds they described alive and in their proper habitat. Many amateur ornithologists collected their own sets of reference skins. There were no game laws to restrict the general shooting of birds for most of the nineteenth century, and there seemed to be no shortage of birds, although consciousness of the need for bird conservation had emerged by the century's end. This was mostly due to the millinery trade, which drove many species to the brink of extinction (Dodsworth 1911; Mearns & Mearns 1998). Collectors had few scruples about shooting specimens; in fact, in stark contrast to modern sensibilities, the rarer the species, the more desirable it became to have one or more specimens in one's collection (Mearns & Mearns 1998: 17).

Ornithological knowledge was based on specimens in collections. Collecting required an expedition consisting of many people—the collector or collectors and a support staff (so-called

coolies) to carry camping equipment, set up camp, and bring the specimens home. Once shot, the birds had to be measured, their skins preserved and the specimens catalogued. Specimens had often to be sent to authorities in different parts of the world, either to help with identification or because one had been commissioned to collect on their behalf. Collecting produced reliable data on the presence and distribution of birds in particular geo-political zones. It was also essential to create collections of skins as an aid to bird identification in the absence of field guides.

Over the course of the twentieth century ornithology underwent a striking transformation both in its aims and its method of study. As the century progressed, the focus on collecting was abandoned and the science shifted from a primary concern with taxonomy to one of behaviour and ecology. This was not a natural development but the outcome of a struggle between a new generation of university-based researchers and an older generation of specialists in museums over the meaning of science (Johnson 2004). More generally, there was a shift in sensibilities and the development of a conservationist ethic in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that was less tolerant of specimen collecting (Chansigaud 2010: 176–79). There have been few studies of how this shift took place in particular ornithological contexts. Johnson's (2004) work on the British Ornithologists' Union is one example, but it examines the centres of knowledge production in Europe and North America. Although the shotgun, once the premier tool of ornithological research, has given way to binoculars, spotting scopes, and cameras, and the private reference collection of bird skins once essential to serious ornithological work has been replaced by an increasingly diverse and specialized array of field guides, this shift in scientific practice has not taken place in the same way and in response to the same forces everywhere in the ornithological world.

Given the historical importance of amateurs in the development of ornithology, any explanation for this shift must consider not only developments within biology itself, such as the rise of ethology, ecology and evolution as legitimate fields of

study, but also the total socio-cultural context in which ornithological work is carried out and from which the workers come. Who were the people who produced ornithological facts, what were the social, cultural, and institutional contexts in which they operated and why did ornithologists in different parts of the world move from one way of doing ornithology to another? Despite some broad similarities, the particulars of this dynamic varied from place to place. Two factors shaping this change worldwide were the emergence of a conservationist ethos in Europe and North America and its diffusion to the native elites of their colonies, and the development of the aforementioned technologies of the binocular and the field guide. To examine this matter from the periphery of ornithological knowledge production (a place and a people not usually associated, ornithologically speaking, with Latour's 'centres of calculation') allows us to see with clarity the role that amateurs play in the development of the science. The transformation in what constituted proper ornithological practice in Sri Lanka was shaped by a transformation in the social backgrounds and cultural values of birders, as well as a transition from a colonial to a post-colonial political order that brought about a change in the legal regime that regulated the exploitation of nature. By the 1980s in Sri Lanka, the possibility of collecting birds for study had evaporated; both the regulatory regime in place as well as the values of the vast majority of those who watched birds militated against it.

The socio-cultural context of studying birds

The transformation in the nature of Sri Lankan ornithology tracks the transfer of power—in terms both of the politics of the island as well as the politics of environmentalism and in the organization of birding—from the colonial state and its personnel to an anglicized Sri Lankan elite. Until the 1950s the public face of birding was colonial—the only organization dedicated to bird study when Sri Lanka became independent, the Ceylon Bird Club, was a bastion of the British expatriates working in the island.

Those recognized as 'experts' were all British and it was they who produced the texts in which ornithological knowledge was inscribed. The values that shaped birding in this period (including the assumption that collecting specimens was normal scientific practice) were those of this social stratum, most of whom were stationed in rural areas and for whom hunting was a way of life and the principal recreational activity.[5] Sri Lankans who birded pursued their hobby in the shadow of the exclusively British ornithological establishment.[6] In the 1930s political control over domestic affairs passed to the mostly urban Sri Lankan elite, for whom—as a class—hunting was not especially important (although some among them did hunt) and who were influenced to a much greater degree by ideas of nature conservation (see, e.g. Spittel, 1938).They shaped birding in the years after independence.

In the period between 1840 and 1880, the foundations of our knowledge of the island's avifauna were firmly established through the efforts primarily of four men, all collectors and all amateurs, in the sense that their professional lives lay elsewhere, and not in ornithology.[7] The first was Robert Templeton, an Irishman who served as a surgeon in the Royal Artillery, and who was in Sri Lanka from 1839 to 1851; he is best known for his work on the insects of the island, and although his wide-ranging interests in natural history encompassed the island's birds, ornithology was not his primary focus. Templeton collected birds for Edward Blyth, the curator of the Royal Asiatic Society's Museum in Calcutta, and a major figure in the development of

[5] On this point there is a wealth of literature, mostly the memoirs of British sportsmen who had spent some or all their careers on the island. See for example Morgan-Davis, 2008 and Phillips, 1964.

