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SRI LANKA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY *e-Newsletter - No 2 of 2019*

Editorial

Election Fever is back ! This time not pertaining to the President of SLNHS but the President of Sri Lanka.

We certainly hope that the incoming President will be conscious of the environment. He needs to see that our precious environment is not sacrificed in the name of "Development".

The lyrics of John Mitchell's "Big Yellow Taxi" come to mind (a catchy tune you have heard)!

"Don't it always seem to go
That you don't know what you've
got 'til it's gone?
They paved paradise
Put up a parking lot"

Members are encouraged to send in their snippets for publication in this newsletter to info@riscor.net

You could send in (say) an image of significance and/ or a write up of an interesting place you visited. These inputs may give rise to destination ideas for future excursions.

Chris Corea

Editor

ANOTHER MOVE

After the "Easter Sunday Tragedy" it became difficult to continue with our lecture series at the university as access to the premises was controlled. It was therefore necessary to change venue once again and lectures are now held at the auditorium of the Organization of Professional Associations (OPA).

The lecture series now continues with the small change that we now meet every 4th Monday.

UPCOMING LECTURE

OF DUNG BEETLES AND LEOPARDS
by Dr. Enoka Kudavidanage

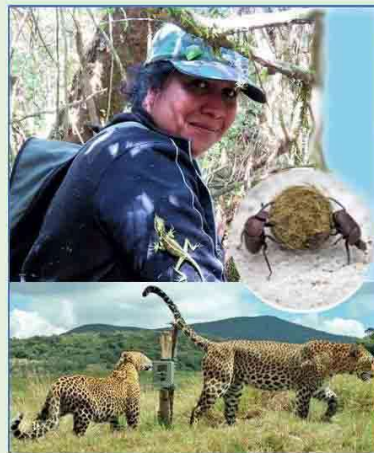


**SRI LANKA
NATURAL HISTORY
SOCIETY**

SLNHS Public Lecture 2019 #7

**"Of dung beetles and leopards: sharing
experiences on research applications for conservation"**

Dr Enoka P. Kudavidanage
Senior Lecturer, University of Sabaragamuwa



**Monday
25th November
6.30 pm**

Auditorium of the
Organisation of
Professional
Associations (OPA),

275/75, Prof. Stanley
Wijesundara Mawatha,
Colombo, 7

**All are welcome -
entrance free**

Name & car registration number to lal_motha@yahoo.ca
if you wish to park inside premises

RECENT LECTURES *Synopses by Asoka Siriwardena*

Social Behaviour of Elephants by Sumith Pilapitiya - Monday 23rd September 2019 6.30p.m.

The September Monthly Lecture was delivered by Dr Sumith Pilapitiya to a packed audience on “Understanding Elephant Behaviour”. He commenced his talk with a few general points explaining as to why understanding elephant behavior is so important. Briefly,

- It helps in conservation efforts
- Useful in formulating government policies
- Managing human /elephant conflict

The key difference between African and Asian elephant societies is that the African elephants have a firm leader, while the Asian elephants have opportunistic leadership.

The talk highlighted that elephants live in social groups and the notable features of elephant society are that it is – a matriarchal society, much social interaction, and offspring care (very protective towards calves who learn by observation). The speaker also explained why elephants like to live in groups.

Speaking on group size he said that resource availability determines the group size. Commenting on our national parks he said that our national parks are not in great shape for elephants but Minneriya and Kaudulla parks support larger herds due to resource availability. The elephant gatherings take place when there is new grass.

Describing male elephant behaviour and mating habits he said that males normally lead solitary lives but come into herds for re-production or mating purposes. Males when adolescent move out of the herd resulting in less chance of inbreeding. They join other groups and thereafter form bull groups. The speaker explained their reproductive cycle and sexual status and behavior.

Elephant communication was then explained. Communication tools are visual, tactile, olfactory and auditory. They do recognize voices and individual sounds.

Finally, the speaker touched on the human elephant conflict and said that if we can understand elephant behavior and teach the local communities on how to react to elephants much can be done to minimize the conflict.

The talk was followed by a question and answer session, at the end which the Society thanked Dr. Pilapitiya for the very informative talk, and with a comment that members will be now better informed on observing elephants and what to look for when they visit national parks in the future.

