

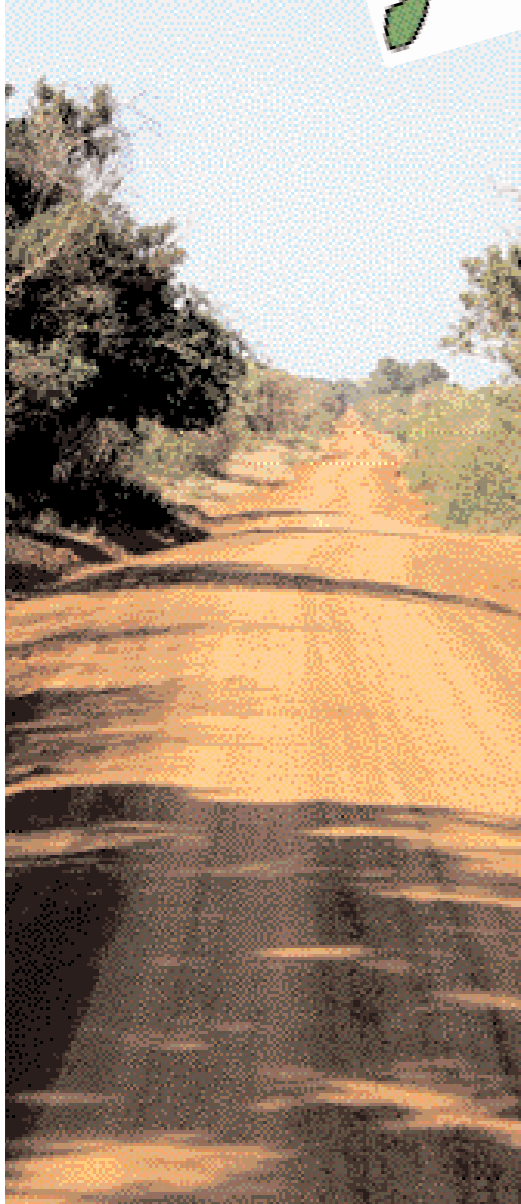
The crocodile basking in the sun



Changing beauty of Menik Ganga

# Yala - Nature lover's paradise

Pix:  
Thilak Perera



'Rani' - the sambhur at the Sithulpawuwa temple



The pride of mother nature - Peacock



Spotted Dove (*Streptopelia chinensis*)

Yala is not just a sanctuary, but truly a paradise. Located in the South Eastern side of the country Yala is highly preferred by many tourists for its convenience to visit as it lies in the close proximity of the magnetizing beaches of the Southern coastal line.

Sri Lanka is well known all over the world as one of those few places where an enthusiast can observe wild animals in their own natural habitats within few hours. Indeed this is a blessing. The Ruhunu National Park is the oldest and the second largest sanctuary of Sri Lanka being declared in the year 1909 as a sanctuary. By February 25 in 1938 this sanctuary was declared as a National Park under the Fauna and Flora Protection Ordinance, tightening its safety.

Located in the lowest plains of the island the uniqueness of the National Park is its vast diversity in the eco-systems. Yala spreads approximately over an area of 126,786 hectares.

Yala is best known for its large sized wild beasts. Elephants,



Mutual friends

Wild Buffalo and Ceylon spotted deer can easily be seen. Density of the animals are more in the Block I area which is close to the coastal line. The '*lephas maximus maximus*' seems to love the saltiness of this particular environment. The leopard *Panthera pardus kotiya* is another attraction. During the evenings one can see many rabbits (*Lepus nigricollis singhala*). You can easily come across bears (*Melursus ursinus*), sambur (*Cervus unicolor*), fox (*Canis aureus*) and monkeys (*Prebytes entellus*).

Yala is the home for a large number of birds - local as well as migratory. Among them jungle fowl (*Gallus lafayetti*) and 'Spur fowl (*Galloperdix bicalcarata*) are endemic to Sri Lanka. You may find a python (*Python molurus*) if you are lucky enough. Corcodiles, *hela kimbula* (*Crocodylus palustris*) and 'geta kimbula (*Crocodylus porosus*), sun bathing on the sand banks and rocks of the water tanks is a common sight for any visitor.

In addition different types of tortoises, lizards and amphibians found to be living in the sanctuary. Yala coastal line is the home to a variety of turtle species. - Dhaneshi



The innocent little one - the rabbit



A difficult encounter!



Pelicans ready for a swim



Indian Robin (*Saxicoloides fulicata*)



Fox- the cunning fellow



A sip to quench their thirst



The Jungle fowl makes Yala vibrant