[6] Two examples are Conrad Felsinger, who describes his birding activities in his memoir of a Sri Lankan boyhood in the 1920s (1972) and E.B. Wikramanayake, who became, in the 1950s, the first Sri Lankan to be admitted into the Ceylon Bird Club. Wikramanayake was the author's grandfather.

[7] Sri Lanka's first ornithologist was the Dutch governor Joan Gideon Loten (governed 1752–1757) but no further scientific work seems to have been done on birds in the island until 1840. On Loten, see Raat's biography (2010).

nineteenth century ornithology in India. Edward Frederick Kelaart (1819–1860) was the only one of these four men who was born in the island, of Dutch and German parentage. He too followed a career as a medical officer in the army, and made most of his contributions to the zoology of Sri Lanka during two postings in the island, from 1849–1854 and again between 1856–1860 (Pethiyagoda & Manamendra Arachchi 1997). Kelaart was interested in the whole spectrum of natural history; he did not shoot, however, relying on others to provide him with specimens. Layard, an Englishman, began his ornithological career collecting specimens for Templeton, who like Kelaart, did not shoot either (Layard 1880: 280); after Templeton's departure from the island, Layard continued to collect for Blyth. By the time Layard left Sri Lanka in 1856, his assiduity had increased the Sri Lanka list from 182 species to, by his own count, 315 (Layard 1880: 281), examples of all of which were sent to Blyth, who described them and retained the type specimens in the Calcutta museum. Saparamadu writes of Layard that he "did more for systematic taxonomy in Sri Lanka than any other person" (Saparamadu 1983: xi).

The most significant of these four major ornithologists of the nineteenth century was an Australian artillery officer, William Vincent Legge, who, unlike the three men mentioned above, devoted all his spare time to birds; his major work, *A History of the Birds of Ceylon* (1880), is not only one of the most significant works of nineteenth century ornithology but also a departure from the taxonomically oriented ornithological literature of his day, which was concerned in the main with classification and distribution. Legge includes extensive notes on the habitat, habits, and nesting of each species, based on his own observations from long hours in the field, the records of his numerous correspondents, and what he collated from the published literature.Unlike his predecessors, Legge travelled extensively throughout the island, heading into the interior from his various postings with his battery in Colombo, Galle, and Trincomalee, and making full use of the hospitality of coffee planters to explore the highlands.

Legge was a node in a network of knowledge production about birds that extended to India, where specimens were funneled to Blyth in Calcutta, and to Britain, where they ended up in both private and public collections. The accumulation of knowledge is codified *as* knowledge and given form in texts, and Legge produced the über-text of nineteenth century Sri Lankan ornithology. He corresponded and exchanged material with a wide network of British soldiers, coffee planters, government officials and, others stationed in the island and drew heavily on this correspondence for his book. He made a point of including Sinhala and Tamil names of birds (as well as their names in the Indian languages, which he gleaned from the literature), and his text is scattered with occasional references to the knowledge of Sri Lankan villagers.

Layard, the most globally peripatetic of these four men, also produced a major work on birds, but it was of the birds of South Africa (1867). Kelaart's magnum opus, *Prodromus,* is significant for being the first work of descriptive zoology for the island, but the section on birds is essentially a checklist with no information on distribution, taxonomic status, or anything else (Kelaart 1852). Kelaart remarked of his work that "A Fauna so extensive and so little known as that of this Island, requires more time and greater facilities for working it out, than can be said to be at the command of any Army Medical Officer serving in the colony" (1852: 1).That observation places in relief Legge's own considerable accomplishment.

Legge amassed a prodigious amount of data about the island's birds during the nine years he spent in Sri Lanka, from 1868 to 1877. His book, which ran to over 1200 pages in the first edition, took him three years to write after he returned to England. Part of his motivation was a strong desire to promote ornithology among the 'educated native community' and to provide 'a textbook for the local student and collector in Ceylon' (1880: v-vi); however, his book was sold by subscription, and only two members of the 'educated native community' appear to have

bought a copy.[8] Like other military officers of the period, Legge would have been encouraged to pursue the study of natural history as '...rational recreation to prevent idleness when serving abroad...' (Greer 2013: 1318; see also Kelaart 1852:ii)—and there was plenty of scope for idleness in a military backwater like the crown colony of Ceylon in the 1870s—but in his case, any such encouragement was unnecessary.

Hunting and the social context of collecting

These early ornithologists worked in a country that was still sparsely populated. Fewer than a million people lived on the island at the time it passed into British hands, and the population was 2,850,000 in 1883 (Ferguson 1883:11). In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the mountains of the old Kandyan kingdom, hitherto mostly under forest, with settlements confined to the valleys, began to be opened up for coffee cultivation, to be replaced by tea after coffee was destroyed by a fungus, *Hemileia vastatrix* (the coffee rust) in the early 1870s.

