

A SHORT PICTORIAL GUIDE TO **UDAWALAWE NATIONAL PARK**



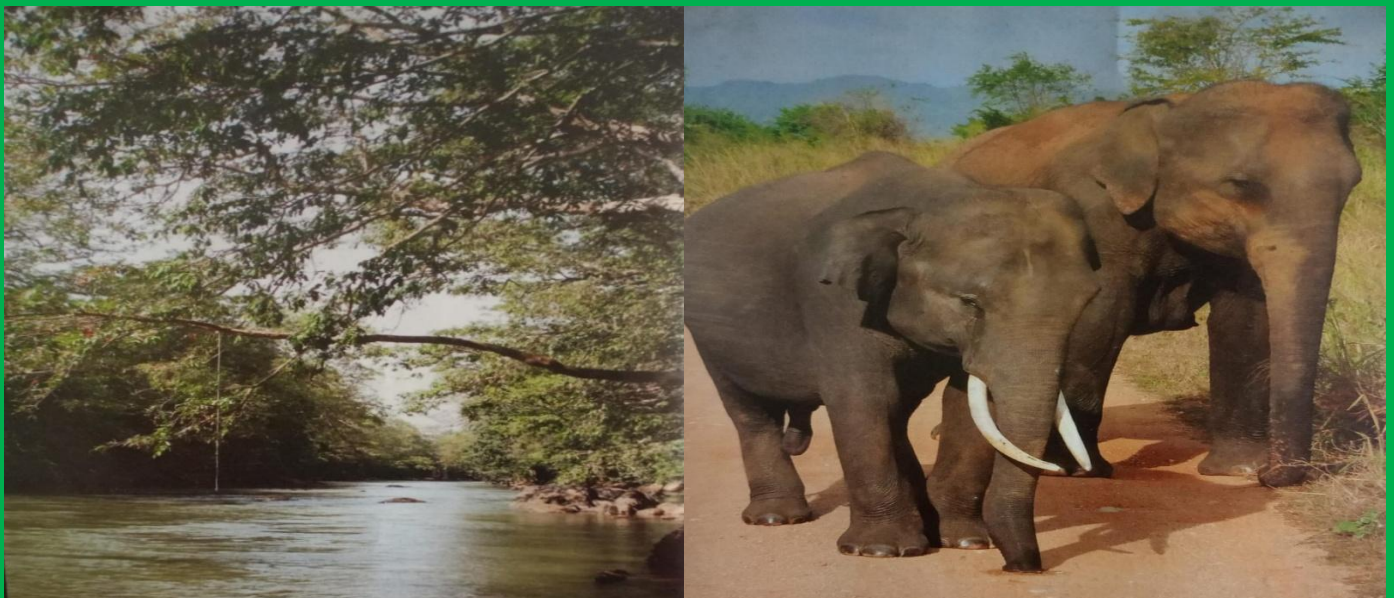
DESIGNED BY CHANDU SRI BANDARA

MAP OF UDAWALAWE NATIONAL PARK



- UdaWalawe National Park was declared on 30 June 1972 (Government Gazette Notification No. 141. This was done at the end of the Udawalawe Reservoir Development project. The primary objective of this declaration was to protect the immediate catchment and create a refuge for elephants displaced as a result of the Walawe Basin Development project.

- A second reservoir, Mau Ara Tank, was constructed inside the park between 1991 and 1998. The Uda Walawe Park is in a strategic location, connecting Lunugamvehera National Park in the south east with Kalthota, Bogahapattiya pond reserve with Koslanda, and Haldummulla in the North.
- The total extent of the National Park is 32,315ha, including the Walalwe reservoir, which accounts for 3,405ha at full capacity.
- Its western half, on the left bank of the Uda Walawe Reservoir, lies in the Ratnapura District and its eastern sector on the right bank is in the Moneragala District. The southern boundary is defined by the Uda Walawe-Thanamalvila road. To the south of this road is the Sevanagala sugar plantation.

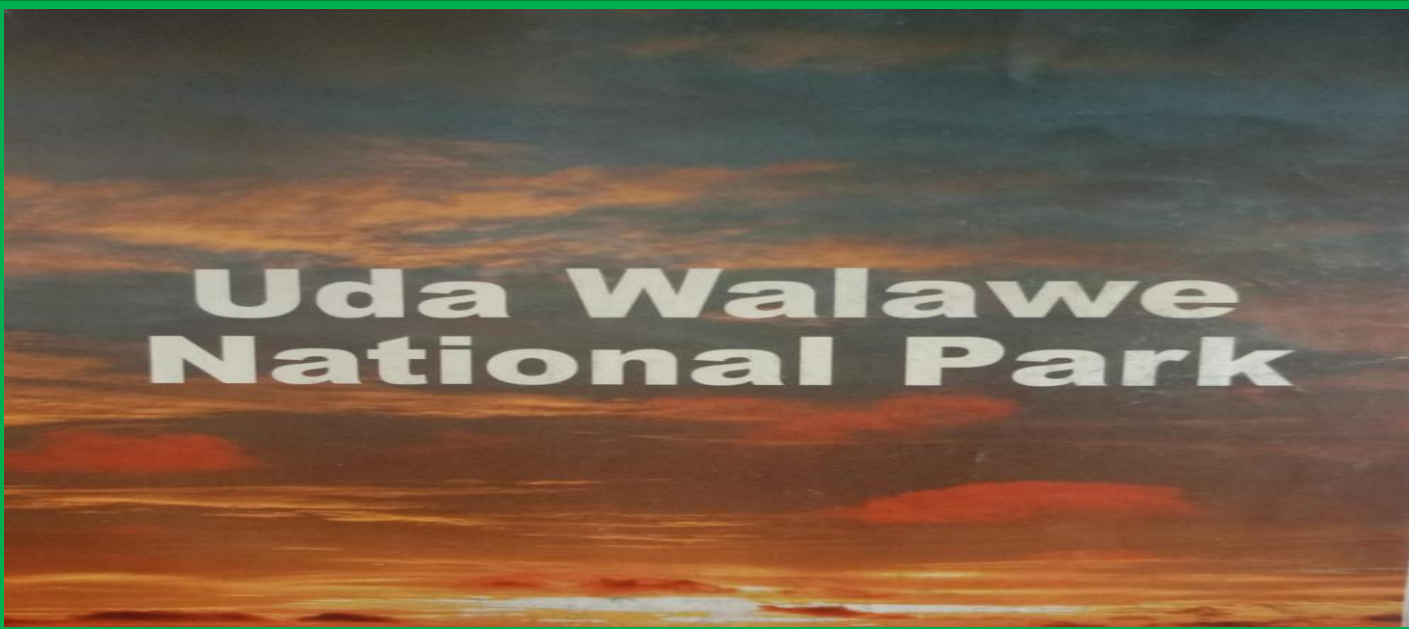


Physical Features

- ❖ UdaWalawe National Park encompasses the two major drainage basins of the Walawe River and Mau Ara. The enclosed land is an undulating plain at about 100m in elevation, rising to 373m at the foothills of Ulgala in the west. The most prominent feature is the Kalthota Escarpment to the north of the park.

Geology

- ❖ A large part of UdaWalawe lies within the Vijayan Series, comprising hard crystalline rocks of the pre-Cambrian era. The western and northern boundaries closer to are the transition zone with the Khondalite or Highland Series. Thus, much of the Park is occupied by a variety of gneisses and granites, with extensive exposure of basement rocks in its north-west and eastern sections



**Uda Walawe
National Park**

Soils

- ❖ Soils in the Park have been developed from residual and alluvial parent materials. They include reddish brown earths, low humic clays, solodized solonetz, and alluvial soils of variable texture and drainage.

Climate

- ❖ The park location in the Dry Zone is characterized by uniformly high temperatures and seasonal rainfall, Mean annual rainfall is about 1500mm. Rainfall peaks coincide with the Southwest Monsoon in April-May and Northeast Monsoon October-November. Mean annual temperature is about 32°C relative humidity ranges from 61% to 94% in the daytime.

