

Sri Lankan Elephants, Wild Life & Tourism

by

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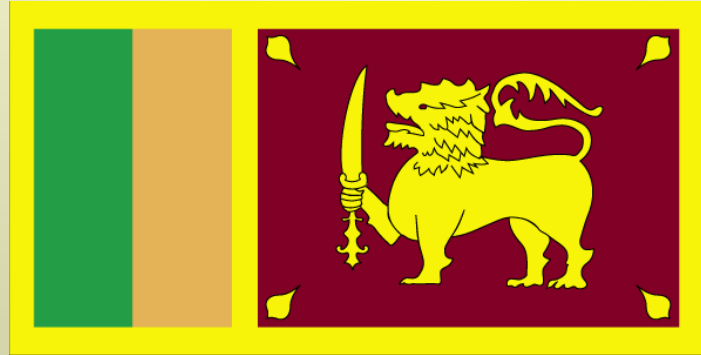
A Presentation

at the Sri Lanka High Commission in Canberra

on 17th March 2017 at 5.30 pm

No 61 Hampton Circuit, Yarralumla, ACT 2600

Sri Lanka



Name: Sri Lanka

Democratic Socialist Rep. of Sri Lanka (*long form*)

Population: 21+ Million

Capital City: Colombo

Currency: Sri Lankan Rupee (LKR)