British men, typically drawn from the middle and lower middle classes, came out to the island to manage these plantations and they, along with government and military officials, formed the major component of the island's European population. Significantly, such men enjoyed the freedom to hunt and shoot in Sri Lanka that they could not in Britain, where such past-times were hemmed in by property rights and class relations (Hoyle 2007). Europeans in Sri Lanka were mostly male, especially in the earlier part of the nineteenth century, and particularly in the interior 'coffee districts'. Hunting was a major source of recreation for many if not most of these expatriates; there was not much else to do in the rural districts in which many of them were stationed, and for the duration of the nineteenth century,

[8] Of 247 subscribers to his book, 53 were resident in Ceylon. Two of the subscriptions came from the Colombo and Matara libraries; all of the rest were British residents of Ceylon, except for J. de Saram, a Sinhalese, and F. Foenander, who was Eurasian of Swedish and Dutch descent. See Subscription List, Legge, 1880.

few restrictions were placed on their freedom to hunt and shoot as they pleased. The naturalist and tea planter W.W.A. Phillips, an enthusiastic hunter himself, recalled in 1936, "Not so long ago, these days of perfect enjoyment to us, were days fraught with terror for the lesser folk of jungle, tank and paddyfield; a gun or rifle was always in hand and killing, in some form or another, the chief object" (1936: 24). Hunting came to be interwoven into British identity in Ceylon, imbued with notions of 'fair play' and 'sportsmanship' that served to set them apart from local people, even those who hunted, for whom it did not have the same value.[9] While most hunting was for the pot or for sport, there were those who hunted birds with a view to collecting, or, if they were not collectors themselves, to bring down birds that seemed unusual or interesting with a view to passing them on to friends (like Legge) who did collect.

The most significant ornithologist of the first half of the twentieth century in Sri Lanka was an English tea planter named William Watt Addison Phillips. Born into a family of hat manufacturers in Warwickshire, he came out to the island in 1911 and stayed until 1957 (Wynell–Mayow, 2002). He was largely a self-taught naturalist, and an able and productive one. His assiduous collecting of specimens, and his deep and broad ranging knowledge of the island's mammalian and avian fauna, enabled him to recognize and name several new species. He had extensive professional contacts where it mattered most—at the British Museum of Natural History and at the Bombay Natural History Society. He was a driving force behind the establishment of the Ceylon Bird Club, a major figure in the affairs of the Wildlife and Nature Protection Society (known as the Ceylon Game and Fauna Protection Society during most of his association with it),

[9] This point is made by MacKenzie (1988) for the British in their empire in general; for Sri Lanka, see Still, 1999: 127. The planter Harry Storey describes "the native, practically unchecked, [who] shoots and slaughters all the year round" (Storey, Farr & Reeves 1907: xvii) as unschooled in any code of shooting ethics and indifferent to laws regulating game, unlike Europeans, who "conscientiously take out the required licences and shoot with some discrimination" (ibid: p. 161).

and the author of numerous scientific papers on the birds and the mammals of Sri Lanka.

Phillips believed in the importance of collecting specimens to confirm or establish an identification. In 1980 he wrote to Thilo Hoffmann, then Secretary of the Ceylon Bird Club, on the desirability of collecting a Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*) so as to 'remove all doubt as to the sub-species' and again, shortly before his death in1981, to Hoffmann again, to express his doubts over the recording of a flock of Wilson's Phalaropes (*Phalaropus tricolor*, an American species) in southern Sri Lanka. Phillips thought they were much more likely to have been Marsh Sandpipers (*Tringa stagnatilis*), which are common, and asked Hoffmann, "Is it not possible to obtain permission to have one of those collected for certain identification?" [10] Where identification was concerned, a bird in the hand was undoubtedly worth a whole flock in the bush. By the 1980s however, the possibility of collecting birds to resolve questions such as this—which would have been acceptable into the 1960s—had receded.

The Bird Club remained a bastion of amateur English expatriate naturalists from its inception in 1943 into the 1950s (and even into the 1960s, the vast majority of contributors to its notes were expatriate Britons resident in the island). The Bird Club never exceeded a dozen people during its early years (membership was limited by the number of carbon copies of its notes the secretary could type up for distribution). When a vacancy opened (typically by a member retiring to England), a replacement was recruited from the British community on the island. This situation changed in the fifties as the numbers of Britons dwindled following Sri Lanka's independence in 1948. It was Phillips who suggested, before he left the island in 1957, that E.B. Wikramanayake, a well known Sri Lankan birder of that period, be invited to join the Bird Club—the first Sri Lankan to

[10] Letter from Phillips to Hoffmann, 11th February 1981, File no. Z. 89.fP, Box 2, Folder 16, Mammals of Sri Lanka: Correspondence. Natural History Museum, London.

be invited to do so.[11] At the same time, the club had made entry more restrictive by requiring two people to nominate every new member, who—given that independence had come to Sri Lanka ten years earlier and the numbers of British tea planters who formed the backbone of the organization were an ever dwindling group—must of necessity be natives of the island. After Wikramanayake joined, membership of the Bird Club consisted of eleven; he was the only Sri Lankan.[12]

The restrictive membership policies of the Ceylon Bird Club, which has continued to the present day in one form or another, led to the founding of the FOGSL in 1976 by Sarath Kotagama, then a young lecturer in zoology at the University of Colombo, who was pursuing a PhD in ornithology at the University of Aberdeen, and Rex de Silva, an accomplished naturalist and the country's leading expert on seabirds, and some of their colleagues. Both had been denied membership in the Bird Club, which led them to create an alternative to it. The FOGSL appealed to a much broader social base than the Bird Club, and reinforced this appeal by publishing over the years a number of field guides in Sinhala and then in Tamil, which made birding accessible to a broad stratum of the population not especially conversant with English. The Field Ornithology Group today is the largest birding organization in Sri Lanka, a major conservation NGO and the national affiliate of Birdlife International (formerly the International Council for Bird Preservation)—where it has displaced the Bird Club as the Sri Lanka partner.

To sum up, the foundations of ornithology in Sri Lanka were laid by numerous British expatriates, who came out to the island as part of the colonial enterprise and who dominated knowledge production about birds, in the sense that it is they who left behind the scientific papers and the technical accounts. Accounts of birds

[11] Ceylon Bird Club Notes, January1958.