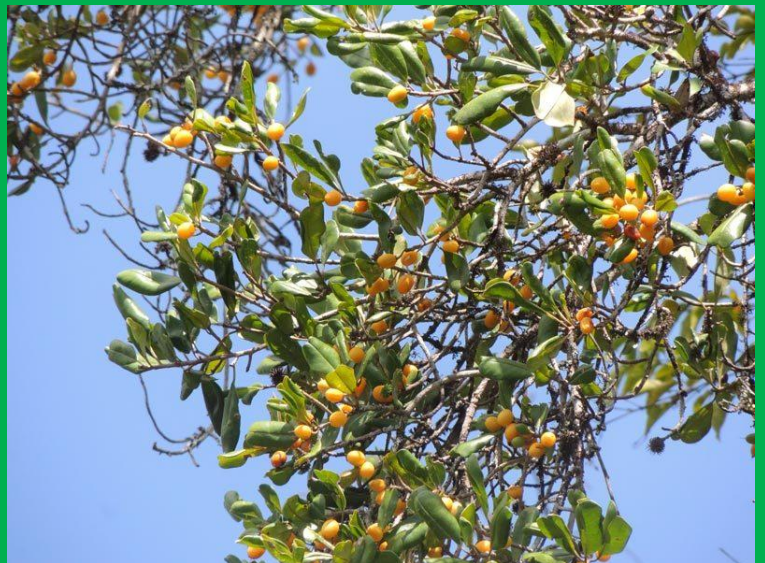
Flora

- ❖ The Park lies within Floristic Region II of Ashton and Gunatillake (1987). The major vegetation types are Dry-Mixed Evergreen Forest, Riverine Forest along the Walawe River, Savanna, Scrub, Grassland, and some forest plantations of Eucalyptus and teak. Most of the teak and Eucalyptus plantations have been destroyed by elephants. They began to feed on the bark and subsequently on the flush from around More than 80% of the area was under forest cover in 1956 but this had declined.

- ❖ To 4% by the time the Park was established in 1972. Human habitation, chena cultivation, and removal of vegetation during reservoir construction were the causes of denudation. Very little original vegetation remains. The result is a mosaic of terrestrial and aquatic habitats, including extensive grasslands.
- ❖ A total of 218 species of vascular plants were inventoried during the Biodiversity Baseline Survey (2006-07), of which nine species are endemic and six are nationally threatened.

Dry-Mixed Evergreen Forest

- ❖ The extant closed-canopy forest has a height not exceeding 30m. The tallest emergent canopy tree is Palu (Manilkara hexandra) which is scattered throughout the Park. Two tree communities have been recognized in this forest. They are widely distributed but fragmented Manilkara-Drypetes-Chloroxylon (Palu-Weera-Burutha) community and Alseodaphne-Berrya-Diospyros (Wewarana-HalmillKaluwara) found close to the river and drainage areas.



- ❖ Other common canopy species are *Cassine glauca*, *Chloroxylon swietenia*, *Diospyros ebenum*, *Drypetes sepiaria*, *Ficus benghalensis*, *Holoptelea integrifolia*, *Pterospermum suberifolium*, *Schleichera oleosa*, *Sterculia foetida*, *Syzygium cumini* and *Vitex altissima*.
- ❖ Sub-canopy species include *Cassia fistula*, *Drypetes sepiaria*, *Diospyros ovalifolia*, *Cordia dichotoma*, *Garcinia spicata*, *Lepisanthes tetraphylla*, *Pleurostyliia opposite* and *Psydrax dicoccos*.
- ❖ Understorey species include *Capparis zeylanica*, *Croton officinalis*, *Clausena indica*, *Dimorphocalyx glabellus*, *Erythroxylum zeylanicum*, *Glycosmis mauritiana*, *Mallotus rhamnifolius*, *Micromelum minutum*, *Milusa indica*, *Murraya paniculata*, *Salacia reticulate*, *Tarenna asiatica* and *Polyalthia korinti*.
- ❖ Much of the forest in the park is actually secondary degraded or disturbed areas of Dry-Mixed Evergreen Forest.

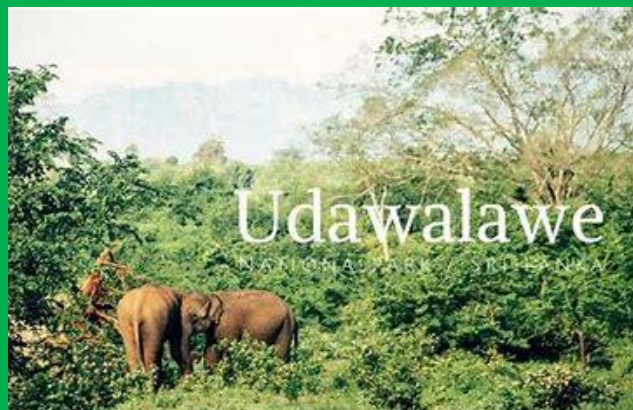


Riverine Forest

- ❖ Riverine Forest (47.0ha, 0.15% of total area) is found along the banks of the Walawe River. The characteristic tree species is *Hopea cordifolia* (Uva Mandora), an endemic and threatened tree species with a threatened endemic height of 35 m. It is the only known Dipterocarp in the Dry Zone. Associated species include: Thimbiri (*Diospyros malabarica*), *Garcinia spicata*, Kolon (*Haldina cordifolia*), Makulla (*Hydnocarpus venenata*), Mee (*Madhuka longifolia*) and Kumbuk (*Terminalia arjuna*). The riverbanks are lined with Kumbuk trees.

Scrub

- ❖ The area covered by scrub is around 15,800ha or over 50.4% of the total. It is 2-3m in height and occurs in areas of degraded climax and thorn forest. Two main types of scrub are present: i.e., one dominated by mixed indigenous species and a second dominated by the invasive exotic *Lantana camara*.



❖ Commonest species in this habitat are *Acacia leucophloea*, *Asparagus racemosus*, *Azadirachta indica*, *Bauhinia racemosa*, *Benkara malabarica*, *Carissa spinarum*, *Carmona retusa*, *Catunaregam spinosa*, *Croton laccifer*, *Dichrostachys cinerea*, *Eupatorium odoratum*, *Flueggea leucopyrus*, *Lantana camara*, *Phyllanthus polyphyllus*, *Scutia myrtina*, *Streblus asper*, *Toddalia asiatica*, and *Ziziphus oenoplia*.



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Grassland

- ❖ Grasslands cover around 9,939.3ha, which is about 31.7% of total park area. Grassland has become established in areas of abandoned shifting/chena cultivation that were originally Dry-Mixed Evergreen Forest. *Panicum maximum* (Guinea grass) is dominant with some scattered shrubs and isolated trees.
- ❖ Recent GIS analytical maps confirm the existence of the major habitat types described above. The remainder consists of Eucalyptus plantations (13.5ha, 0.04%), rock outcrops (310.4ha, 1.0%), savanna (3.7ha, <0.1%), abandoned chena (265.5ha, 0.9%), bund (4.90ha, <0.1%), and water (3690.2ha, 11.8%) out of a total area of 31,364.3 ha. Note that this total area is different to the gazetted area of 32,315ha.

Fauna

- ❖ Udawalawe, with its diverse habitat types, is populated by a diverse vertebrate and invertebrate fauna. The latter is not well documented except for the and butterflies.



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Fish

- ❖ The UdaWalawe National Park contains a rich assemblage of fish, representing 25 (30%) of the 82 indigenous species (nine families, 21 genera). However, the number of endemics in the park is low (5 species), representing only 11% of the national total of 44 species. The number of exotic species is relatively high (7 species), accounting for 22% of the total number of species recorded in the Park. The exotic species are mostly confined to the Uda Walawe Reservoir and other tanks but *Oreochromis niloticus* is widespread in the Walawe River and both *O. mossambicus* and *Catla catla* are also present in streams. No nationally threatened species have been recorded.