Languages: Sinhala (official), Tamil, others

Religions: Buddhist (70%), Muslim, Hindu, Christian

Land Area: 65,610 sq km



Sri Lanka Tropical, Island Nation-

*Over 1200 km of
Coast line*

© Srilal Miththapala

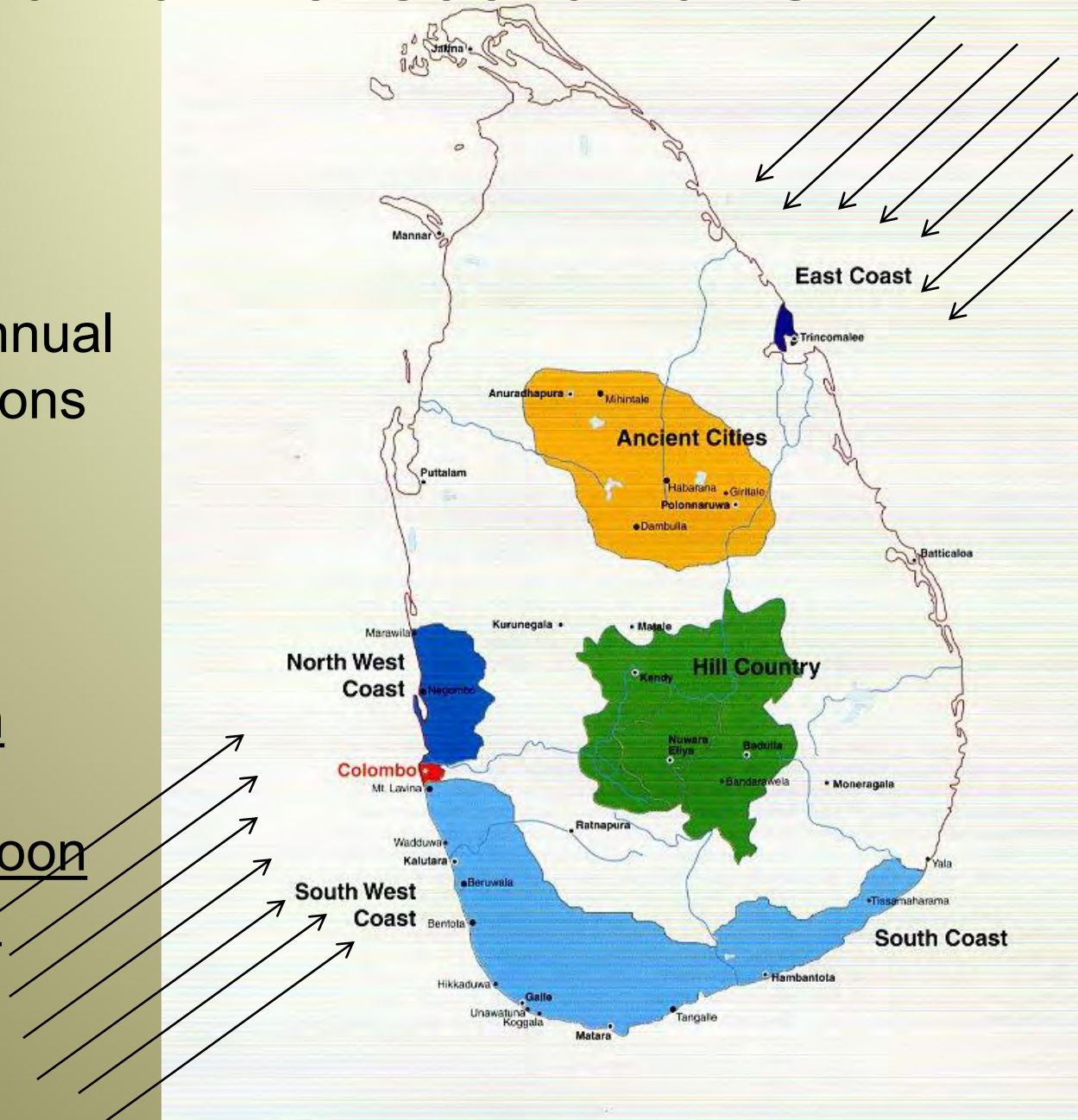


Sri Lanka- Monsoonal rains

Two annual
Monsoons

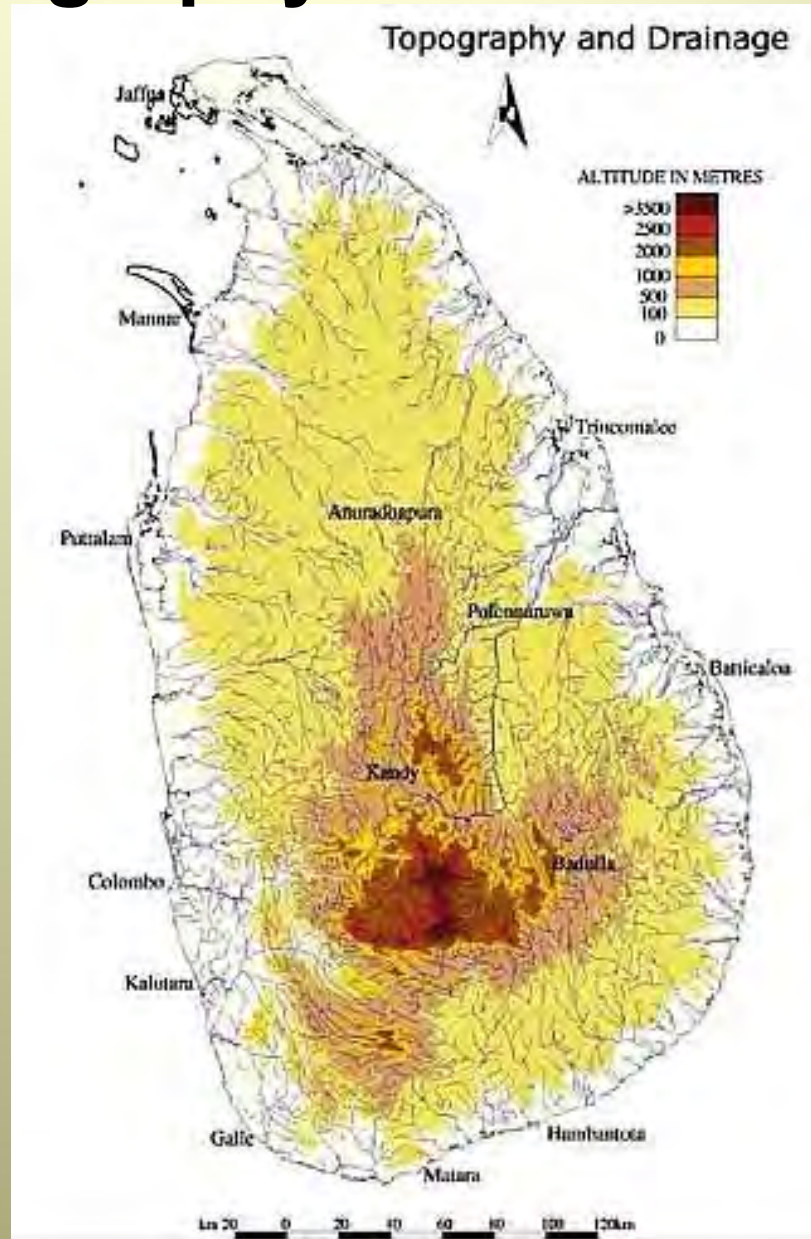
South
West
Monsoon
-May-
Sept

North-East
Monsoon
Nov-Feb



Sri Lanka- Topography

*Central hills
with peak of over
2500m, grading
down around the
island to the coast*



Sri Lanka- An 'irrigation' Nation

- 16 major rivers
- Over 30,000 man made water reservoirs (tanks)
- (majority built from 3rd century BC to 12th century) almost equivalent to one reservoir (weve') for each sq. km

"It is possible, that in no other part of the world are there to be found within the same space, the remains of so many works of irrigation Probably no other country can exhibit works so numerous, and at the same time so ancient and extensive, within the same limited area, as this Island.".... Wikipedia