[12] Letter from Graeme Jackson, secretary of the Bird Club, to members, April 15, 1958. Correspondence and Ceylon Bird Club Notes, Tring Mss PHILLIPS (1944–56). Natural History Museum, London.

by Sri Lankans only begin to appear towards the end of British rule, although their interest had begun much earlier.[13] To these Britons, as a class (there were exceptions, as I noted above, to the general rule), shooting came easily and hunting was a favoured form of recreation; the evidence for this is plentiful in the early volumes of *Loris*, the journal published by the Ceylon Game and Fauna Protection Society. British residents in colonial Sri Lanka were invested in regulating hunting, mainly by defining what sorts of practices (theirs) were acceptable and which sorts (those mostly of villagers and other Sri Lankans) were not. This also served to assert their distinct place and identity in the island's social milieu. They were not interested in eliminating hunting in any form;[14] that came later through the rise of a Sri Lankan elite to control of the island's domestic affairs two decades before Sri Lanka's independence from Britain.

Preservationism and the role of the Sri Lankan elite

Attitudes towards hunting in general and the indiscriminate slaughter of birds and other animals began to change in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. Conservation began as a response to the destruction of the large mammals through sport hunting in Africa, India, and North America (Dunlap 1988), but over time, in the course of the first half of the twentieth century, developed into a broader

[13] For example, E.B. Wikramanayake (1960) describes his first sighting of a skylark as a young student in England in the 1920s, and Felsinger (1972) describes watching birds in his memoir of his childhood in the 1920s.

[14] See for instance a letter to the editor of *Loris* by a J. Mansergh Hodgson (1962), who insists that the Wildlife Protection Society is "not, repeat Not, an anti blood-sports society" and who threatens to resign were it ever to become one, along with 50 per cent of the membership—presumably the British members. On this issue, the British resident on the island were probably not generally representative of their compatriots back home. Hodgson's letter voices the ideology of sportsmanship: the 'true' sportsmen shoots cleanly and only to consume; 'so-called sportsmen' are unable to shoot cleanly and only wound, and they hunt at night with car headlights, a cardinal attribute of lack of sportsmanship.

vision of conservation. Where birds were concerned, preservationist concerns were driven mainly in opposition to the plumage trade to provide feathers for women's hats (Doughty 1975; Dodsworth 1911). This is the period when the first game laws were introduced; prior to this, except for the constraints placed by property rights, there were few restraints on what could be shot where wildlife was concerned, especially in Europe's colonies.

By the end of the nineteenth century, there was noticeable decline in the number of game animals in Sri Lanka. The British blamed village hunters, whose methods of hunting came to be defined by the colonial authorities as illegitimate, because it did not follow the practices that the British defined as good sportsmanship. British cultural values were encoded in the game legislation of the period, most significantly Ordinance No. 1 of 1909.[15] Villagers hunted for subsistence and for barter, while Europeans hunted for "sport" according to formal rules of hunting etiquette that were probably not always faithfully followed. [16] Europeans however were as responsible for the destruction of this fauna as Sri Lankan villagers; the number of animals seemed limitless, there were no legal restraints on shooting and large mammals as well as birds were shot in astounding numbers. In the 1840s, for instance, an Englishman, Major Rogers, was credited with shooting 1500 elephants in the space of four years (Gordon-Cumming 1892: 218–19). A hundred years later, even after these conditions of abundance no longer obtained, R.L. Spittel, a Eurasian who became the first Sri Lankan President of the Game and Fauna Protection Society in 1934, cited the example of a resident of a rural town who, by going out for a few hours after dinner every night, shot 35 leopards in one year (Spittle 1942: 14).

[15] "An Ordinance to amend and consolidate the Law relating to the Protection of Game, Wild Beasts, Birds, and Fish."

[16] The early volumes of *Loris* are full of articles by British writers denouncing hunting by rural people; see for example March 1938 and Hennessey 1939. On failure of some British hunters to follow sporting etiquette, see Still 1999.

In response to destruction on this scale, British sportsmen resident in the island founded the Ceylon Game Protection Society in 1894. Reflecting a changing ethos and a membership in which Sri Lankans had come to be the predominant (and dominant) component, it became, in the second half of the twentieth century, the Wildlife and Nature Protection Society. The original focus of the society, which during the first decades of its existence was open only to Europeans, was on the preservation of game for hunting, which necessitated the establishment both of shooting reserves and the redefinition of native and non-elite ways of hunting as poaching. When the Ceylon Game Protection Society (which by the mid-twentieth century was dominated by native Sri Lankans) decided to drop reference to game and focus entirely on wildlife conservation, it was mainly the British membership that fought an unsuccessful rear-guard action against it (Uragoda 1994: 24).

British rule produced in Sri Lanka an anglicized elite class who were schooled in English and sometimes in England, who spoke English fluently and who had assimilated many English values (Jayawardena 2000). This was primarily an urban population of people in mostly professional and commercial occupations who were not, by and large, interested in hunting. This is not to claim that members of this class did not hunt; there were individuals who did. Rather, my claim is that it was not an aspect of their social identity, nor was it socially significant. Hunting did not play the same role in Sri Lankan life that it did in the small and constrained world of British society in Sri Lanka; those of the Sri Lankan elite who developed an enthusiasm for wildlife did not, for the most part, consume it through the barrel of a gun and were not invested in hunting as an important aspect of who they were.