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The following facts are noteworthy:

- ❖ The most abundant family is the Cyprinidae and the commonest genus is *Puntius*, within the same family Cyprinidae. Of the seven species of *Puntius*, two are endemic.
- ❖ The most widely distributed species are *Puntius sarana*, the endemic *P. singhala*, and the exotic *Oreochromis niloticus*, all of which occur in the river, streams, the UdaWalawe Reservoir and other tanks but not in the waterholes or ponds.
- ❖ Only two species were recorded in waterholes and ponds, *Puntius chola* and *P. dorsalis*.
- ❖ Seven exotic species were recorded in the Uda Walawe Reservoir, of which three were recorded elsewhere. Of the eight indigenous species found in the reservoir, only *Puntius sarana* and *Labeo dussumieri* were as abundant as the exotic species.



- ❖ The large number of exotic species in the reservoir and other water bodies in the National Park is due to the activities of the Uda Walawe Freshwater Fish Breeding Station of the Ministry of Fisheries. This Station has been stocking water bodies in the area, especially the Uda Walawe Reservoir, with carp and tilapia fingerlings over the years. There are reports of the introduced carp reproducing in Uda Walawe Reservoir. These exotic fish species, particularly those in the Reservoir, contribute significantly to the local fishing industry.

Amphibians

- ❖ Fifteen species of amphibians, including four endemics and five new species, are known from the park.
- ❖ Significant findings: Uda Walawe National Park is important for the conservation of herpetofauna, evident from its relative wealth of species for a site that lies in the Dry Zone. This includes one amphibian genus (*Philautus*) endemic to Sri Lanka.



Reptiles

- ❖ 26 species of reptiles, including eight endemics, have been recorded from the park.
- ❖ Other interesting facts about the reptiles are:
- ❖ The Painted-lip Lizard (*Calotes ceylonensis*) and Lowland Kangaroo Lizard (*Otocryptis nigristigma*), both endemic, are recorded sympatrically in undisturbed and disturbed Dry-Mixed Evergreen Forest.
- ❖ The endemic and nocturnal Kandyan Gecko *Hemidactylus depressus* and the endemic Day Gecko (*Cremaspis* sp.) are present.
- ❖ Two endemic genera of reptiles occur, namely *Lankascincus* and *Nessia*. The relict genus *Nessia* is represented by an unidentified species which could be new to science.
- ❖ The endemic Tammanna Skink (*Eutropis tammanna*), a new record for Uda Walawe, is recorded in undisturbed Dry-Mixed Evergreen Forest and Grassland with native grass species such as illuk (*Imperata* sp.).

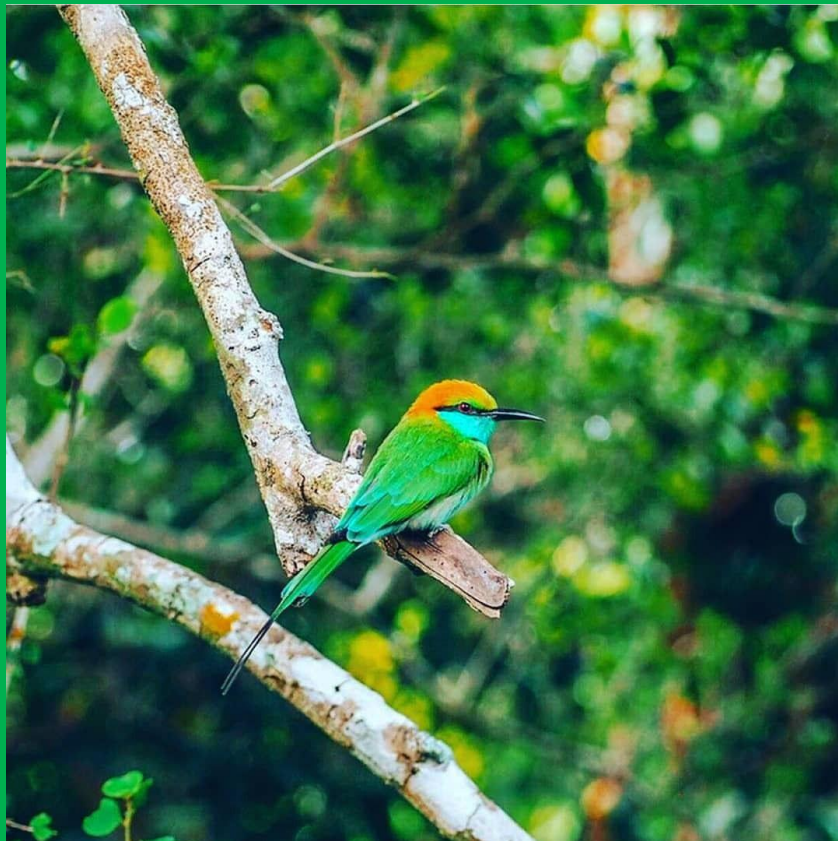
- ❖ A new record of the rare colubrid snake *Boiga beddomei* in Uda Walawe also represents an extension to the known geographical range of this species. The endemic and nationally vulnerable striped flying snake (*Chrysopelea taprobanica*) is recorded from disturbed Dry-Mixed Evergreen Forest. Other rare species include the Rock Python (*Python molurus*) and the Trinket Snake (*Coeloganthus helena*).
- ❖ The diversity for reptiles is highest in undisturbed Dry-Mixed Evergreen Forest, intermediate in Grassland, and lowest in Scrub.

Birds

- ❖ A total of 225 bird species have been recorded in the Park. This includes four endemics and three nationally threatened species, including the critically endangered Rock Pigeon (*Columba livia*). Of these species, 191 are illustrated in the present volume.
- ❖ Highest species richness is recorded in Grassland, followed by undisturbed Dry-Mixed Evergreen Forest and Riverine Forest while the lowest species richness is recorded in the Scrub habitat. The species richness in Grassland is

inflated because of the numerous shallow bodies of water scattered in that habitat.

- ❖ Of Sri Lanka's 220 breeding resident birds, 61% are thus commonly found within the Park. Endemics (15%) are relatively low in number compared to protected areas in the Wet Zone, this is generally the expected result for Dry Zone sites. Only about 10% of Sri Lanka's 110 migratory species are present, but this is likely an underestimate. The riverine vegetation is known to harbour the elusive Red-faced Malkoha. The first authentic nest of that species in recent years was recorded here in 1976. Scattered forest patches, especially along stream beds and around tanks are good habitats for birds.