Sri Lanka Tourism at a glance



A Traveler's Paradise



"This, for it's actual size, is better circumstanced than any other island in the world In this island there is a very high mountain where the tomb of Adam, our first parent, is supposed to be found"

– Marco Polo (1293 A.D)

"Dear me! It is beautiful"

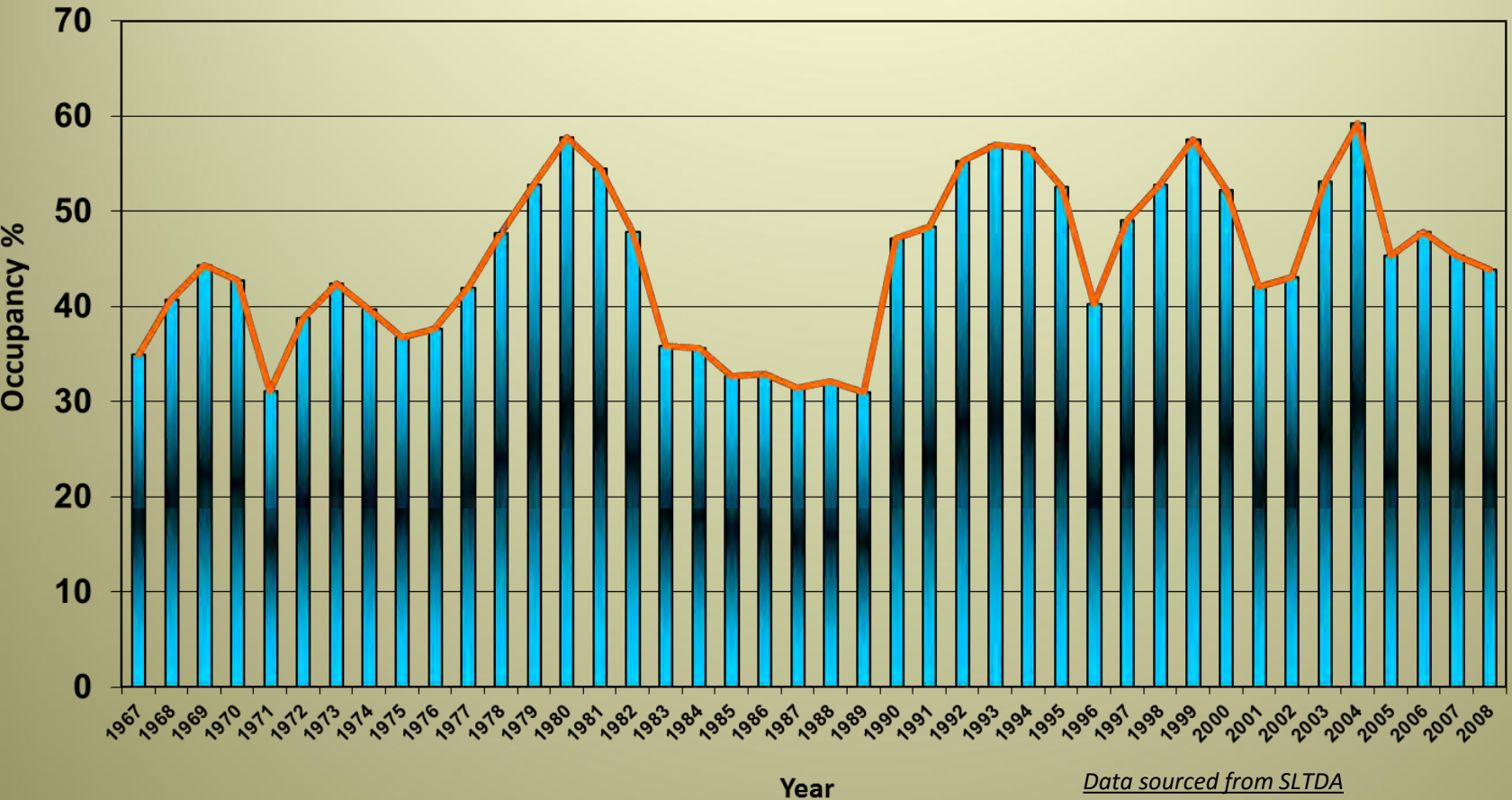
– Mark Twain (1890)

This country is an oasis, prosperous % happy; Its people are well-to-do; ...

