



## Horagolla National Park, Attanagalla.

**Participants.** Dr Malik Fernando, Chris and Enoke Corea, Lal Motha, Asoka Siriwardena, Ninel Fernando, Prasantha Jayasekara, Peter Rezel, Shevanthi Jayasuriya, Damayanthi Attanayake, Nelun Gunasekara, Aruni Gunawardena, Ayesha and Rashid Abdur- Rahman. **Guests of Members.** Gwen Edama, Bharatha Attanayake. **Coordinated by -** Lal Motha, Chris & Enoke Corea

**Introduction: Horagolla National Park** was formally a part of the Bandaranaike family estate in Attanagalla. It was gifted to the State by the then Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike whose government brought in the Land Reform Act of 1971. The forest and the Walawwa took their names from the predominantly *Hora*- Dipterocarpus forest of 31 hectares abutting the estate which was once the hunting reserve of the family in the Colonial period. In Oct 1972, Horagolla forest was gazetted as a Sanctuary and in 2004 it was declared a fully-fledged National Park under the purview of the Department of Wildlife Conservation.

Fifty years of conservation has resulted in the forest maturing without adverse human interaction. The benefits of the forest are many; it provides a haven for fauna, flora and is indirectly an asset to the people of the area as a regional climate regulator, a rainwater generation/retention mechanism in this fast urbanizing satellite town of Attanagalle.



1. *Hora*. (*Dipterocarpus zelanicus*) Leaf, flowers, winged fruit, and stipules. [NF].



2. The narrow pathway leading to the Park entrance [NF].



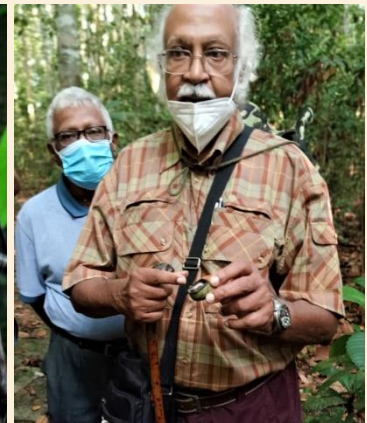
3. Tree Hugger Shevanthi. [NF]



4. Hasitha with a flower from a *Puswela* [AS]



5. Endemic Land Snail, (*Acavus phoenix*) [NF]



6. Dr. Malik talking about *Acavus*. [AS]

We entered the park at 9.30 am through the narrow pathway to the park office where I had arranged for Hasitha, our guide to meet us. On entering the forest, we were amazed by its shady coolness. Hardly any light percolated to the ground through the tall canopy. The understory was bereft of ground cover as little light reached the ground for plant growth.

Hasitha showed us many types of trees including the *Boo Del* (*Artocarpus hirsute*) an exotic and now naturalized variety of wild Jak, Its small orange-sized compound fruits are an abundant source of food for birds and beasts.

Dr. Malik informed us of some interesting facts about the endemic land snail, *Acavus phoenix*, *Sin-puwak gas bella*, or *beheth bella*. He also told us that local Ayurveda physicians use its mucus for external applications. Observation: the population density of *Acavus phoenix* seemed to be greatly reduced in comparison to a visit I made 15 years ago. This fact was corroborated by the DWC staff. Once we had navigated all the forest paths within one and a half hours, we arrived at a clearing to see the insectivorous plants *Drosera burmannii*, *Sin-Watessa*. It thrives in well-lit, open areas having Nitrogen-deficient soils. The flower-like plant, 4-7 mm across, exudes a sticky liquid on the hairs growing on its up-turned petal-like whorls. Insects coming in contact with the liquid are trapped and slowly digested by the secretion of enzymes to provide nutrients for the plants. The adaptation of plant species to infertile soil conditions shows the evolutionary process to adapt to available eco niches in their fight for survival. I have observed this variety of *Drosera* on the banks of Chundikuam tank in coastal Jaffna, Pitawela Pathana close to the Knuckles cloud forests. The plant's amazing adaptability to a wide range of weather conditions and temperature variations attest to its evolutionary success.



7. Boo Del, a Sp of Jak, food for bird and . beast. approx 6. cm in diameter [LM].



8. *Drosera burmannii*, an insectivorous plant. Immature plant with sticky exudation [NF].



9. Mature, flowering plant with a white flower on a long stem. [NF]

From here, we followed the path on the outskirts of the forest and were able to see many types of small and medium trees like *Diya para*, *Goda-para*, *Kannda*, *Divi Kaduru*, and *Goda Kaduru* which are often seen in lands subjected to human interference. The last two produce poisonous latex possibly to deter grazing by herbivores.



