

Social Behaviour of Marshy Elephants in Wasgamuwa National Park

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ABSTRACT

This paper will present identifiable behaviour patterns of marshy Elephants (*elephas maximus maximus vil- aliya*) which are a subspecies of Sri Lankan (*elephas maximus maximus*) Indian (Indicus) and Sumatra elephants. As marshy elephants inhabit Wasgamuwa National Park and suburban areas in Sri Lanka, they are identified as “Wasgamuwa Elephants”. This subspecies mostly resides near water sources and grasslands in tropical, semi-evergreen forests. It seems that they mainly favour lush and scrub in the park but use different habitats like nomads around principle areas. It is estimated that 150 of the elephants in the park include 12- 15 cows and calves in a herd. Sri Lankan marshy elephants are capable of sharing territory with other creatures. Wasgamuwa elephants inherently show signs of uneasiness in awkward moments and are more aggressive than other relatives like Adams Peak mountain elephants, Yala and Udawalawe elephants. They also have a strong family bond.

Behavioral patterns demonstrated by this mammal include their thinking capability, reminiscence power, teaching and learning patterns, imitating role models and communicating by infrasonic levels. This data is collected by utilising the participatory observation method and recorded data of The Wild Life Conservation is also used as secondary data.

These positive behaviour patterns show how these elephants survive and how comfortable they are in the park surrounding them, both psychologically and physically. Further, this behavior also reveals that well-trained park conservation officers are looking after them. The Wasgamuwa elephants are energetic elephants since the park provides a very good environment for a suitable habitat.

Keywords: *mammal habitat, Marshy elephant, Asian elephant, Threaten species, wild life*