Fa Hien (414A.D)

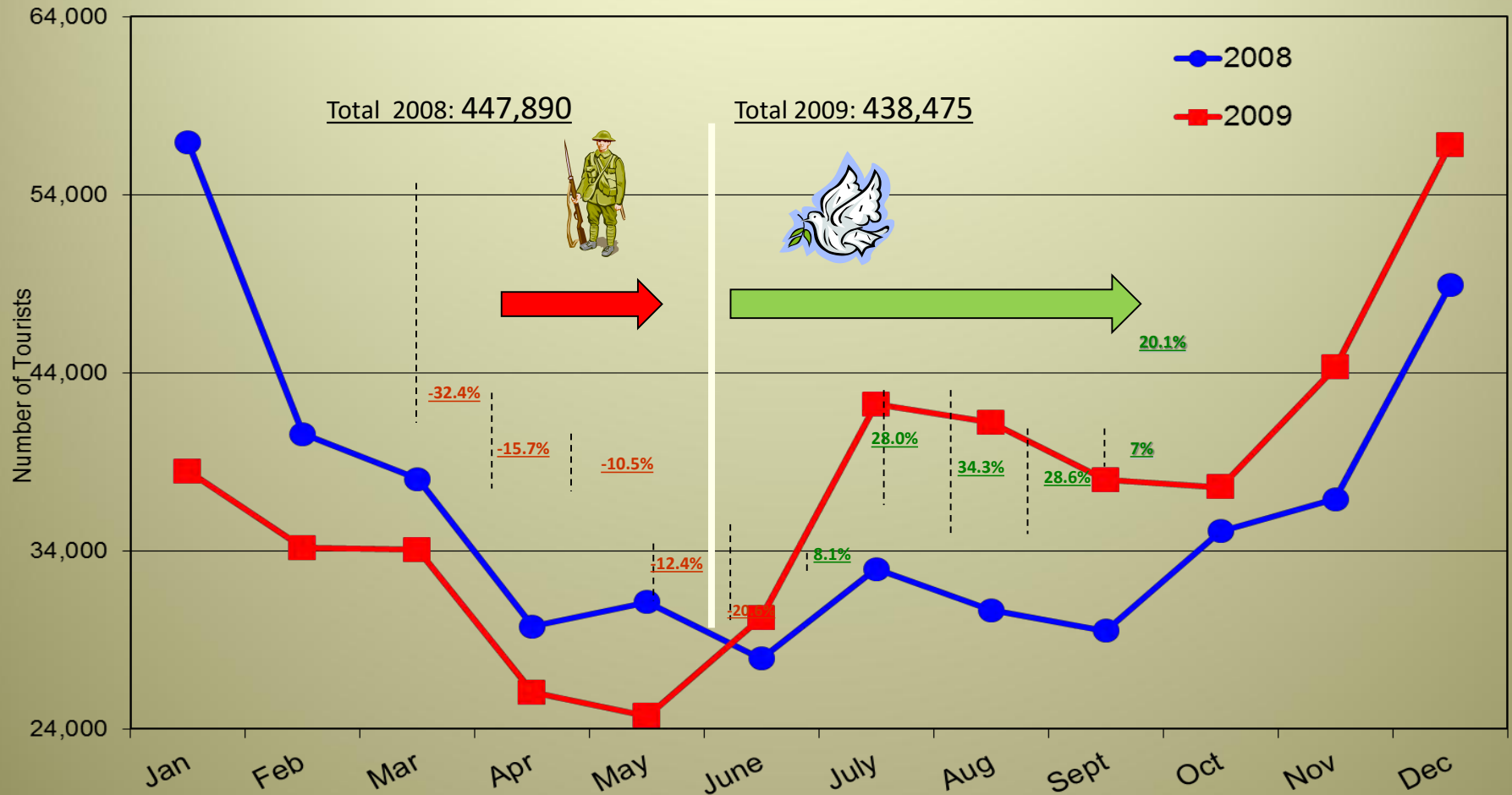
Sri Lanka Tourism

A 40 year- Roller Coaster Ride!