The ideology of nature that this class adopted was not that of game hunting and the need to preserve large mammal species for shooting but the newer ideas of nature preservation and conservation that were taking hold in Britain. They were interested in preserving wildlife, not game as such, and they came

to political prominence during the middle decades of the twentieth century. During the 1950s, '60s and into the '70s, those Sri Lankans who became interested in watching birds and who played an active role in the development of ornithology, came from this class; the community of Sri Lankan birders became more socially diverse only after the 1980s, with the establishment of the Field Ornithology Group and its success in fostering an interest in birding among a broader social spectrum.

Institutional constraints on bird collecting

I have outlined above the broad contours of the social and cultural forces at work in bringing about a shift in the way the study of birds was conducted in Sri Lanka. I turn now to an institutional factor that is deeply embedded in the social and cultural context I have described. As we saw earlier, British sportsmen in Sri Lanka had persuaded the colonial government to adopt in 1909 the first legislative act designed to limit the shooting of wild animals. The focus of the Act was on controlling the hunting of those species of mammals and birds that were sought by sportsmen—buffalo, deer, elephant, waterfowl, and other game. Non-game species were not protected.

The Sri Lankan approach to the protection of wildlife followed a different course. In 1931, the British had introduced constitutional reforms that gave Sri Lankans a much greater say in their domestic affairs. In 1937, D.S. Senanayake, who would later become independent Sri Lanka's first prime minister, but was then Minister of Agriculture and Lands and an enthusiastic conservationist, sponsored legislation—the Fauna and Flora Preservation Ordinance (FFPO)—that is significant to the issue of collecting specimens. Unlike the earlier game laws, the FFPO threw its net wider, to include wild fauna and flora in general rather than particular species, and over a period of many years and many amendments, extended protection to all wild animal species except a handful deemed to be pests, and made legal hunting almost impossible. To collect birds today, the permission of the Director-General of Wildlife Conservation is needed, and

such permission is difficult and perhaps impossible to obtain, not least because of the likely opposition of much of the birding community.[17]

While the Game Protection Ordinance of 1909 was entirely the work of British expatriates and the colonial government, with little or no input from Sri Lankans whose behaviour it was intended to control, the Fauna and Flora Protection Ordinance was the work, primarily, of D.S. Senanayake and R.L. Spittel, at that time President of the Game and Fauna Protection Society. The most significant point about the Fauna and Flora Protection Ordinance is that by the 1960s, following a number of amendments, it had outlawed the shooting of any wild bird on the island, except for a few species designated as game birds—mostly ducks—which could only be shot during a short open season in the winter. Today, even this is not permitted. If a museum wants to collect birds, it must apply to the Director-General of Wildlife Conservation for a permit, which the Director may grant at his discretion. This is a significant institutional constraint on the old style of ornithology by shotgun.

The shift to the FFPO, which was far more sweeping in its scope than the old Game Ordinance of 1909, was attributed by an editorial writer in the *Times of Ceylon* to "…the religious sentiments of all sections of the population".[18] It is unlikely however that 'all sections' of the population were consulted on the matter. The FFPO represents the sentiments of the educated middle classes; whether the village people cared about the ordinance or were even aware of it is an open question. The sentiments of course were Buddhist. But sentiment against

[17] During a visit in February 2015, I asked about a hundred Tamil schoolchildren active in nature clubs in the Jaffna peninsula and many interested in birds, what they thought about collecting birds for scientific study. Almost universally, they were opposed to it. Among their reasons was that it would be a violent act contrary to their religion (Hinduism, in this instance); that if birds are shot, there would be none left; that birds should have their freedom; and that "we are nature lovers and as such don't approve of this."

[18] Editorial, *Times of Ceylon*, February 13, 1936.

hunting was and continues to be a middle class value; although such values have percolated to rural elites such as schoolteachers and ayurvedic physicians,[19] village people did hunt[20], and game was the most valued kind of meat in villages.[21]

While the FFPO was a negative factor shaping the transition to a new kind of birding, there were positive factors as well. Chief among these were the ready availability of binoculars for those who could afford them and the emergence of the field guide, with its colour plates and succinct descriptions of species. The first more or less portable guide to birds in Sri Lanka was published in 1955 by G.M. Henry, the son of a British tea planter, who had been born and raised in the island. A (literally) weightier tome had been published in 1925 by a civil servant, W.E. Wait, but it lacked illustrations and was too bulky to be used in the field. Although Henry's book was not a field guide according to the Peterson model, it had comprehensive accounts of most of the species found in the island, full colour illustrations of these species, and was portable enough to take to the field. The book made field identification easier and gave an impetus to birding among Sri Lankans born into the English-educated and mostly urban based class from which Sri Lankan members of the Bird Club had sprung. A couple of generations of Sri Lankan birders grew up with Henry as their guide to Sri Lanka's avifauna; today there are more modern field guides, but Henry's book remains a classic.

