



Nature and Wildlife Tours



Udawalawe and Yala National Parks are two major national parks nearby, created to provide a sanctuary for wild animals.

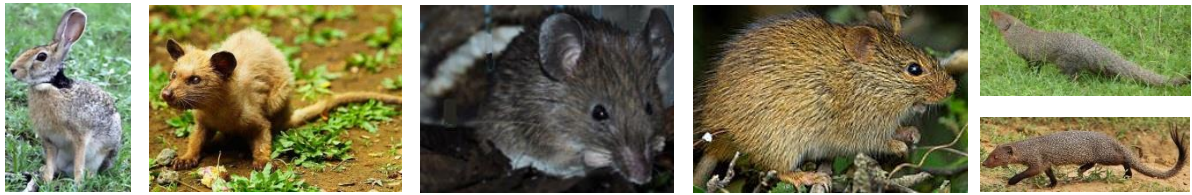
Both have leopards and elephants, Yala having the largest leopard population on the island and Udawalawe housing an abandoned baby elephant feeding programme.



Udawalawe is an important habitat for water birds and elephants with a herd of about 250 believed to be permanently resident.

Some species to be seen in Udawalawe are the rusty-spotted cat, fishing cat, Sri Lankan leopard, Sri Lankan sloth bear, rarely seen because of its rarity, Sri Lankan sambar deer, Sri Lankan axis deer, Indian muntjac, Sri Lankan spotted chevrotain, wild boar, water buffalo, golden jackal, asian palm civet, toque macaque, tufted grey langur, Indian hare, golden palm civets, five species of mice, Ceylon spiny mouse, Indian bush rat and three species of mongoose.





Udalawale is a good birdwatching site. Endemics such as Sri Lanka spurfowl, red-faced malkoha, Sri Lanka grey hornbill, brown-capped babbler, and Sri Lanka junglefowl are among of the breeding resident birds. White wagtail and black-capped kingfisher are rare migrants. A variety of water birds visit the reservoir, including cormorants, the spot-billed pelican, Asian openbill, painted stork, black-headed ibis and Eurasian spoonbill. The open parkland attracts birds of prey such as white-bellied sea eagle, crested serpent-eagle, grey-headed fish eagle, booted eagle, and changeable hawk-eagle. Landbirds are in abundance and include Indian roller, Indian peafowl, Malabar pied hornbill and pied cuckoo.



Oriental garden lizards, painted-lip lizards, mugger crocodiles, Asian water monitors, Bengal monitors and 30 species of snake are found in the park. The stone sucker fish is an endemic fish species recorded in park while the introduced Tilapia, giant gourami, catla, and rohu are important food fish species found in the reservoir.