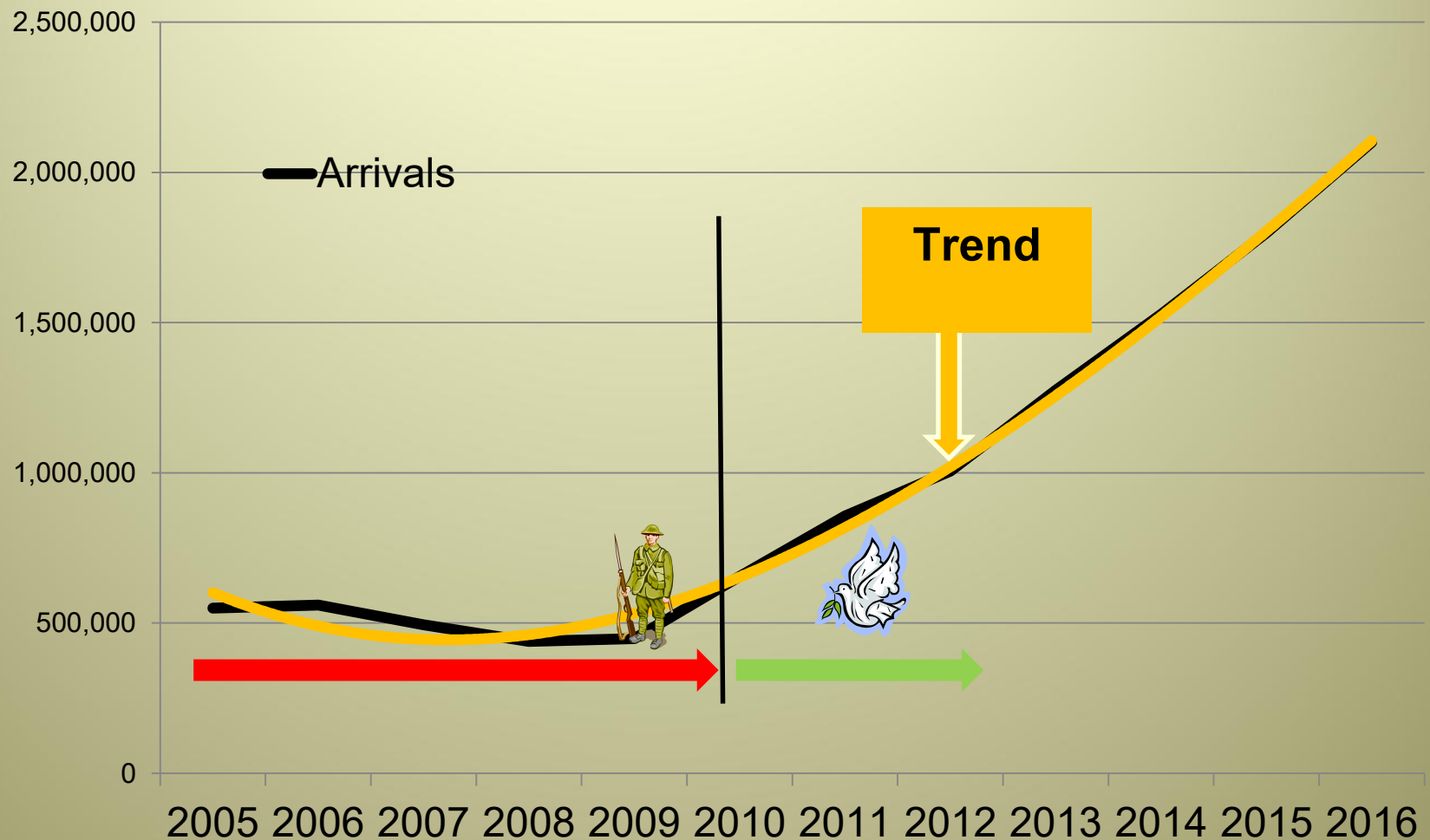
Tourist Arrival Variation-

January to December 2008/2009



Data sourced from SLTDA

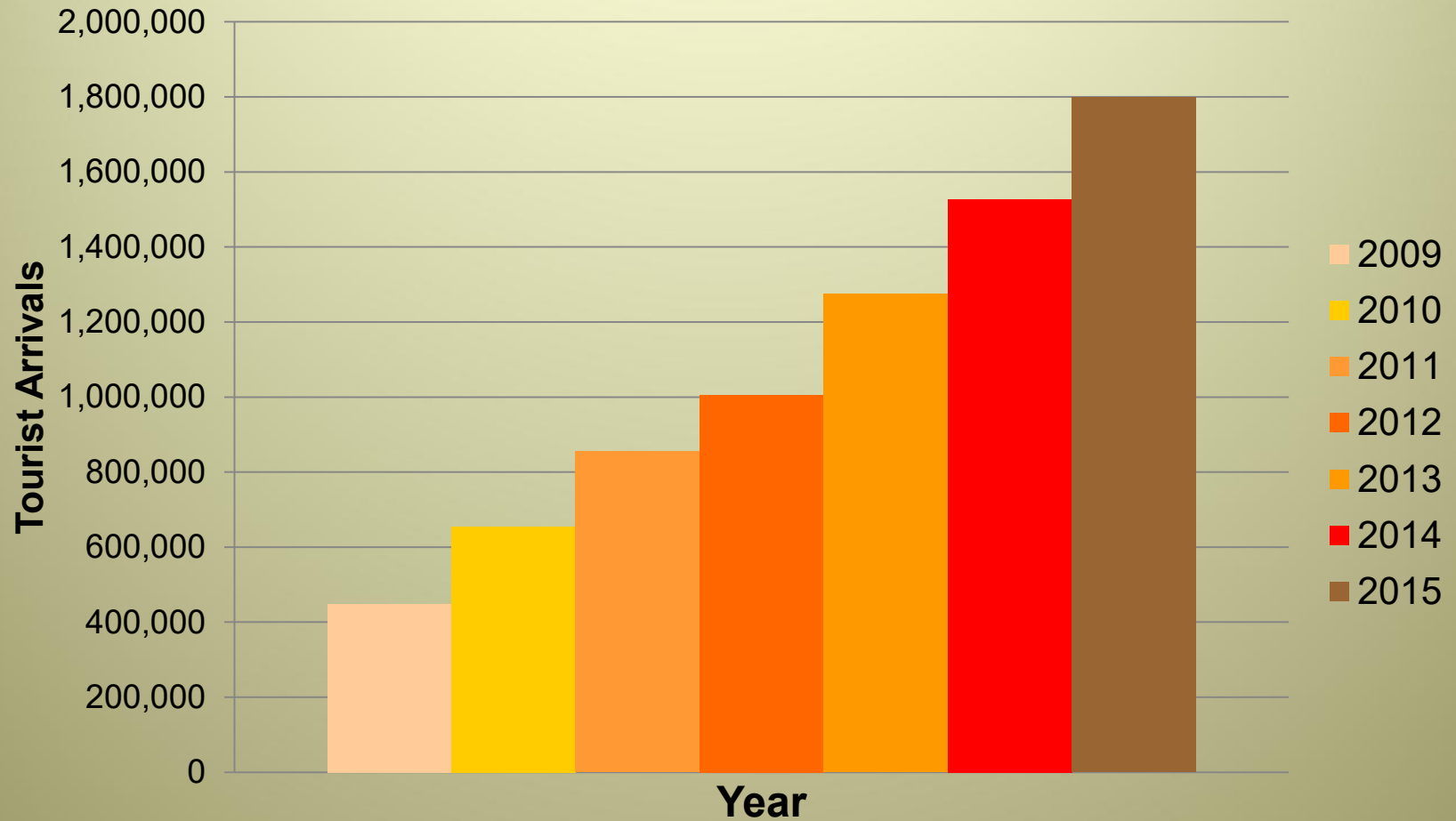
Trend in Arrivals 2005-2016



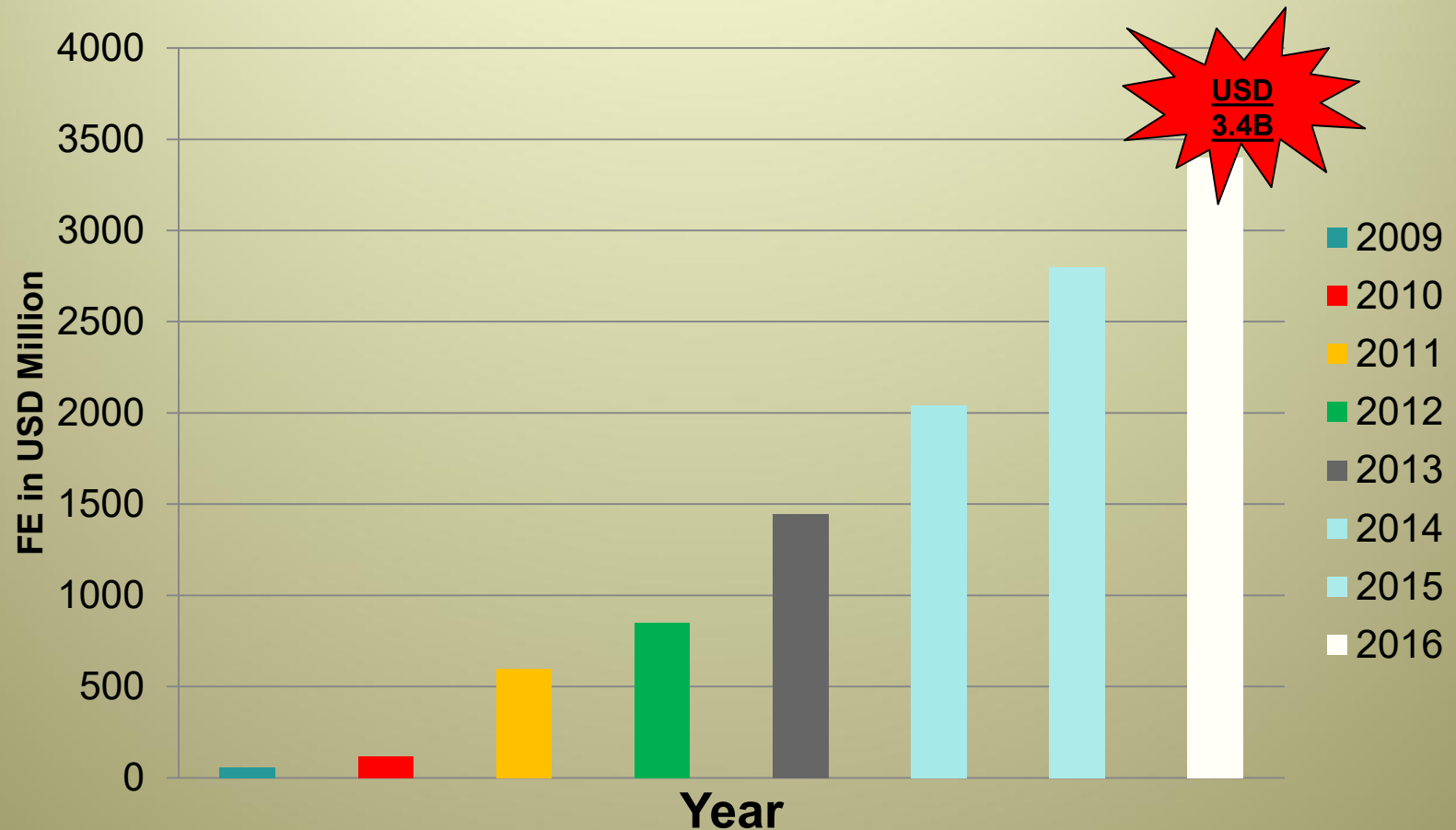
Derived from SLTDA data

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Tourist Arrivals 2009-2016