The British had dominated ornithology in Sri Lanka into the 1950s; they controlled the institutions, they wrote the texts and they conducted their science in light of their own values and proclivities. Beginning in the 1950s they began to be replaced by a native, anglicized elite who shared some but not all of their values. In particular, as a class, they lacked the attachment to

[19] I am indebted to Nireka Weeratunge for this insight.
[20] This is extensively documented in the colonial literature on hunting in Sri Lanka and in the early volumes of *Loris*.
[21] Gananath Obeyesekere, pers. comm., January 14, 2015.

hunting and shooting of their European counterparts who had hitherto dominated the study of the country's avifauna, and this impacted their attitudes to collecting as a way to study birds. This transition took more than a decade after independence to accomplish, but the Sri Lankans who moved into the ranks of the Ceylon Bird Club and later, beginning in the late 1970s, into the newly formed FOGSL, were not, with few exceptions, hunters (and hunting of birds and game by this time was in any case no longer legal). They were marked by strong attitudes in favour of preservation and antipathy to killing birds shaped in some measure by a middle class Buddhist and Hindu ethos. They were generally unfamiliar with firearms —which were in any case difficult to come by for ordinary citizens after the insurgency of 1971—and, for the increasing numbers who were Buddhist, adhered to what Obeysekere has called Protestant Buddhism (Gombrich & Obeyesekere 1988), a mostly urban reformist interpretation of doctrine and practice that is significantly different from the Buddhism of the village.

These new attitudes are summed up in a schoolboy's letter to the journal of the Wildlife and Nature Protection Society, to protest the re-publication of an article on hunting from a past issue:

> Sir, I think people who call themselves 'Sportsman' by killing our wild animals, have no place in this country today. It is we, the younger generation who want to protect them and not to learn how to kill them. (Seneviratne 1978).

This, then, was the changing sensibility among that segment of the population with an interest in nature and conservation from the immediate post-war context to 1981, when Ripley and Ali arrived in the island with plans to collect specimens for their respective museums. The controversy their visit generated was foreshadowed by another over the shooting of a wild bird for science that occurred very early in this post-war period.

The Broad-billed Roller incident

The Broad-billed Roller (*Eurystomus orientalis*) is a widely distributed bird in Asia, but is relatively rare in Sri Lanka. Prior to its rediscovery in the island in 1950 by Iris Darnton, an English birder, a specimen had last been collected in 1910. Darnton discovered a pair about to nest in eastern Sri Lanka and informed the Colombo Museum. The museum director, P.E.P. Deraniyagala, then instructed his taxidermist to return to the site with Darnton and collect both birds, which he duly did (Darnton 1951a). Deraniyagala determined after examining the skins that this was a *sub-species* new to science (a determination which has not endured) and named the Sri Lankan race for Iris Darnton: *Eurystomus orientalis irisi.* Phillips, who believed to the end of his life in the value of collecting specimens for ornithology, was nevertheless upset by the incident:

> ... the Broad-billed Roller is probably the rarest of our resident breeding birds, and if specimens were required for the Museum collections, this pair might well have been left for a few months, to rear their family before being specimanised.

He continued, rather acidly,

> There are just sufficient grounds ... for separating the two and naming the Ceylon bird after Mrs. Darnton, in order to commemorate the shooting of the first pair found actually breeding in Ceylon.
>
> I trust that now this point is settled, the Warden, Wild Life Department, will refuse to grant under any pretext whatsoever, any permit to collect further specimens of this most interesting and important member of Ceylon's relict fauna. (Phillips 1951: 327)

The Ceylon Game and Fauna Protection Society also condemned the collection of the rollers. The editor of its journal *Loris* commented, "A permit [for collecting] should never be

forthcoming for a species that, owing to its rarity, is nearing extinction. An argument supporting collections of this nature has been advanced: that the public are, in all probability, denied the pleasure of seeing such a species in its wild state, but will be able to view a stuffed specimen in the Museum. This would appear cold comfort to any right thinking nature lover" (Norris 1950: 141–142).

Darnton responded to the criticism in a letter to *Loris*, in which she clarified that the birds were not actually nesting (although they had been observed to mate and the eggs in the female "were actually minute and would not ... have been laid for perhaps several weeks"—at which point, presumably, the birds might have been beyond the reach of science). She went on to ask whether anyone could "deny the right of the Museum to collect whatever they wish for scientific data or to complete their collection"—a question to which, in 1981, the answer would have been a resounding yes. She ended by swiping at her critics, including, implicitly, Phillips, whom she had earlier linked to Whistler's avifaunal survey in the 1930s, in which he had been involved:

> The Broad-billed Rollers were not shot for 'the mere pleasure of killing', but—as was the case in the Avifaunal Survey—to further the cause of science. That quotation [referring to Norris' editorial in *Loris*, which quotes Axel Munthe that "The time will come when the mere pleasure of killing will die out in Man"] surely applies more aptly to those "sportsmen" who spend their leave "shooting". (Darnton 1951b).

As she pointed out, quite accurately, Whistler intended to make a collection of all the species of birds found in Sri Lanka, and had he encountered the Roller, it would have been added to the collection. But ornithology had changed since Whistler and was continuing to change. The last word on the Broad-billed Roller story goes to a Sri Lankan lawyer and snipe shooter in the coastal town of Chilaw, who, writing under the pseudonym Gallinago, penned the following lines:

In spite of Mrs. Darnton's tears
This grisly fact alone appears;
That after everything is said
Two lovely birds are very dead—
And so, to us, the Broad-bill story
On No One seems to shed much glory.
(Gallinago 1951: 328)

Ripley's last visit to Sri Lanka

The foregoing describes the changed context in which Dillon Ripley and Sálim Ali entered Sri Lanka in 1981. The opportunity for the visit arose from a joint bird-ringing project that the BNHS and the FOGSL had planned to carry out in the island, and Ripley and Ali intended to use the opportunity to collect birds both for the Bombay Natural History Society's and the Smithsonian's collections. They had obtained the cooperation of the Colombo Museum by promising it some of the specimens they would collect.[22] The locality in which they proposed to work was the Sinharaja rain forest in southwestern Sri Lanka. They had, however, not obtained the necessary permit from the Department of Wildlife Conservation (DWLC) before arriving in the island, which suggests either lackadaisical planning on their part or a puzzling indifference to the local regulatory context.[23] The Smithsonian had been conducting research on wildlife in Sri

[22] On the Colombo Museum's role, see letter from Ali to Ripley, 22 October 1980, and letter from Mrs. P.R. Ratnapala of the Museum to Lyn de Alwis, Director of Wildlife Conservation, Feb 7, 1981, in Smithsonian Institution Archives (SIA) RU000613, Box 586.

