



THE NATIONAL TRUST – SRI LANKA

“History and Future of Sri Lanka’s Elephants”

By

Dr. Prithviraj Fernando

The Monthly Lecture Series No: 149 of the National Trust

Thursday 30th March 2023 at 6.00 pm, online

Link to join the Zoom meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81147932173>

Sri Lanka holds a unique place with regard to Asian elephants. The Sri Lankan subspecies is one of only four and is the ‘type’ for the original scientific recognition of Asian elephants. Sri Lanka holds the second largest wild Asian elephant population and has a ‘country density’ ten times that of any other. Sri Lanka also holds the highest genetic diversity of Asian elephants, indicating that the country has always had a large elephant population. Sri Lanka is also unique in still having elephants over almost half the country and in people and elephants sharing 70% of elephant range. Scientific knowledge about Asian elephants is much less than of African elephants. Studies done in the recent past indicate that social organization of Asian elephants differs from that of African elephants. Similarly long held beliefs about the ranging patterns of elephants in Sri Lanka have proven to be inaccurate. Sri Lankan elephants are increasingly threatened by human-elephant conflict and its management, and developmental activities. The lecture will trace the history of Sri Lanka’s Elephants and discuss the future of this threatened species for its survival with an approach of human-elephant coexistence, which could benefit elephants and effectively manage human-elephant conflict.



Dr. Fernando obtained his PhD from the University of Oregon, USA. He pioneered genetic analysis of Asian elephants using their dung and radio tracking of elephants in Sri Lanka. After his PhD, he joined Columbia University New York, where he conducted research on Asian elephants and Javan rhinos. His work resulted in the recognition that Borneo elephants were indigenous and not introduced to Borneo. In 2004, he returned to Sri Lanka and set up the Centre for Conservation and Research of which he is the Chairman. The focus of CCR has been on conducting research and conversion of findings to policy and management to better mitigate the human-elephant conflict and conserve elephants. He has conducted field work on elephants and human-elephant conflict in Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Laos, Cambodia, Borneo, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar and Vietnam. Dr. Fernando is a Research Associate of the Smithsonian Institution USA and has received the Whitley Award from HRH Princess Anne and Sri Lankan Presidential Awards for Scientific excellence.

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