Foreign Exchange Earnings from Tourism 2009-2015



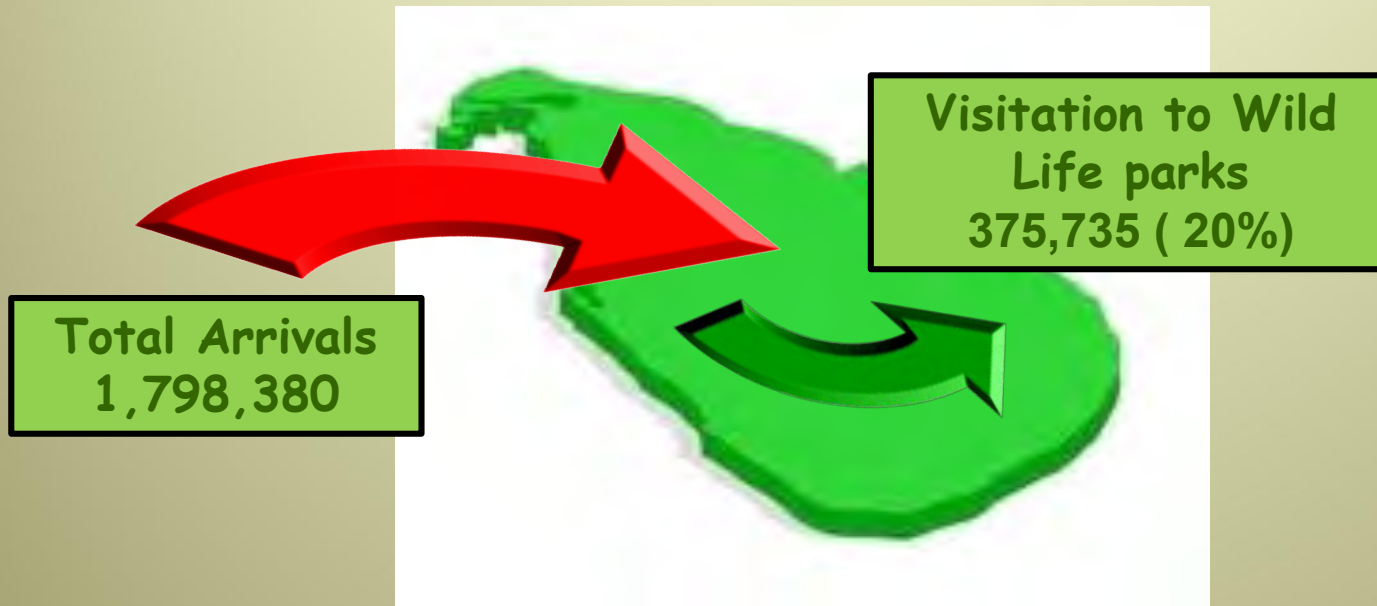
Sri Lanka Tourism 2016



Sri Lanka Tourism 2020 Targets

- *4.5 million tourists (2015-1.8m)*
- *10 billion US dollars in earnings (2015-2.7 B USD)*
- *45,000 rooms (2015- 22,500)*

Wild Life Park Visitation 2015



Derived from SLTDA
data

- So Wild Life/ Nature Tourism is currently an important segment of Sri Lanka Tourism's product offering
- It also has the potential to grow much larger

Sri Lanka Tourism



A scenic sunset over a beach. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and light blue. Silhouettes of palm trees are on the left. In the distance, two small figures stand on a rock. The foreground shows a large rock in the shallow water.

