

Diyasaru Uyana, Talawathugoda.

#2 .2020. SLNHS Field Visit Report. Sun. 6th Sept. 2020



Resource Person. Ravishka Jayasuriya. **Participating Members.** Chris Corea, Enoka Corea, Shalini Corea, Dr Malik Fernando, Padmini Seneviratne, Nelun Gunasekara, Peter Rezel, Rohan and Kamini de Soysa, Janak and Chandanie Wanigathunga, Lal Motha, Jeevani Siriwardena, Harshini de Silva, Nandalal Ranasinghe, S. Somasundaram, Nisanka Gunasekara, Prof Ranjith Silva, Esha Erandi, **Guests of Members.** Bharatha and Damayanthi Attanayake, Kumi Hemachandra, Prabha Loganathan, Masters Chalana and, Rashmitha Galappathi Total. 22 participants. Two members who registered were unable to participate. **Organized by** - Ninel Fernando.

Diyasaru Wetland Park welcomed us with clear skies for the morning's excursion in spite of overnight showers. The participants arrived on time and we proceeded to the visitor's center. On the way we were excited to see the large foot prints and the tail drag- mark of what was thought was a Eurasian Otter but later found it was of a Water Monitor.

Ravishka Jayasuriya, our young naturalist introduced us to the numerous forms of small plants that many of us may not have noticed on our own.



1. Water Monitor, (*Varanus salvator*)
footprints and tail marks.

Inset, Comparison, Human foot print

2. Small water plant (*Urticularia Aurelia*)
Inset- globular insect traps- enlarged

3. Pitcher plant, (*Nepenthes distillatoria*)
- Endemic

He explained how these plants have adapted ingeniously to specialized niches in varying climate of other eco-zones as well. Here, Ravishka focused mainly on carnivorous plants adapted to environments with low nutrient levels. The plants overcame these deficiencies by resorting to ingenious strategies such as trapping insects using sensitive hairs on their fleshy leaves to trigger a closing mechanism to trap insects walking on them. The dead insects would be digested by secretion of enzymes by the plant body and the soluble nutrients would in turn be absorbed.

We were able to see samples brought to observe these specialized adaptations. An exotic sample of a Venus fly trap (*Dionaea muscipula*) showing a trigger mechanism and an endemic sample of a Pitcher plant, (*Nepenthes distillatoria*) with adaptation of some of its leaves to form a pitcher were seen. Insects entering the pitcher would sometimes drown in the water collected within it and would be digested providing nourishment to the plant.



4. Purple Swamphen. (*Porphyrio porphyrio*)



5. Lesser Whistling- duck. (*Dendrocygna javanica*)



6. White- Throated Kingfisher -Juv (*Halcyon smyrnensis*)



7. Plain (*Prinia inornata*) One of our smallest birds

We then took a guided walk in the well-laid out grounds resembling a natural environment and also did some bird watching. The migrants had not arrived as yet as it was early September but many common residents; both water birds and others were seen in plenty.



8. Blue Tiger (*Tirumala limniace*)



9. A tiny, jewel-like butterfly, Species, *Hesperiidae*.

The “ant hotel” and the “bat house” among other interesting exhibits made us think of the many creatures that are losing their habitats due to urbanization and how we may mitigate their impact by providing for them in some small way wherever we can.



10. Sombre lieutenant , (*Brachydiplax sobrina*)



11. Variegated Flutterer-female(*Rhyothermis vereigata*)



12. Indian Green Frog. (*Euphlyctis hexadactylus*) .



13. Sri Lanka Black Terrapin-Juv.(*Melanochelys trijuga*)



14. Bakmee tree with fruits. (*Nauclea orientalis*).



15. Indian almond or- Kottang. (*Terminalia cattapa*)

It was an experience out of the ordinary for all and we were thankful to Ravishka for sharing his knowledge with us. We were glad to spend a beautiful morning in a natural environment not far from home.

It also brought home to us that nature is amazing at all levels and that there is a lot to learn from observing little plants, insects and animals and not only the iconic species. They maybe small in size but their complex structures and life cycles are beyond imagination. A sudden shower cut short our ramblings at 9 AM. We gathered in a dry area, chatted over our Mung Kiribath breakfast and departed a contented and enlightened lot.



16. A closer look at the habitat showing plants of the area as well as those introduced. Sadly, some destruction can also be seen. Lotus. *Ath Olu (Nymphaea pubescence var.ruba)*



16. A long view of the watch tower. From here, you can have a panoramic view of the wetland and beyond. Unfortunately, the wooden staircase has been derelict for a long time.. The lookout is therefore not accessible.

Note: Diyasaru Park is a site that is easily accessible to us, city dwellers who would like to enjoy some time in natural surroundings. During the bird migrant season - Oct to March, many exotic birds can be observed and photographed. It is also an ideal place to take children for an outing to develop a bond with nature. Tickets cost only Rs 100.00 for adults. There is ample parking and is easily accessible by car or bus.

Many thanks to Ravishka, our invaluable guide and Mr. Lester Perera for checking /correcting the ID's.

Ninel Fernando
SLNHS

Photos - NF