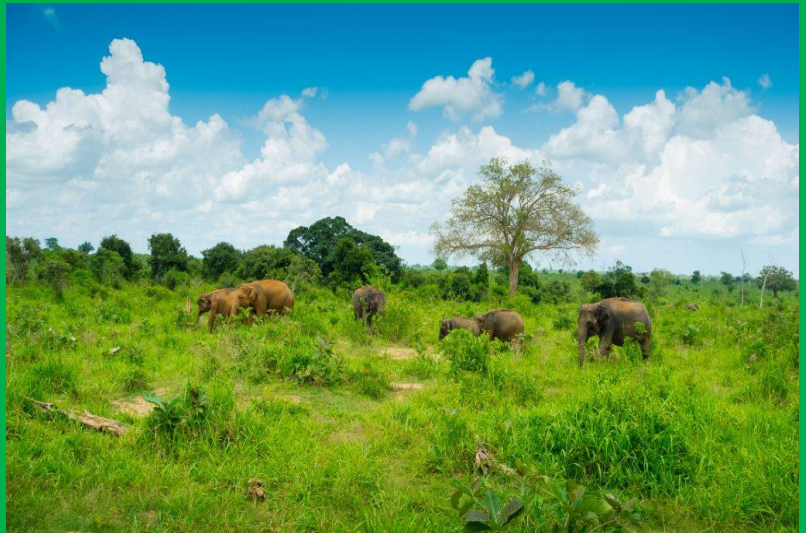
Mammals

- ❖ Forty two (42) species of mammals are known from the park. The following interesting facts should be noted:
- ❖ Mammals recorded at UdaWalawe belong to 25 genera and 16 families. They comprise several bat species, a dozen rodents including four species of squirrels, the Porcupine (*Hystrix indica*), at least seven species of rats, the Leopard (*Panthera pardus*), the Jungle Cat (*Felis chaus*), three civets, three mongoose species, the Otter (*Lutra lutra*), the Golden Jackal (*Canis aureus*), six species of ungulates, three primates, the Black-naped Hare (*Lepus nigricollis*), and Asian Elephant (*elephant maximus*).
- ❖ six species are endemic, namely Purple-faced Langur (*Semnopithecus vetulus*), Toque Monkey (*Macaca sinica*), Flame-striped Jungle Squirrel (*Funambulus layardi*), Sri Lanka Spiny Mouse (*Mus fernandoni*), White-spotted Chevrotain (*Moschiola meminna*), and Sri Lankan Golden Striped-backed Palm Civet (*Paradoxurus stenocephalus*). One species, the Buffalo (*Bubalus arnee*) is an exotic. The most common species in the Park are the Toque Macaque, the Grey Langur (*Semnopithecus priam*), Spotted Deer (*Axis axis*), Asian Elephant, the Black Rat (*Rattus rattus*), and Wild Boar (*Sus scrofa*).

- ❖ Eleven species are nationally threatened, of which the endemic Sri Lanka spiny mouse (*Mus fernandoni*) is Critically Endangered.
- ❖ Species richness for mammals is highest in the Grassland and undisturbed Dry-Mixed Evergreen Forest habitats. This is attributed, at least partly, to the shade and cover afforded by such habitats, particularly the tall grasses.
- ❖ Udawalawe is renowned for its large Asian Elephant population. It attracts large numbers of visitors because elephants can be easily viewed, especially in the open Grassland habitat.
- ❖ The Park is probably the best place in Sri Lanka to view the elusive Jungle Cat (*Felis chaus*). These cats can sometimes be glimpsed on the roads at all times of day and night.
- ❖ Several small mammals are also seen often in the park. Among them are Antelope Rat (*Tatera indica*), Common Rat (*Rattus rattus*), Soft-furred Metad (*Millardia meltada*), White-tailed Wood Rat (*Madromys blanfordi*), Sri Lanka Spiny Mouse (*Mus fernandoni*), Indian Field Mouse (*Mus booduga*), and Painted Bat (*Kerivoula picta*)

plants

- ❖ Flowering plants are a group of vascular plants with their seeds enclosed in fruits. The characteristic feature is the flower, which is a shoot system modified for reproduction.



- ❖ Angiosperms are by far the most diverse and successful plant group, containing over 95% of all land plant species alive today. These grow in every habitable region and dominate most terrestrial and even some aquatic ecosystems. They represent the majority of economically important plants.
- ❖ There are 4143 known flowering plants in Sri Lanka representing 214 families and 1522 genera. Of the total number, 75% are indigenous (that is, not introduced by humans) and, of them, approximately 27% are endemic. The number of flowering plants in the Udawalawe National Park area is yet to be fully assessed; a baseline survey was conducted in 2007

Molluscs

- ❖ Molluscs, typically snails, slugs, mussels, etc., are one of the most important faunal -groups found in Sri Lanka. Home in water and on land, most of them have a shell. Some have two shells and they are called 'bivalves' while most have a single shell. Both types belong to the group Gastropoda. There are also a few which do not have a shell, called slugs, and these are found on land. They feed mainly on vegetables by rasping, for which they have a radula which is a row of teeth, constantly renewed, located on the floor of the mouth. They move by gliding over a mucous layer secreted by the 'foot'. Many of the Molluscs in Sri Lanka are endemic to the island.

Arthropoda

- ❖ The arthropods are a very widespread group of animals and comprise 75% of all species described to date. The common feature is that their limbs are segmented, like the body. The body often consist of a head, thorax, and abdomen. The appendages in the body are modified to perform different functions. In the head they are modified for feeding, while in the thorax and abdomen they are modified mostly for movement. This diverse group has a chitinous body cover in most cases. Based on the number of limbs they are generally divided into Class Insecta with six legs and Class Arachnida with eight. Class Crustacea of Phylum Arthropoda are mostly inhabitants of water although some crustaceans have invaded land.

Dung beetles

- ❖ Dung beetles (Coleoptera: Scarabaeinae) perform key roles in tropical forests. They have roles in waste removal, secondary seed dispersal, and parasite suppression. Dung beetles are divided into three functional groups; rollers, tunnelers, and dwellers. Their front legs are specially modified to form a ball with dung and this sphere is rolled into an underground chamber to feed larvae.



Spiders

- ❖ Spiders evoke fear in many and are often misunderstood. Their webs are wonders of natural architecture. They can be easily distinguished from other insects because they have two body segments: the cephalothorax and the abdomen. Spiders possess up to eight simple eyes and four pair of legs.
- ❖ Spinnerets (silk weaving structures) are on the posterior end. There are around 501 known species of spiders in Sri Lanka, with probably another thousand waiting to be discovered.
- ❖ Female spiders are generally larger than males. Using sight, vibration, and touch they target insects and other prey alighting or walking nearby. Some prey may be bigger than the spider. The best known method of prey capture is by means of sticky webs.
- ❖ Spiders immobilize their prey in two ways - by biting and injecting paralyzing venom, and by silk swathing and wrapping.
- ❖ Spiders avoid human beings and bite only in self-defense. Even so, only a handful produce venom that cause a reaction.

Dragonflies & Damselflies

- ❖ Dragonflies and damselflies are insects that belong to the order Odonata. In Sri Lanka a total of 119 odonates, including 56 endemics, are currently known to science. They can be classified under two Sub-orders namely Anisoptera and Zygoptera.
- ❖ Zygopterans, commonly referred to as damselflies, are generally smaller and delicately-built insects with small hammer shaped head, two well separated compound eyes, and slender abdomen and equally sized narrow wings that are placed along the abdomen when at rest. Anisopterans or dragonflies are usually much larger and have two large compound eyes that touch each other at the center, hind wing that are expanded at the base, and keep their wings broadly opened when at rest.
- ❖ Odonates have an incomplete metamorphosis and their larval stages are exclusively aquatic. Both damselflies and dragonflies are active carnivores.
- ❖ In Udawalawe National Park, many dragonflies can be found near rivers, streams, tanks, ponds, and marshes. Some species prefer shade.

Butterflies

❖ Butterflies are instantly recognized by people the world over as attractive, harmless, insects. They are found in every habitat from mountaintops to the darkest jungle, in desert and in our gardens - a truly cosmopolitan group.



- ❖ Butterflies and moths belong to the order Lepidoptera, a name that points to the principal characteristics of this group: it derives from the Greek word lepis, meaning "scale", and pteron, "wing". The presence of overlapping scales on the wings and body helps distinguish the Lepidoptera from other insects orders. Their closest relatives are the caddisflies (Order Trichoptera), which have wings covered by scale-like hairs.
- ❖ The Lepidoptera manifest metamorphosis during their 'birth'. The transformation from caterpillar to pupa and then to a large-winged, often brightly coloured, butterfly is dramatic.
- ❖ The Lepidoptera order is one of the biggest in Phylum Insecta, with an estimated 200,000 species.
- ❖ Butterflies are today strongly associated with flowering plants, and it is likely that plants and butterflies co-evolved.
- ❖ There are 245 known butterfly species in Sri Lanka in 5 families; 26 of them are endemic to the Sri Lanka.