[23] Ripley asserts, "We quite clearly informed the authorities concerned... that we were coming, that we would need permits and that we would indeed have to collect." The statement is dated after the Wildlife Department shut down the project. ("Statement by S. Dillon Ripley, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, on his visit to Sri Lanka, February 7, 1981" (Sálim Ali Papers, File no 26 (i), NMML). Nowhere does he state, however, that he had actually received a permit to collect prior to arriving in the island. Shirley Perera, then Assistant Director of Wildlife Conservation, denies that any request was made for a permit for large scale collecting, which, he notes, would not have been granted (Interview, 24/9/14).

Lanka during the 1960s and '70s and as an institution would have been aware of the provisions of the Fauna and Flora Protection Ordinance, which regulated their research activities. Nor had Ali and Ripley reached out to any local organization in Sri Lanka to seek cooperation, not even with the Field Ornithology Group, which had been developing a relationship with the Bombay Natural History Society. The FOGSL supposed that their expedition was to study the impact of deforestation on endemic birds in Sinharaja, which is what Ripley had told Kotagama;[24] he was careful however not to tell Kotagama or anyone else in Sri Lanka connected with the birding community that they also intended to shoot birds, both to collect specimens and as a means to identify small passerines in the upper canopy, which would be difficult to identify by sight. Ripley had been told by the U.S. embassy of adverse reactions from birders on the island if it became known that he and Ali were there to collect specimens, and he wrote to Ali that they should be circumspect and only let the military or police know of their intentions.[25] Ironically, Ripley did not anticipate trouble from the FOGSL; he thought that trouble, if word got out, would come from "Mr. Hoffman [sic] and his friends".[26]

Sinharaja is one of the few localities in Sri Lanka where it is possible to find almost all of the country's endemic birds. It consists of old growth rain forest, and is one of the last forests of this type remaining in the island. In the early 1970s, the government proposed to log it to feed a plywood factory, and despite an outcry from environmentalists, it was saved only by the election of a new government in 1977, which declared the forest a reserve. Scientists from the universities of Colombo and Peradeniya had undertaken long term projects on the avifauna of Sinharaja and on forest regeneration, and the forest had become an icon of conservation to Sri Lankan environmentalists.

[24] Letter, Ripley to Kotagama, January 12, 1981; Dr. Sálim Ali Papers, file 26 (i), pp. 2–3.
[25] Letter, Ripley to Ali, December 31, 1980; Dr. Sálim Ali Papers, file 26(i), p. 8. (NMML).
[26] Ibid.

That Ali and Ripley were in the island to collect endemic birds was discovered by accident by a member of the FOGSL who was invited to a reception at the U.S. embassy in honour of Ripley (where he was staying as a guest of the ambassador). Despite the relationship they were building with the BNHS, FOGSL opposed the project once it learned of it. Discovering that a permit had been granted, not to Ripley and Ali but to the Colombo Museum to collect birds, the FOGSL took the matter up with the Department of Wildlife Conservation and lobbied strongly against it.[27] FOGSL's reasons, as Kotagama wrote to Ali afterwards, in an attempt to repair relations, were two fold. The first was a lack of knowledge among ornithologists in Sri Lanka of the status and numbers of endangered endemics; without that information, there was no way to know what the impact might be on the population of collecting even a few specimens. This was a position that Ripley disagreed with; he argued in his statement after the project was terminated that describing a bird as 'rare' did not necessarily mean it was endangered but that it was hard to observe; and he asserted flatly that "…there is not an endangered species of bird in Sri Lanka."[28] Given that not much was then known about the distribution and status of many of the island's endemic birds, this was an astonishing statement; subsequent research has shown that both the Red-faced Malkoha (*Phaenicophaeus pyrrhocephalus*) and the Green-billed Coucal (*Centropus chlororhynchus*) merit endangered status (Jones et al., 1998). The second reason was the status of Sinharaja itself; it was an icon of conservation in Sri Lanka, and as Kotagama noted in his letter, "…this forest has been a symbol of hope and also triumph to most Sri Lankans and it was expected that the forest and its fauna would remain inviolate for posterity."[29]

[27] A permit to collect birds in Ripley's papers at the Smithsonian dated February 6, gives him permission to collect "...not more than one pair each of the birds which cannot be otherwise identified..."; oral instructions to Perera were that no endemic species could be collected under any circumstances. (SIA RU000613, Box 586; interview with Shirley Perera, 24/9/2014.)

[28] Ripley, "Statement" op. cit.

[29] Letter, Kotagama to Ali, 10 April 1981, FOGSL Records, Folder: "Dr. Sálim Ali: Arrangements Visit."

