



THE NATIONAL TRUST – SRI LANKA

Sinharaja World Heritage Site: The Lesser Known Facts

By

Prof. Sarath Kotagama

The Monthly Lecture Series No: 145 of the National Trust

Thursday 27th October 2022 at 6.00 pm, online

Link to join the Zoom meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81438032106>

Sinharaja World Heritage Site became what it is today, in 1989 after a long battle. After stopping the logging in 1977, research for the identification of faunal species in the western sector of the forest, the impact of the logging and plantation of Pinus along the forest fringe on the fauna were undertaken in 1981. These data and the available information presented at a conference resulted in the process for the application for the World Heritage Status. The remaining unlogged forest area and the logged forest were all included in this declaration. The process also required the preparation of a Management Plan. There was community resistance as well, which was overcome by dialogue and workshops for the community, undertaken on the request of the Forest Department. Further, some drastic actions were taken to ensure the 'protection' of the newly declared forest which had to be rectified through similar actions. Having attained the World Heritage status, the traditional 'protection' attitude also prevailed over 'conservation' resulting in some very interesting outcomes with regards to the nature of the forest that are not known by many. The 'uniqueness' of Sinharaja has dwindled and the 'unknown' element has taken over, resulting in asking the question "why are we protecting Sinharaja?"



Professor Sarath Kotagama graduated with Honors in Zoology in 1974 from University of Colombo and was awarded the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy by the University of Aberdeen, Scotland in 1982 for his research on the behaviour and feeding ecology. He had been a lecturer in Zoology and environment Science, both at University of Colombo and the Open University of Sri Lanka since 1974. His service to Sri Lanka as an ornithologist and Environmentalist is extraordinary. He received the President's award for Environment and was also awarded the "2003 Distinguished Service Award for Environment Education and Journalism" by the International Society for Conservation Biology. He is the leading ornithologist in Sri Lanka. He is a former Director, Department of Wildlife Conservation of Sri Lanka and Scientific Adviser to the Ministry of Wildlife Resources Conservation. He is also the Chairman of BirdLife Asia, and Council member of BirdLife International.

The National Trust – Sri Lanka conducts monthly lectures generally on the last working Thursday of each month. The lectures are open to the members and the general public. The HNB Sustainability Foundation is the principal sponsor of the events of the National Trust – Sri Lanka.

Further information can be obtained from the Trust Office Tel.0112682730/ 0719566929