Amphibians

- ❖ Amphibians are thought to have been the first vertebrates to have evolved to live away from water. These animals are capable of living both in water and on land. Modern amphibians breathe through their skins and require moist habitats to survive. Despite this specialized requirement, amphibians have evolved into over 250 genera and 2000+ species around the world.
- ❖ Sri Lanka is represented by 111 species belonging to seven families. When Prof. Keerthisinghe first surveyed Sri Lanka's amphibians in 1956 he was able to name only 39 species. However, through the years, specially during the last 20 years, we have seen a surge of new species identified in Family Rhacophoridae (tree/bush frogs) some of which are visually spectacular.
- ❖ In Sri Lanka approximately 35% of frog species do not show a 'tadpole' stage. Instead, they develop within an egg and 'froglets', tiny adult frogs, hatch out. This phenomenon is called 'direct development'.
- ❖ The total number of frog species in Sri Lanka is 111. They belong to the families Bufonidae, Dicroglossidae, Microhylidae, Nyctibatrachidae, Ranidae, Rhacophoridae, and Ichthyophidae. Nearly 65% of Sri Lanka's frogs belong to the Rhacophoridae

Reptiles

- ❖ Reptiles are 'cold blooded'. which means that they require multiple strategies to keep themselves alive. The common sight of snakes, lizards, and crocodiles basking in the sun all have to do with this need. Reptiles possess dry skins that are often scaly. Snakes shed their skins regularly to facilitate growth.
- ❖ Reptiles lay eggs which they do not normally hatch. However, Pythons are known to wrap their body around their eggs to promote hatching. The babies that come out of the eggs are similar to adults in all respects except for the small size.

Fishes

- ❖ Fishes are distinct from other vertebrates owing to their aquatic lifestyle, the presence of scales on their bodies, and possession of fins that are used for propulsion. They use oxygen that is dissolved in water. The sensory system is usually based on the 'lateral line', a series of tiny pores along the body that are sensitive to chemical, electrical, and pressure stimuli. Some bottom-dwelling species have sensitive barbs that alert them to ambient conditions.

❖ Birds

- ❖ There is no doubt that, amongst animals on Planet Earth, birds have received the most friendly response by people. Their great appeal has encouraged an important recreational pursuit - bird watching.
- ❖ Most birds are large, nearly all are diurnal, numerous, ubiquitous with many species conspicuously sharing man's environment. Their popularity and aesthetic appeal among the people come from their remarkable array of colours, behaviours and habits, especially the call or song.
- ❖ Birds have evolved out of the dinosaurs (which emerged from primitive reptiles) and have many reptilian features. These are often hidden, covered by that unique bird character - feathers. Thus birds are often referred to as "glorified reptiles".
- ❖ The world has over 10,000 species of birds recorded while in Sri Lanka we have recorded 495. This includes all sight records of even those that have been recorded a single time. Among them 33 species are considered endemic, of which 27 are definitive while 6 are proposed.

Mammals

- ❖ Amongst animals the group considered most "developed" are the Mammals. There are many aspects of their structure and activities that set mammals apart from other organisms. Mammals form a distinct group of animals identified today by the possession of hair and, in females, mammary glands.
- ❖ Mammals inhabit both terrestrial and marine habitats but land is their principal domain. Nevertheless, the largest animal in the world - the Blue Whale - is a marine mammal that breathes air. The mammalian form and physiology have enabled these animals to live in very difficult conditions. The ability to control body temperature enables them to exist in very cold or very hot climates. Coupled with the ability to feed throughout the day they have been able to expand and increase in numbers, enabling mammals to establish themselves in nearly all the world's habitats. For a small island of 65,000 sq.km. Sri Lanka has an impressive mammalian fauna, better than that of any island of similar size in the world. There are at least 125 known species of which 20 are endemic. It is the number of endemic species in Sri Lanka that are a special feature of the island's fauna.
- ❖ The endemic mammals have an interesting distribution. Eight are confined entirely to the Wet Zone with the one endemic genus also confined to this zone. One mouse is confined to the Dry Zone, while the four primates are found widely distributed with subspecies in each zone.



HOST BY : UPUL KUMARA

Banyan Tree (*Ficus benghalensis*)



The Banyan Tree, scientifically known as *Ficus benghalensis*, is one of the most remarkable and widespread trees found in Sri Lanka, especially within Udawalawe National Park. It is an iconic and culturally significant tree in South Asia.

◇ Scientific Name:
Ficus benghalensis

◇ Common Name:
Banyan Tree

◇ Sinhala Name:
Maha Nuga





General Description:

The Banyan is a large, spreading tree that can cover a vast area. One of its most distinctive features is the presence of aerial roots that hang down from branches. These roots eventually reach the ground, become strong trunks, and provide extra support to the massive canopy.



Leaf Characteristics:

- Arrangement: Spiral
- Shape: Ovate (egg-shaped)
- Tip: Obtuse (rounded)
- Base: Cordate (heart-shaped)
- Margin: Entire (smooth, unbroken edge)



❁ Inflorescence:

Hypanthodium type the flowers are enclosed within a fig-like structure, containing both male and female flowers separately.

🍎 Fruit (Fig):

- **Type:** Sessile (without a stalk)
- **Color:** Turns from green/orange to red when ripe
- **Shape:** Depressed-globose (round but slightly flattened)
- **Special Feature:** Separate male and female flowers inside the fig



🌳 Ecological Importance:

The Banyan provides shade, shelter, and food for many wildlife species in dry zones such as Udawalawe.

Its fruits are eaten by birds, bats, monkeys, and other animals.

The strong network of aerial roots helps stabilize soil and prevent erosion.

🌿 In Udawalawe National Park:

The Banyan is a common and ecologically vital tree in Udawalawe. It offers shelter for animals and serves as a key food source during dry seasons. The large canopy and root system create microhabitats that support biodiversity in the park.

In summary, the Banyan Tree (Maha Nuga) is a magnificent, culturally revered, and environmentally important species. In Udawalawe, it stands as a symbol of strength, life, and harmony with nature providing shade, food, and ecological balance to countless living beings.



Milla (*Vitex altissima*)

The *Vitex altissima*, commonly known in Sinhala as Milla, is a large drooping tree found abundantly in dry zone forests such as Udawalawe National Park. It is a significant native tree species, well adapted to the dry tropical climate.



- ◇ Scientific Name: *Vitex altissima*
- ◇ Common Name: Vitex Tree
- ◇ Sinhala Name: Milla

General Description:

Vitex altissima is a large deciduous tree with drooping branches and a tall, straight trunk. It is a characteristic species of Sri Lanka's dry zone forests, especially in areas like Udawalawe, where it forms part of the natural canopy providing shade and habitat for wildlife.

Leaf Characteristics:

Arrangement: Opposite–decussate (leaves arranged in opposite pairs, each pair at right angles to the next)

Type: Trifoliolate (three leaflets per leaf)



Leaflets:

- **Shape:** Elliptic (oval-shaped)
- **Size:** Sub-equal, with the central leaflet slightly larger than the two side ones
- **Tip:** Caudate/Acuminate (long-pointed or tapering tip)
- **Base:** Acuminate to shortly attenuate (narrowing gradually)
- **Margin:** Entire (smooth-edged)

✿ Inflorescence:

Panicle type - flowers are arranged in branched clusters.

✿ Florets (Flowers):

- Shape: Corolla salver-shaped (narrow tube with spreading lobes)
- Color: Light pink, white, bluish, or purple
- Type: Bilabiate (two-lipped corolla)
- Attracts: Bees and butterflies - important for pollination.

🍎 Fruit:

- Type: Drupaceous (fleshy fruit with a hard stone inside)
- Shape: Spheroidal (round)
- Color: Greenish-black when ripe
- Surface: Marked with small white dots



🌳 Ecological Importance:

- Serves as a shade and nesting tree for birds and small mammals in Udawalawe.
- Provides nectar for pollinators and fruits for wildlife.
- Helps maintain ecological balance and supports dry zone forest biodiversity.

🌿 In Udawalawe National Park

Vitex altissima is a dominant and characteristic dry zone tree species. Its drooping branches and wide canopy provide shade for elephants, deer, and monkeys, while its flowers attract a variety of pollinating insects. The tree also plays a role in soil conservation and forest regeneration.