A second type of protest was organized by a group of young men (including the author), two of whom were members of the FOGSL executive committee and the rest of whom were birders and conservationists. In addition to writing letters to people in authority to protest the Ali–Ripley project, they organized a demonstration outside the American Consul's residence on the day that Ali and Ripley departed for Sinharaja; the U.S. embassy in India had facilitated Ripley's work throughout his career, and the embassy in Sri Lanka was deeply involved in this expedition in a supporting role. On behalf of FOGSL, Kotagama disavowed any connection with that protest, emphasizing that FOGSL members who participated did so in their personal capacity. That was true. The Sinharaja incident became one of the catalysts later that year for the establishment of Environmental Foundation Limited, a public interest law firm modeled on the National Resources Defense Council, and for a couple of decades one of the most successful environmental NGOs in Sri Lanka (Guneratne 2008). It was established by the same people who had protested outside the Consul's residence, many of whom were law students.

At some point after their arrival in the island, Ali and Ripley met with Lyn de Alwis, the Director of Wildlife Conservation, at his office in the Zoological Gardens, which also came under his purview. Present at the meeting was his Assistant Director, Shirley Perera, a skilled birder in his own right, and a member of both the Bird Club and the FOGSL who had completed eight months of field research on the avifauna of Sinharaja after the forest had been declared a reserve. According to Perera, de Alwis allowed Ali and Ripley to go to Sinharaja on condition that Perera would accompany them; blanket permission to collect birds was not given. The permit they were given, dated February 6, 1981, allowed them "…to collect not more than one pair each of the birds which cannot be otherwise identified...".[30] De Alwis told them that Perera would be able to identify any bird they saw; in the event that Perera could not, then, at his discretion, they might collect it. However, when Perera arrived in Sinharaja, he found

[30] In brown manila folder labeled "SDR Sri Lanka", SIA RU000613, Box 586.

'a large group' of personnel from the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), along with all the paraphernalia for collecting and preserving specimens. Perera presumably misremembers the numbers because only two people from the BNHS accompanied Ali to Sri Lanka; the others in the party at Sinharaja were Ali himself, Ripley, and Ripley's wife Mary.[31] Perera was told by S.A. Hussain of the BNHS that they were there to collect endemic birds. Perera recalls that he immediately got in touch with de Alwis, who instructed him to stop everything and bring the group back to Colombo. Ripley told the Director at that second meeting that he had been given permission to collect to which de Alwis had responded that he had only been given permission to collect what Perera couldn't identify—an eventuality that Perera thought was unlikely to happen. When the Director refused to change his mind, Ripley called off the expedition; Perera remembers that Ripley was 'fuming'. Perera himself did not think the Director had been contacted for permits to collect prior to the group's arrival in Sri Lanka; he commented to me, "[Ripley] would have known very well that Mr. Lyn de Alwis was a staunch conservationist and that he would never get permission so they were trying to do it on the sly".[32] However, it is clear that Ripley did not know de Alwis, to whom he refers in a letter to Ali as 'the local wildlife man'; it is much more likely, that, as he had done before, when he entered Nepal by passing himself off as a friend of Nehru's, he believed rules, regulations, government policies and popular sentiments should not stand in the way of his scientific research. The irony is that Ripley himself was a staunch conservationist; unfortunately, his understanding of conservation and that of de Alwis differed enough for the latter to be skeptical of his motives.

Ali and Ripley were overtaken by the weight of modern attitudes to the scientific study of birds that had taken root in Sri Lanka. Indeed, Ali recognized the values that impeded him in Sri

[31] Ali's party from the BNHS consisted of himself, S.A. Hussain and P.B. Shekar (Letter from Ali to Ripley, 5 January 1981, ibid.)

[32] My account of how the expedition ended is based on an interview with Shirley Perera on 24 September 2014.

Lanka at play in India as well; he had written just the year before, deploring birding's lack of popularity among Indians, that "Religious sentiment against taking life has inhibited the juvenile collection of bird skins and eggs ... [tending] to dampen the spirit of enquiry in Indian children" (Ali 1980: 83). Ripley seems to have believed in an ornithology that was autonomous of local values and attitudes, one that saw no need to adapt itself to local contexts; he wrote in his statement justifying his failed visit, "The gun is ... a tool of science. It is not a weapon. It is something which is used just as a butterfly net would be used to collect a specimen."[33] The problem for him and Ali was that the Sri Lankan birding community did not agree, nor did the Department of Wildlife Conservation, which under Lyn de Alwis adhered to a well-entrenched ideology of conservation in which large scale collecting of specimens had no place. Part of the problem was also their hubris; in their own contexts both were powerful and influential men, who were able to carry on an approach to ornithology that was falling out of favour in South Asia (where their interests lay) because their position and power largely insulated them from the need to pay heed to local people and local interests. Ali had the ear of Indira Gandhi and high officials in the Indian establishment, who were often able, despite occasional reverses, to facilitate their collecting expeditions in different parts of India, sometimes against the distinct lack of cooperation of local officials. As Secretary of the Smithsonian, Ripley was a member of the U.S. establishment, and could rely on U.S. embassies abroad to facilitate his work; he routinely used the U.S. diplomatic pouch to further his ornithological research, sending guns and ammunition through it to India (and to Sri Lanka) and material for the books he and Ali co-authored. Sri Lanka was not India however; even the links being forged between FOGSL and the BNHS could not sway the Field Ornithology Group to ignore what Ali and his BNHS colleagues (and Ripley) wished to do in Sri Lanka. What ornithology meant to Sri Lankan birders and what it meant to Ali and Ripley were different, and by 1981, that gap, very probably, could not have been bridged.

[33] Ripley, "Statement", op. cit.

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