UDAWALawe NATIONAL PARK

Wildlife, and a Jumbo named Rambo

Molaka Rodrigo

Udawalawe is the best place to have a close encounter with elephants. Jumbos in the National Park are adapted to move very slowly and usually show signs of digestion while drinking. The head of the elephant is stuck that we can often see it yawning with the mouth open. He had only a single look at us before continuing to move in search of its mate. However, if you approach them on their path or house them, of course you are asking for trouble. You have to respect them and they will not do any harm. Udawalawe is one of the remaining elephant territories in Sri Lanka.

We also saw a group of three elephants with radio collars. These young elephants were recently released by the Elephant Transit Home in Udawalawe. The reason behind the release of the elephants is to ensure they can manage for themselves. They are then released to the wild and closely monitored their movement during the first few months. Large radio collars with transmitters have been placed around the necks of the elephants to research their movements. We expect the released elephants to mingle with the Udawalawe herd. We have released about seven groups now. These three elephants are yet to mix up with another herd, but we hope it will happen soon as experienced the veterinary surgeon of the Transit Home, Dr. Mahesh Jayasinghe.

It is estimated that the population of wild elephants in the park traces back to at least 700 individuals. This may not be an accurate number because the herd is often lost or mistaken. We can get a rough estimate of the elephant population here. This is an estimation of the elephant population in 2018. This increases the number of elephants in the park. These 700 elephants have become a destination for Elephants, the diversity of other wildlife is also very high. This includes 21 species of deer, 13 species of antelopes, 19 species of snakes and 78 species of mammals. It is estimated that nearly 700 bird species can be seen in the park.

The Birds in Udawalawe

The migratory Rusty Starlings have visited Udawalawe in large numbers this year as well. The Rusty Starlings are commonly seen in open areas of Udawalawe by many photographers. But Rusty Starlings are one of the birds that have enormously increased. The Rusty Starling is a member of the family of the Corvidae Myna. We have seen large numbers of small flocks flying or roosting on trees. Starlings are communal roosters that use the same place for spending the night.

Leopards in Udawalawe

Vadfrid Yala, Udawalawe doesn’t have a dense Leopard population, hence it is not a good place for observing the big cat. However, if you are lucky, you can spot one. The first time was in 2001 in the morning. We were in search of some wildlife. We’ve seen Elephants, spotted deer, but no signs of leopards. Suddenly, we spot the spots. The leopard has crossed the road, and without pausing, got into the bushes. Later, we saw a leopard on the same stretch of road and very close to our vehicle. It went around, turned back, and then had a current of cats. We could see the sandals of the leopards. Later, we were in a very dense forest and saw two leopards. It was not easy to spot a leopard. You also need to have luck and patience, our guide who was another veteran of Udawalawe.

Popular Park in the country

The Udawalawe National Park is second in terms of popularity to the Yala National Park. The National Park was established in 1972 by the then director of wildlife, Len de Silva. Other than providing a haven for wildlife, the National Park also serves multiple purposes for developing the surrounding areas. The National Park is surrounded by an extensive cultivation area for the Udawalawe reservoir, which provides water to cultivate nearly 25,000 ha. The vegetation of the Udawalawe National Park is threatened by the invasive Lantana camara (pandana) shrubs. Birds like blackbirds are spreading the pandana seeds everywhere there spreading the weed faster. Even elephants don’t feed on this shrub, so it thrives in the Udawalawe ecosystem. Unfortunately this is becoming a problem in the growing elephant population inside the park.

A feeding herd inside the park

Feeding the Jumbos

Feeding the Jumbos is not allowed, but there is a great opportunity to observe this. The Jumbos are near the fence and people started throwing food at them. We started repeating these scenes which added a variety to the day, especially to the children. As we were in the Udawalawe National Park, we can be observed throughout the day.

feeding the Jumbos

Feeding the Jumbos in Udawalawe is not allowed. The Udawalawe National Park is an elephant缓冲区 around it. This stretch that is off the Tharamathi Ella Finger which has been used by many for getting their meat locally. Rambo used to main near the fence and people started throwing food at him. We started repeating these scenes which added a variety to the day, especially to the children. As we were in the Udawalawe National Park, we can be observed throughout the day.

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