In summary:

The *Vitex altissima* (Milla) is a majestic dry-zone tree native to Sri Lanka. In Udawalawe, it stands as an essential part of the ecosystem - offering food, shade, and habitat to countless animals while

maintaining the forest's natural beauty and ecological health.

Maila (*Bauhinia racemosa*)

The *Bauhinia racemosa*, commonly known in Sinhala as Maila, is a small to medium-sized tree (about 7 meters tall) that grows abundantly in Udawalawe National Park and other dry zone forests of Sri Lanka. It is a distinctive and ecologically important species, easily recognized by its unique twin-lobed leaves

- ◇ Scientific Name: *Bauhinia racemosa*
- ◇ Common Name: Small-leaved Bauhinia / Bidi Leaf Tree
- ◇ Sinhala Name: Maila



🌿 General Description:

The Milla tree is a small, deciduous tree with spreading branches and light green foliage. It is very common in dry and semi-dry forest regions such as Udawalawe, where it grows both naturally and along open forest edges. The tree is easily identified by its bilobed leaves, resembling a cow's hoof or a butterfly's wings.

🌿 Leaf Characteristics:



- **Arrangement:** Distichous (leaves arranged in two opposite vertical rows)

- **Shape:** Obcordate (heart-shaped but inverted)
- **Structure:** Conduplicate (folded along the midrib) and bilobed (divided into two rounded lobes)
- **Tip:** Lobes rounded at apex
- **Base:** Cordate (heart-shaped base)
- **Margin:** Entire (smooth edge)

🌸 Inflorescence:

Racemose type - flowers arranged along a central axis (raceme).

🌸 Florets (Flowers):

- **Corolla:** Rotate (wheel-shaped)
- **Color:** Yellowish-white or greenish-white
- **Attraction:** The flowers are mildly fragrant and attract bees and butterflies for pollination.



Fruit:

- **Type:** Indehiscent (does not split open when ripe)
- **Shape:** Oblong, compressed black pod
- **Texture:** Hard and flattened
- **Contains:** Several small seeds

Ecological Importance:

- Provides shade and food for many dry-zone animals and birds.
- The leaves are sometimes eaten by elephants and deer in Udawalawe.
- The flowers attract pollinators like bees, supporting the ecosystem's reproductive cycle.
- The wood is occasionally used locally for small tools and fuel.

In Udawalawe National Park:

The Milla tree (*Bauhinia racemosa*) is one of the most abundant and visible small trees in Udawalawe. Its bilobed leaves and small white flowers make it easy to identify among the dry forest vegetation. It contributes greatly to the biodiversity and ecological stability of the park, providing shelter, food, and nesting sites for birds and insects.

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6:00A.M - 4.00P.M

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LASTING MEMORIES OF FREEDOM IN
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STARTING TIME
5.30 A.M - 2.00 P.M

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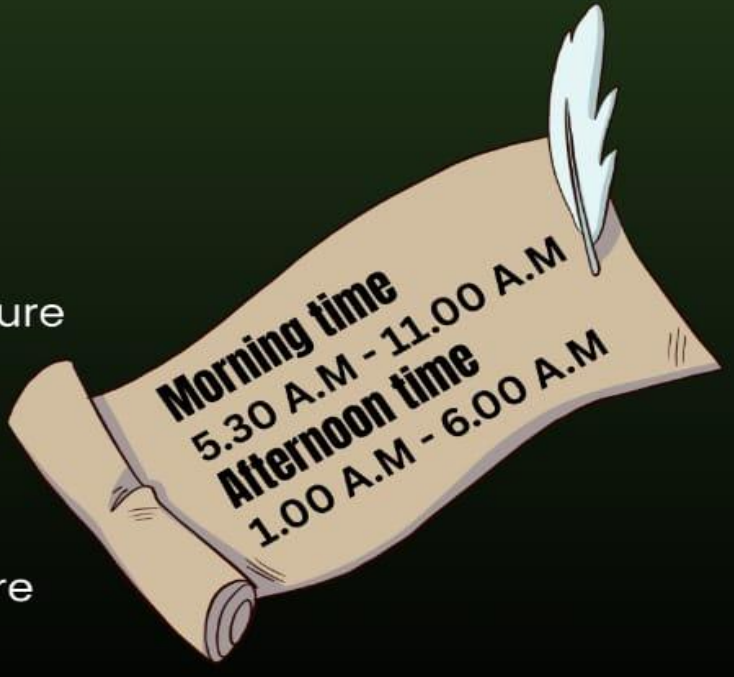




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1.00 A.M - 6.00 A.M



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according to your wishes.**

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Sri Lanka Purple-faced Leaf Monkey (*Semnopithecus vetulus*)

Sri Lankan black monkey



❖ 54-56cm. Tail 73cm. Generally sooty black with white whiskers. Nearly always found on trees, in the Dry Zone it likes to feed on trees near the rivers. Separated from the langurs by the round head and white whiskers. Four distinct subspecies recognized according to their body size, colour patterns, and geographical range Endemic.

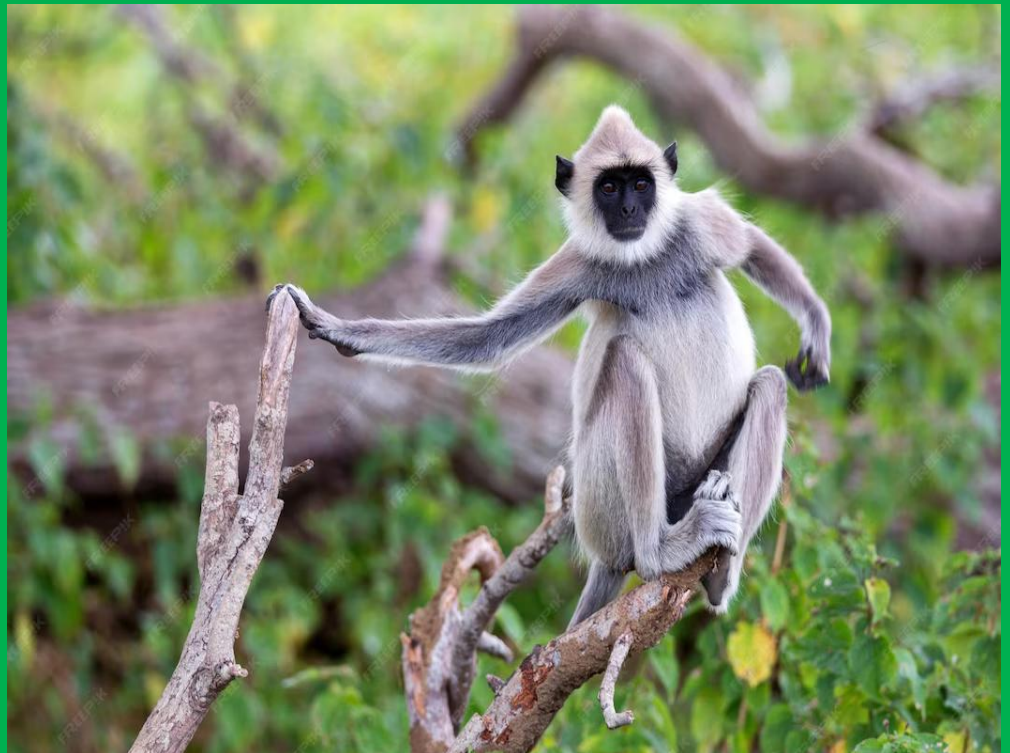
Sri Lanka Toque Macaque (*Macaca sinica*)



❖ 47-49cm. Tail 59cm. General colour brown mixed with yellow. Troops consist of 10 to 20 individuals. Three distinct subspecies are recognized according to their body size, colour patterns, and geographical range.

Gray Langur (*Semnopithecus priam*)

❖ 62-64cm. Tail 68cm. General colour greyish. Tail held up (curved or 'S' shaped) when moving on the ground. The distinguishing feature is the pointed head, formed by the radiating hairs.



