

Human – Elephant Conflict and Conservation of Elephants in Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT

Human – elephant conflict has become a burning question and therefore, it is important to open the public eye to conservation of elephants in Sri Lanka. Most of the human – elephant conflict has occurred due to the fact that the people tend to populate into areas inhabited by elephants. This has caused tremendous death of over 200 elephants annually with a development of growing numbers day by day. At this juncture, it is essential to make awareness from grass root level the importance of conservation to protect the rest of the elephant inhabitants in the country. The Asian elephant is the largest land animal dwelling in the Asia and the elephant has given special place in Asian culture especially in Buddhist and Hindu culture. Not only that they have been used as an icon in flags, logos, coins, official seals and mascots more than any other animal and also illustrated broadly in temple paintings and architecture in Sri Lanka. The fast growing human population has resulted in making use of extensive areas of land for farming and infrastructure development. This has been unfortunately caused in a loss of habitat for elephants, disturbance of their movement patterns and their access to food and water. The effect has been a battle in land use between human and elephants. As human beings it is our responsibility to stop the battle and find out lasting solution to this burning question to protect our vanishing mammals. It is necessary to maintain a database on elephant populations in order to conserve them. It is noted that many parts of the Asian elephant range are captured by human beings for their agricultural work. This has become an important socio-economic and political issue. There should be a sound knowledge of the ecology, behavior, or genetics of elephant populations to conserve our elephants in an effective manner.

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