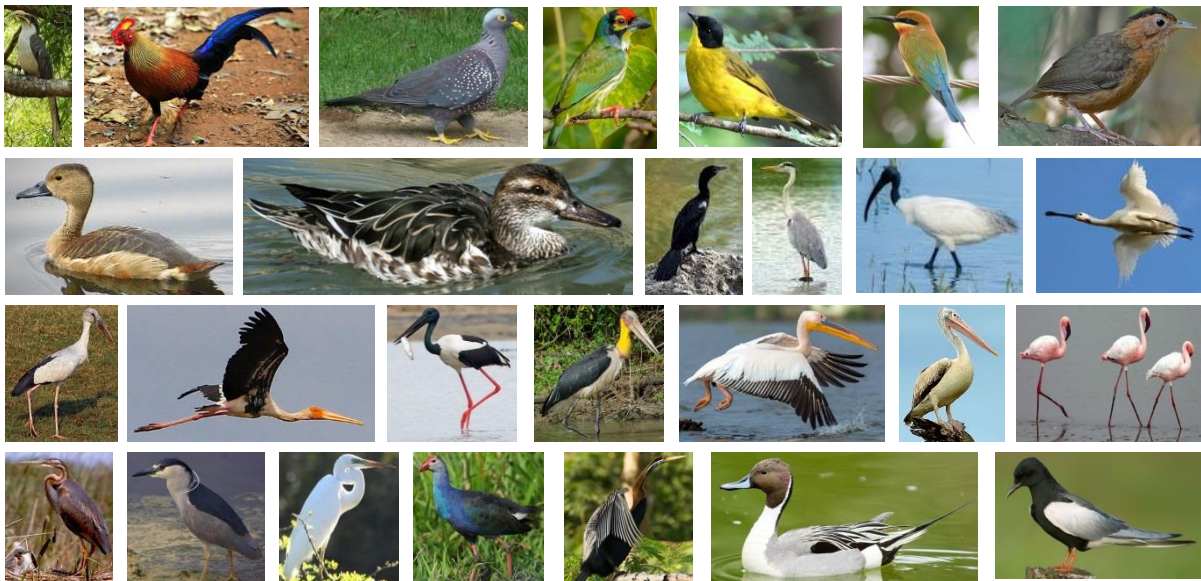


Yala National Park, made up of 5 blocks, is the most visited and second largest national park in Sri Lanka, bordering the Indian Ocean. The park is best known for its variety of wild animals. It is important for the conservation of Sri Lankan elephants, Sri Lankan leopards and aquatic birds.

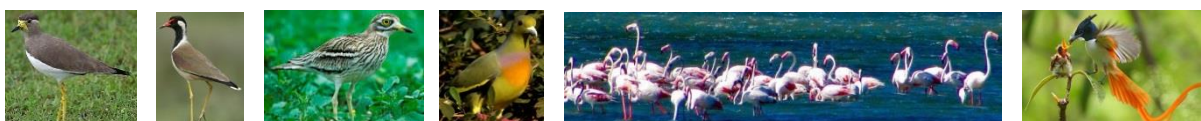
Yala is home to 215 bird species including six endemic species of Sri Lanka. The number of mammals that has been recorded from the park is 44 and it has one of the highest leopard densities in the world.



Yala is also a good bird watching site, home to the Sri Lanka grey hornbill, Sri Lanka junglefowl, Sri Lanka wood pigeon, crimson-fronted barbet, black-capped bulbul, blue-tailed bee-eater and the brown-capped babbler. The number of waterbirds inhabiting wetlands of Yala is 90 and half of them are migrants. There are waterfowl, lesser whistling duck, garganey, little cormorant, Indian cormorant, large waterbirds including the grey heron, black-headed ibis, Eurasian spoonbill, Asian openbill, painted stork, medium-sized waders and small waders. Black-necked stork and lesser adjutant are many of the rare birds that can be seen in the park. The migrant great white pelican and resident spot-billed pelican are also have been recorded. Other waterbirds attracted to the Yala lagoons include lesser flamingo, pelicans, and rare species such as purple heron, night herons, egrets, purple swamphen, and Oriental darter. Thousands of waterfowls migrate to the lagoons of Yala during the northeast monsoon. They are northern pintail, white-winged tern, Eurasian curlew, whimbrel, godwits and ruddy turnstone.



The visiting species mingled with residing species are the lesser whistling duck, yellow-wattled lapwing, red-wattled lapwing and great stone-curlew. Rock pigeon, barred buttonquail, Indian peafowl, black stork, black-winged stilt and greater flamingo are among the other bird species. Crested serpent eagle and white-bellied sea eagle are the raptors of the park. The forest birds are orange-breasted green pigeon, hornbills, Old World flycatchers, Indian paradise flycatcher, Asian barbets and orioles.



25 individual leopards are estimated to roam in Block I. The elephant herd of Yala contains 300–350 individuals. The Sri Lankan sloth bear, leopard, elephant, and wild water buffalo are all threatened mammals that Yala harbours. Although water buffaloes are indigenous to Sri Lanka, most populations contain genes of the domestic stock or have descended from feral populations. Toque macaque, golden palm civet, red slender loris, and fishing cat are among the other mammals that can be seen in Yala.



The reptile fauna recorded from the park is 47 and six of them are endemic. Sri Lankan krait, Boulenger's keelback, Sri Lankan flying snake, painted-lip lizard, Wiegmann's agama, and Bahir's fan-throated lizard are the endemic species. The coastal line of the park is visited by the all five globally endangered sea turtles (leatherback turtle, olive ridley, loggerhead sea turtle, hawksbill turtle and green turtle) that visit Sri Lanka. The two breeding crocodile species of Sri Lanka, mugger crocodile and saltwater crocodile, inhabit the park. The Indian cobra and Russell's viper are among the other reptiles.

There are 18 amphibian species that have been recorded in Yala.

In Yala water courses 21 freshwater fish are found. The fish population in the perennial reservoirs contain mostly an exotic food fish, the Mozambique tilapia. The stone sucker and flying barb are endemic among other species. The blackspot barb, olive barb, orange chromide and common spiny loach are the common fish species.

A variety of butterfly species is found here. The common bluebottle, common lime butterfly, crimson rose, common Jezebel and common Mormon are the common species