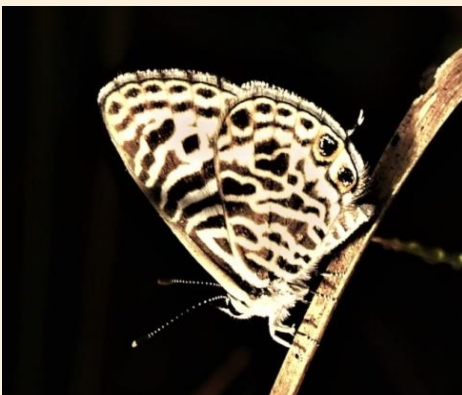
10 Para. (*Dillinia suffruticosa*). [NF].



11. Goda-para - (*Dillinia retusa*) [NF].



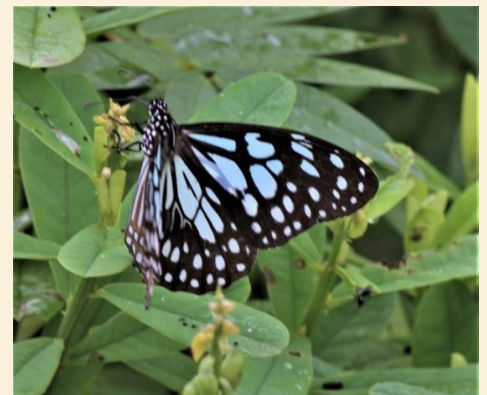
12. Divi kaduru fruits - (*Pagiantha dichotoma*) [NF]



13. Zebra Blue - (*Leptotes pilnius*). [NF]



16. Great Eggfly, Male - (*Hypolimnas bolina*). [NF].



17. Blue Tiger. - (*Tirumala limniace*) [NF]

Only a few butterflies were seen on the forest periphery and in open areas. Blue Tigers and Glassy Tigers were commonly seen.

Sadly, not many birds were seen. Only a Greater Coucal, Red Vented Bulbuls, and an Oriental Honey Buzzard flying over the open area. Birds calls seemed to be tantalizingly close in the stillness of the forest through vocalized high up in the canopy, often 50 Mts above ground. The Hora trees were in bloom as the vast number of fallen flowers on the forest floor indicated. The blooms were probably attracting many a bird and arboreal animal to the treetops to the detriment of us amateur naturalists below.



18. Ahh! Out of the woods and a welcome swig! [AS].

19. Part of the contingent with Hasitha, our guide [CC]

On leaving the Park, some of us continued to the base of Mahaimbulkanda, another Sanctuary close by in Ranpokunugama. Not many people are aware of the existence of this sanctuary, not even those living in the locality. We were fortunate to be led to the entrance by a good samaritan on his motorbike. By the time we finishing observing Mahaimbulkanda from the base of the hill, we were pleasantly surprised to find he was back with cool drinks for us!



20. Injured Spot-bellied Eagle-Owl. Juv, locally called Ulama, in the Horagolla Infirmary. [NF]

21. Mr. Fernando, the Good Samaritan in Mahaimbulkanda [NF]

22. The group who visited Mahaimbulkanda.

The others proceeded to Hickgalla Bungalow, the country estate of Chris and Enoka Corea, our kind hosts. All of us finally gathered at Hickgalla estate for a drink followed by a delectable country lunch and fellowship. It was all the more appreciated being our first outing after a long period of enforced isolation since covid stopped us in our tracks.



23. Hickgalla Bungalow, the country House of Chris & Enoka [AAR]



24 & 25 enjoying the comforts of a Colonial-type Country Bungalow. [CC]

Our heartfelt thanks go to Chris & Enoka for their hospitality and all the effort put in to entertain us at Hickgalla. A big thank you to their staff as well. To Lal for coordinating the tour, Dr. Malik for his scientific insights, Sampath Goonatilake of IUCN for checking scientific names, to Hasitha Radaliyagoda of DWC, for ably guiding us through Horagolla Park. To Lal, Enoka, and Prasantha of NHS for proofreading, and to our participants for their cooperation and for contributing their photographs for the Trip Report.