Marine turtles by Thushan Kapurusinghe - Monday 26th August 2019 5.30p.m.

The August Monthly Lecture titled “Marine Turtle Conservation was delivered by Thushan Kapurusinghe, an environmental conservationist who had pioneered the Rekawa Turtle Conservation Project.

A good part of the presentation showcased what has been done in Rekawa, supported by the filming of the BBC documentary on Turtle Conservation in Rekawa. Dealing with conservation and environmental issues he spoke on a whole range of subjects in a holistic manner, touching on community based eco-system support, alternative livelihood to those engaged in illegal

trade, tagging, coastal restoration, mangrove restoration, community livelihood development, nature tourism, training for nest protectors, nature tourism and promotion and sharing of local knowledge. He explained how in the 1990's people were engaged in illegal turtle trade but now they are looking after turtles thanks to the project's efforts.

The Rekawa Project established in 1993, had succeeded in securing Rekawa and Ussangoda declared as sanctuaries in 2006 and today Ussangoda and Dodawangala are declared national parks. The project has now been handed over to the local community and is self-sustained.

Marine Stingers .by Dr. Malik Fernando - Monday 29th July 2019 5.30p.m

The Monthly July Lecture was held at the OPA delivered by Dr. Malik Fernando on Marine Stingers and Jellyfish. It was explained that the lecture was of particular interest to medical doctors and divers.

At the outset it was explained as to what Marine Stingers are and the people at risk. Then he went on to explain the first aid and management of victims affected by stinger or jellyfish stings. Mostly that no specific treatment is necessary and no antivenins are available in Sri Lanka.

The speaker then described the type of Jellyfish found with pictorial illustrations. A lot of the animals and stinging corals disappeared with El Nino -global warming. The speaker then described the sting effects of different types of Jellyfish and their management. Finally the talk covered sea urchins, star fish, vertebrates, stone fish, electric rays, marine eels, and different species of sea snakes all of which are very venomous.

Jellyfish of Sri Lanka by Dr. Dileepa de Croos and Mr. Krishan Karunaratne Monday 25th March 2019 5.30p.m.

The monthly public lecture was delivered by Mr. Krishan Karunaratne of the University of the Wayamba University on the subject of Jellyfish of Sri Lanka. He commenced by stating that this was the first scientific study done on Jellyfish in Sri Lanka and the period of study was during Jan 2017-2018, from samples collected from the continental shelf of the Island.

The objectives of the study was to assess the diversity, density, distribution, and seasonal patterns, and for a comparison of worldwide distribution as a literature study helpful for policy makers.

He described what jellyfish are with visuals, and that the term jellyfish broadly corresponds to Medusae ie., the life cycle stage in the Medusozoa. That there 150 species of jellyfish reported in the coastal waters of Sri Lanka, while worldwide there are in all some 2500 species, classified into 8 classes.

He described the anatomy, the life cycle, the sexual reproduction, and the taxonomy of the jellyfish. He added that the largest specimen ever found in Sri Lanka was 7cm ??? stranded in the Mullaithivu coast. Mention was made of freshwater jellyfish recorded in Polonnaruwa.

The speaker explained how jellyfish is important to man. In some countries it is a source of food. He then went on to describe the adverse effects of jellyfish, mainly of jellyfish stings which can vary from mild to severe, the safety precautions that can be taken, and the treatments. The talk concluded with a question and answer session and a brief discussion.

RECENT EXCURSIONS

The Manigala excursion turned out to be excellent despite fears with regard to the rainy weather. The accommodation was located at a very scenic spot with a panoramic view of the surroundings from the dining room and the rooftop terrace.

Most of the participants climbed to the top of Manigala rock. A glorious plateau from where we enjoyed a stupendous view of the mountains.

A walk on Pitawela Pathana was most enjoyable and we were treated to a phenomenal sunset with the sky changing colour from moment to moment. Mini worlds end at Riverston Peak offered spectacular views of the Knuckles area.

Those of you who have a copy of our “Historical Compendium” may recognise the cover image from the following photograph taken from the top of Manigala.



Unfortunately, the proposed Runakanda trip was postponed twice due to rain and flooding in the area. This has now been deferred until a suitable date early next year.