Sri Lanka Red Slender (Loris Loris tardigradus)



❖ 20cm.
Females larger than males. Tail less. Yellowish brown. Eyes glow red when a flashlight is shone at them. Only use red light in the presence of these animals

Pangolin (Manis crassicaudata)

❖ 89-141cm. Distinctive. Body colour varies with that of the local soil. Entirely nocturnal. It mainly feeds on termites and ants.



Golden Jackal (*Canis aureus*)



- ❖ 100cm. Brown tinged with reddish brown. Dark near mid-dorsal line of body. paler below, tail bushy, darker and held down. Usually found in pairs.

Jungle Cat (*Felis chaus*)



- ❖ 68cm. General colour sandy brown with a grey tinge. Darker above and light below. Ears tipped with black long hairs. Tail has black rings towards the tip. Dark stripes on legs which fade with age. Usually encountered when the cat crosses a road at night.

Leopard (*Panthera pardus*)



- ❖ 2.1m. Yellow with black rosettes. Sri Lankan subspecies is endemic.

Brown Mongoose (*Herpestes fuscus*)



- ❖ 65cm. Male larger. General colour brown; intensity varies according to the sub species from zone to zone. Tail carried with tip held up. Tail tip same colour as rest of body.

Striped-neck Mongoose

(*Herpestes vitticollis*)



- ❖ 80cm. Male larger. Reddish brown. Tail often carried straight though it may be turned up at times. Tip of tail black. Black stripe behind ear.

Ruddy Mongoose (*Herpestes smithii*)



- ❖ 65cm. Male larger. Tail carried with blackish tail tip held up. Active during day time.

Asian Elephant (*Elephas maximus*)

Asian Elephants of Udawalawe National Park

- ❖ Udawalawe National Park, located in the southern region of Sri Lanka, is one of the best places in Asia to witness the magnificent Asian elephant (*Elephas maximus maximus*) in its natural habitat. The park is home to over 500 wild elephants, making it one of the most reliable destinations for year-round elephant sightings.



Habitat and Lifestyle

- ❖ Asian elephants in Udawalawe roam freely across open grasslands, forests, and near the Udawalawe Reservoir, where they come to drink and bathe. The park's ecosystem provides the perfect balance of water, vegetation, and shelter, ensuring the elephants can thrive throughout the year, even during the dry season.



Feeding Habits

- ❖ Elephants are herbivorous grazers and browsers, consuming a wide variety of plants every day.
 - ❖ Their diet mainly includes: Grasses and reeds found in open plains
 - ❖ Leaves, bark, and twigs from trees and shrubs
 - ❖ Fruits and seeds from forest plants
 - ❖ Water plants from the reservoir area
-
- ❖ An adult elephant can eat over 150 kilograms of vegetation and drink about 100 liters of water daily. They often feed in the early morning and late afternoon, resting in shaded areas during the hottest part of the day.

Social Behavior

- ❖ Udawalawe's elephants display fascinating social behavior.
- ❖ Female elephants live in matriarchal herds led by an experienced older female.
- ❖ Males usually live alone or form small bachelor groups once they mature.
- ❖ The herd communicates through low-frequency rumbles, trumpets, and body gestures, maintaining strong emotional bonds.
- ❖ Young calves are particularly protected and nurtured by all females in the group, not just their mothers - a behavior known as allomothering.



Daily Activities

❖ Throughout the day, elephants engage in a mix of activities that are both practical and social:

❖ **Feeding:** Constant grazing and browsing throughout the park.

❖ **Bathing:** Regular bathing and

mud wallowing to cool their bodies and protect their skin from insects.

- ❖ **Resting:** Short naps under shade, often while standing.
- ❖ **Socializing:** Touching trunks, play-fighting, and communicating with deep rumbles.
- ❖ Visitors can often observe these natural behaviors up close, especially near the waterholes during the dry season.



Conservation Importance

- ❖ Udawalawe serves as a critical sanctuary for displaced elephants from nearby areas. The park helps maintain genetic diversity and ensures the protection of this endangered subspecies. The Udawalawe Elephant Transit Home, located adjacent to the park, cares for orphaned elephant calves and releases them back into the wild once they are independent.

Why Udawalawe Is Special

- ❖ Unlike many parks, Udawalawe offers year-round elephant viewing opportunities. The wide-open terrain makes it easier to observe herds in the wild, providing unforgettable encounters for wildlife enthusiasts and photographers.

Wild Buffalo Bubalus arnee

- ❖ 1.25m at shoulder. Males larger. Highly doubtful that pure wild buffaloes exist in Sri Lanka. Males with even partially wild blood have sweeping, broad horns.

Wild Buffalo of Udawalawe National Park



- ❖ Udawalawe National Park is not only famous for its elephants but also for its impressive herds of wild water buffalo (Bubalus arnee), one of Sri Lanka's most powerful and iconic large mammals. These animals play a vital role in maintaining the park's wetland ecosystem and are often seen near water bodies, creating a truly authentic wildlife experience.

Habitat and Lifestyle

- ❖ Wild buffaloes in Udawalawe prefer wetlands, marshes, and grassy plains surrounding the Udawalawe Reservoir. They are highly dependent on water for drinking, bathing, and wallowing - activities that help them regulate body temperature and keep away biting insects. Their strong, curved horns and muscular build make them perfectly adapted to both open grasslands and muddy terrains.



Feeding Habits

- ❖ Being strict herbivores, wild buffaloes mainly graze on:
 - ❖ Fresh grasses found in open fields and riverbanks
 - ❖ Aquatic plants growing near the water's edge
 - ❖ Tender shoots and reeds during the wet season
-
- ❖ A wild buffalo can consume large quantities of grass daily, helping to naturally maintain the park's vegetation balance. Their grazing behavior also supports new plant growth, contributing to the park's ecological cycle.



Social Behavior

- ❖ Udawalawe's wild buffaloes are highly social animals, usually living in herds ranging from 10 to 30 individuals.
- ❖ Female herds consist mostly of mothers and calves led by a dominant matriarch.
- ❖ Mature males (bulls) often live alone or in small bachelor groups, joining female herds only during the mating season.
- ❖ They communicate through grunts, snorts, and body signals, and are known for their protective and cooperative group behavior, especially when facing predators like crocodiles or leopards.



Daily Activities

- ❖ Throughout the day, wild buffaloes follow a calm and steady routine:

- ❖ Morning: Grazing in open grasslands when the air is cool.

- ❖ Midday: Wallowing in muddy pools or shallow water to cool off.

- ❖ Afternoon: Resting under trees or near water sources.

- ❖ Evening: Returning to graze before nightfall.

- ❖ Their wallowing creates small waterholes that benefit many smaller animals and birds, making buffaloes essential to the park's biodiversity.