## Ninel Fernando.

### Photo credits:

AAR- Ayesha Abdur-Rhaman. AS- Asoka Siriwardena. CC- Chris Corea. LM – Lal Motha. NF - Ninel Fernando

Attached: Appendix A. List of Bird Sightings and Calls,

B. Plant List – Some Notable Plants seen



26. Group Photo Taken at Hickgalla Bungalow [CC]

**Appendix A.**

**List of Bird Sightings and Calls. Horagolla National Park. 21. 03. 2021**

**Birds Seen.** 1. Greater Coucal. 2. Red Vented Bul Bul 3. White-Throated Kingfisher 4. Oriental Honey Buzzard.  
5. Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill

**Bird Calls Heard.**

1. Black Hooded Oriole. [many] 2. Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill [2 calls] 3. Brown Capped Babbler [much in evidence]  
4. Tickle's Blue Flycatcher [3 episodes] 5. Brown-headed Barbet [many] 6. Coppersmith Barbet.  
7. Serpent Eagle. [Heard calling in flight, soaring way above the forest]. A few other bird calls that could not be identified

**Note:** A visit was made on 9<sup>th</sup> Mar. 3 persons, Much earlier in the morning-7 am. Birds seen other than those recorded on 21<sup>st</sup>. were;

**Birds Seen** - 1. Lesser Hill Myna. 2. White-breasted Waterhen. 3. Indian Pond Heron. 4. Tickell's Blue Flycatcher. 5. Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill

**Bird Calls Heard.** 1. Indian Paradise flycatcher 2. Layard's Parakeets or Alexandrine Parakeets

Appendix B

Some Notable Trees and Creepers Seen at Horagolla and their Usage where Applicable

<u>NO</u>	<u>COMMON NAME</u>	<u>BOTANICAL NAME</u>	<u>SPECIAL CHARACTERS.</u>	<u>USES</u>
<u>1.</u>	Hora	<i>Dipterocarpus zelanicus</i>	Endemic. Canopy tree. tallest [50 Mts} in SL.	Good timber
<u>2.</u>	<u>Davata</u>	<i>Carallia brachiata</i>	Endemic. Freshwater mangrove, buttress roots.	Corkwood tree
<u>3</u>	Ankenda	<i>Acronychal pendunculata</i>		
<u>4</u>	Boo Del	<i>Artocarpus hersute</i>	Introduced, now naturalized. Small compound fruit providing food for animals and birds.	
<u>5</u>	Atamba	<i>Mangifera zelanica</i>	Endemic. Large tree, fruits, eaten.	Light Wood for low-cost coffins, packaging, etc
<u>6</u>	Kumbuk	<i>Terminalia arjuna</i>	Large tree, growing by streams, tanks.	Close grained, fine wood
<u>7</u>	Inipetta, watti waati	<i>Cythocalyx zelanica</i>	Pioneer in wet zone forests. Thin Strips of wood bend easily.	Used to strengthen rims of bamboo baskets
<u>8</u>	Havari Nuga, Ginikooru gas	<i>Alstonia macrophylla</i>	Introduced. Pioneer in clearings.	Lite wood. Tea Boxes, packaging
<u>9</u>	Ruk Attana	<i>Alstonia scholaris</i>	“Devils tree” Mass bloomings, strong fragrance, attracts bees. Pollen may cause allergies resulting in its common English name	
<u>10</u>	Rata Diyapara	<i>Dilinia suffuticosa</i>	Introduced. From Mayala, Borneo as ornamental tree. Now invasive.	
<u>11</u>	Goda para	<i>Dilinia retusa</i>	Endemic. Medicinal. Fruits traditionally used as a shampoo	
<u>12</u>	Goda kaduru	<i>Cerbera odollam</i>	Latex, Poisonous. The wood is used for mask making.	
<u>13</u>	Divi Kaduru	<i>Pagiantha dichotoma</i>	“Forbidden Fruit”. Latex, poisonous. Ayurveda medicinal purposes	
<u>14</u>	Korasa wel	<i>Tetracera samentosa</i>	Tall liana, Dilleniacea. Traditionally used to tying fence posts etc.	
<u>15</u>	Pus wel	<i>Entada scandence</i>	Large, woody climber. Old creepers may spread horizontally sometimes over a Km.	Seeds, medicinal uses.
<u>16</u>	Pota wel	<i>Pathos scandens</i>	Climber. Roots attach themselves to the rock or tree.	Medicinal uses
<u>17</u>	Watassa	<i>Drosera burmannii</i>	Small, insectivorous plant	

Note:

Prepared by - N F. [Based on some local names given by Hasitha. Scientific names and usage added wherever possible]