Despite the warning by Global Amphibian Assessment 2004 that most amphibian species in the world are under threat from both humans and nature itself, the authorities concerned have done very little to protect them. The Global Amphibian Assessment 2004 evaluated at five thousand seven hundred and forty-three species of amphibians. Of these, 4,136 (75% per cent) are found in Sri Lanka.

One of Sri Lanka’s leading ornithologists, Rohan Perera, says that while this is not a record among biodiversity-rich countries, the Global Amphibian Assessment analyst gives Sri Lanka very poor marks.

Virtually all of the 34 species of amphibians confirmed native worldwide during the past 200 years are from Sri Lanka. These comprise 17 species of Plethodonts, and one species each of the endemic genera Adansoniidae and Rhacophoridae. Evidence of three apparently extinct species of amphibians known through the 19th century are known recently, according to Wildlife Heritage Trust of Sri Lanka (WHT) Amphibian Task Group leader and one of the foremost authorities on amphibians - especially frogs and toads of Sri Lanka - Kulasan Manamendra Abahachi. In fact, Kulasan is continuing his research on the above amphibian species.

A broad-based multi-stakeholders assessment of amphibian fauna, together with the results of the WHT Amphibian Survey of 1997, indicate that amphibian species are threatened with extinction. In addition to the 36 native species, 5 species were evaluated as Critically Endangered, 26 as Endangered, and five species as Vulnerable. Sri Lanka’s amphibians are in trouble and very little is being done about it.

The conservation of sensitive fauna that is not a victim of targeted exploitation, such as Sri Lanka’s amphibians, is a major challenge. Among the threats to these species, habitat loss is one. The vast majority of Sri Lanka’s amphibians are restricted to the northwestern wet zone of the island and fewer than 1% of the original forest cover has now vanished, according to Rohan Perera. Just one square mile of relatively unartificial forest remains in the wet zone and even this is severely fragmented. Three fragment sites - the Puttalam Wildlife account for half of this estate. Clearly, fragmentation is a threat and needs to be addressed through the active management of habitat quality at key sites and through the establishment of habitat corridors between major fragments.

Kulasan says that the damage to the same level, reduced forest cover, water pollution, reduced fresh water numbers and foggy habitats, urbanisation, agro-chemistry and habitat loss are some of the contributory factors to extinction.

Extinction only a hop, skip and a jump away