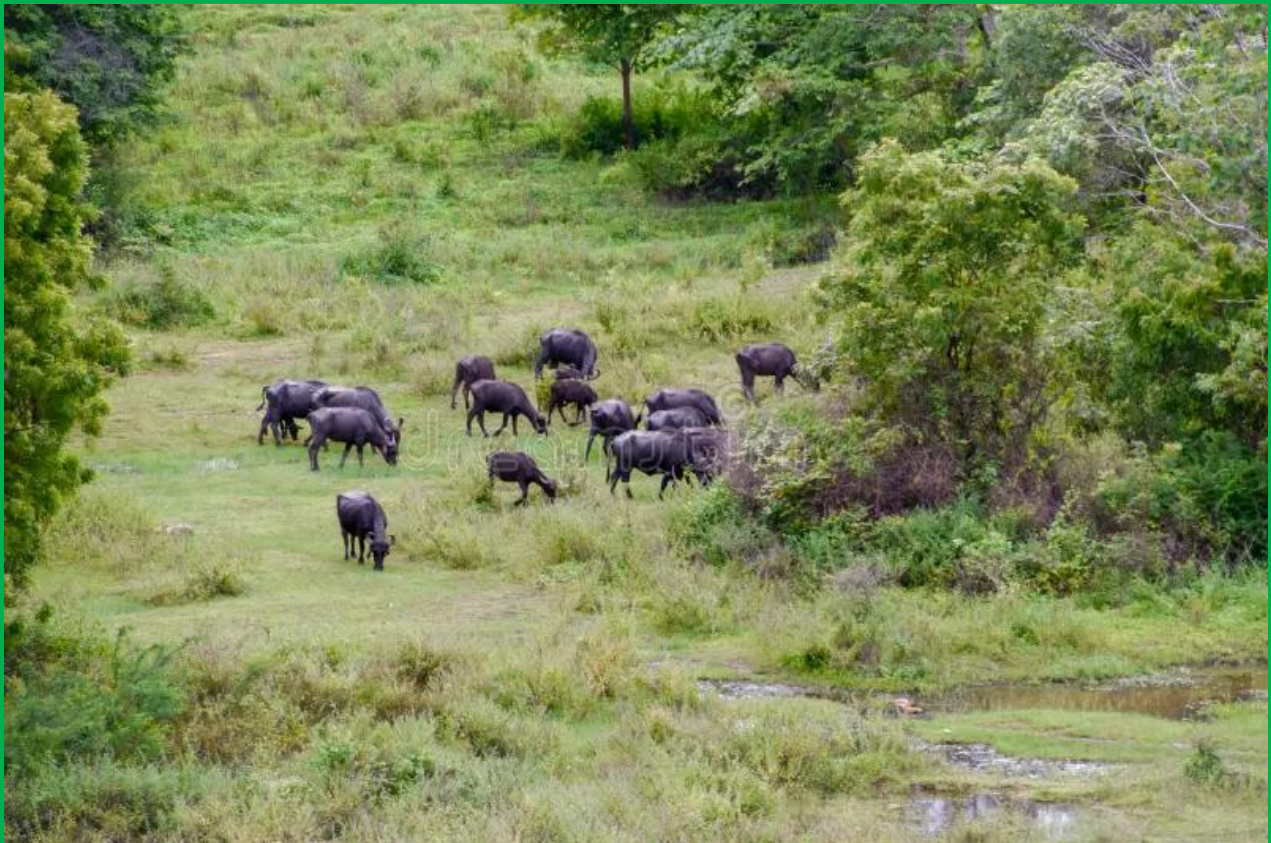


Conservation Importance

- ❖ The wild water buffalo population in Sri Lanka is considered vulnerable, primarily due to hybridization with domestic buffaloes and habitat loss. Udawalawe National Park plays a key role in protecting genetically pure wild herds. Conservation efforts focus on monitoring populations and maintaining suitable wetland environments for their survival.

Why Udawalawe Is Special

- ❖ In Udawalawe, visitors can often witness herds of buffalo grazing peacefully near the reservoir or bathing in the golden evening light, creating some of the park's most picturesque scenes. Their majestic horns, muscular strength, and calm yet powerful presence make them an unforgettable part of the Udawalawe wildlife experience.



Spotted Deer (*Axis axis*)



- ❖ 1.2m at shoulder. Reddish brown to yellow brown with white spots on body. Underside white. Males develop a black neck band ventrally mainly during the rutting season. Branched antlers in males. Can be seen in large herds in open grassland and scrub.

Porcupine (*Hystrix indica*)



- ❖ 79-89cm. Black and white quills on body and tail. Coarse, bristle like hair is crevices during the day time. present on the head and foreparts of the body. Nocturnal species, hides in rock

Wild Boar (*Sus scrofa*)



❖ 95cm at shoulder. Males larger. Blackish. Young animals brown with black stripes on upper surface. Hair on the body is very scanty and bristle like. A mare is present, especially in the males. Usually found in herds with large numbers of piglets.



Sri Lanka Mouse Deer

(*Moschiola meminna*)



❖ 40cm at shoulder. In males the upper canines are elongated. Females larger. Brown with a greenish yellow (sandy) tinge, white underside. White spots on body, elongated and fused to form longitudinal bands on sides. Three white stripes on throat.



Sambhur *Cervus unicolor*



❖ 1.3m. At shoulder. Males larger. Uniform dark brown with lighter underparts. Males have heavy antlers. Hair very coarse and shaggy. A mane is present in the males. Largest member of the deer family in Sri Lanka. It prefers jungles to open grasslands.

Grey-headed Fish eagle (*Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus*)

❖ 71cm. Upperparts dark brown. Head and throat grey, Breast brown. Lower belly, undertail coverts and basal two-thirds of tail white. Juvenile: Similar to adults but upperparts paler. Whitish-brown eyebrow. Underparts pale brown streaked with white. In flight: Underparts contrast sharply with white of lower belly and tail base.



White-bellied Sea-eagle

(*Haliaeetus leucogaster*)



- ❖ 73cm. White head, underparts, neck and third of tail. Rest ashy grey. Juvenile: Brownish. In flight: Wings broad at base, held strongly forward and raised in a shallow "V", Short wedge-shaped tail. Wing lining white. Primaries and secondaries black.

Changeable Hawk-eagle

(*Spizaetus cirrhatus*)

- ❖ 69cm. Dark-tipped feathers form distinct vertical crest. Plumage colour varies considerably. Upper parts vary from pale to dark brown to almost white. Underparts from dark brown streaks to almost buffy brown to white. In flight Undersides whitish with black bands. Tail banded.



Crested Serpent Eagle (*Spilornis cheela*)



❖ 51-71cm. Dark brown plumage, spotted with yellow above and white below. Small crest often lying flat on the head giving a characteristic shape to the crown. Yellow feet, base of bill and eyes. Tail with broad white band. In flight: Broad white band along the length of the wing separates black tips of flight feathers from rest of the wing.



Common Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*)



❖ 34cm. Male: Head and nape grey. Upper back reddish brown with black spots. Breast narrowly streaked and belly spotted with black. Female: Upperparts reddish brown. Immature: Like female but heavily marked.

Black-winged Kite (*Elanus caeruleus*)



❖ 33cm. Pale grey upper parts. Black shoulder patch. Black eye stripe. Immature: Brownish tinge. May possess brown streaks on breast. In flight: White underparts. Black primaries. Long pointed wings.

Intermediate Egret (*Mesophoyx intermedia*)



❖ 71cm. NBr. Dark green to black legs. Pale yellow lores. Br: Black legs, yellow bill, green lores; plumes on upper breast and lower back.

Great Egret (*Casmerodius albus*)



❖ 94cm. Gape extends beyond eye. NBr: Dark brown to black legs; yellow bill and pale greenish-yellow lores. Br: Black bill and green lores; plumes on lower back only. Upper tibia reddish.

Mugger Crocodile (*Crocodylus paluster*)



- ❖ 5m. Freshwater crocodile inhabits tanks and rivers. Snout relatively broad and heavy, forehead concave, ridges in front of eyes absent. Juveniles light tan or brown with dark cross-bands on body and tail, while adults grey to brown, usually without dark bands.

Black Turtle (*Melanochelys trijuga*)



- ❖ 38cm. Dorsal shell black. Ventral yellowish body parts. Head, legs neck visible from the outside is also blackish. One subspecies has some bright coloured spots of yellow- red on the face.

Common Garden Lizard

(*Calotes versicolor*)



❖ SVL 10-12cm; TL 22-27cm. Apices of lateral body scales point upwards. Colour mostly brownish (extremely diverse). Most females with 2 2 longitudinal, light coloured lines from eye to tail, black shoulder patch. Breeding males with red gular sac. Juveniles light brown with dark transverse lines on body and tail.

Green Garden Lizard

(*Calotes calotes*)



❖ SVL 12-13cm, TL 40-41cm. Apices of lateral body scales point upwards. Dorsally bright green with 4-6 transverse bluish white or dark green bands. Yellowish to black shoulder patch. Juveniles mostly bright or light green. dark bluish-green head. Breeding males with red or dark red head and gular sac, black shoulder patch. juveniles mostly bright or light green.

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