Sri Lanka...

..... 'Asia's Most Authentic,
Diverse and Compact Island'

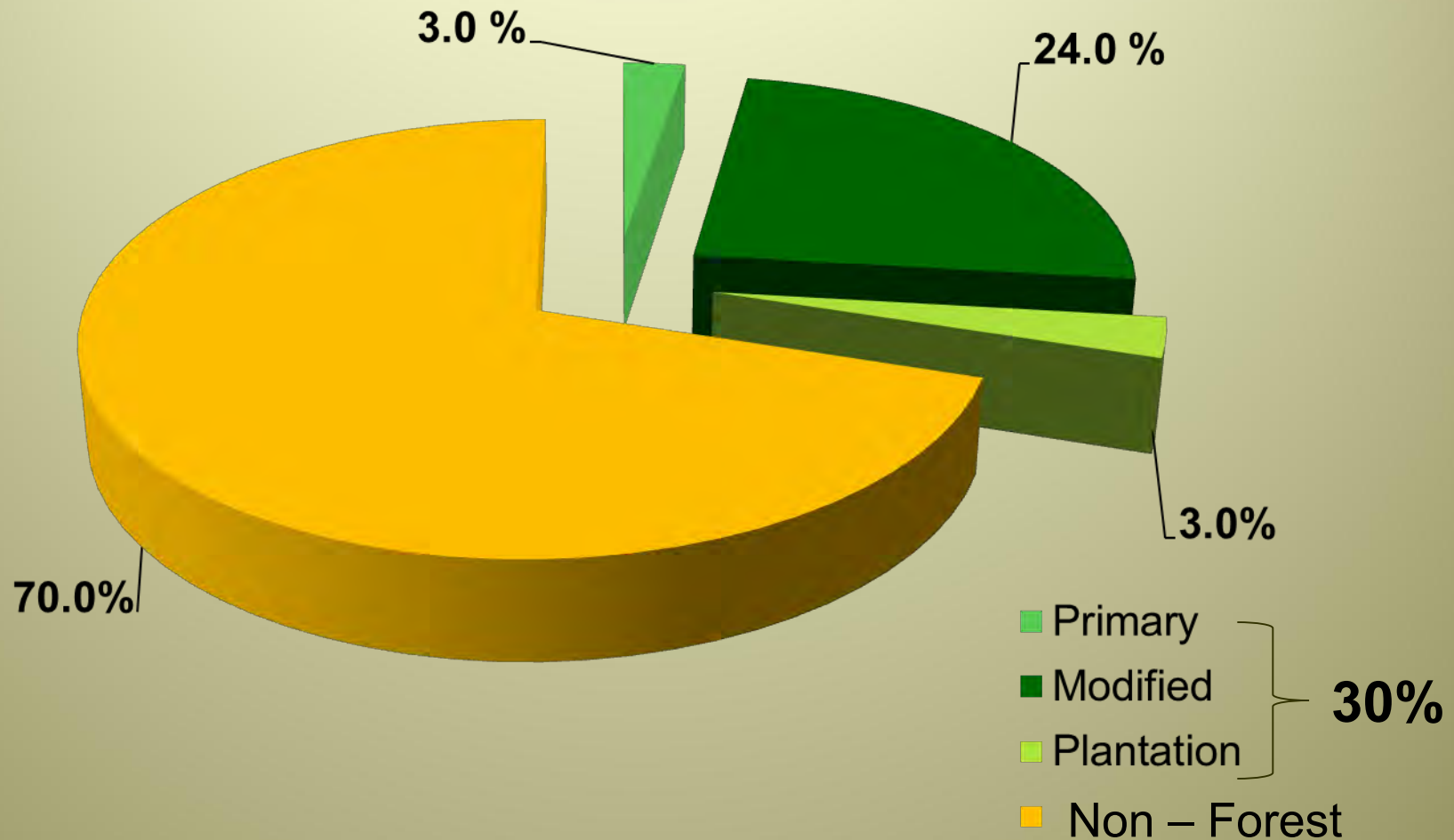
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SRI LANKA'S BIO-DIVERSITY AND WILD LIFE

Sri Lanka Forest Cover

		Area in Ha	% of Land	% of Forest
Total Land area		6,474,000		
Total Forest cover		1,933,000	30%	
Primary		167,000	3%	9%
Modified Natural		1,571,000	24%	81%
Plantation		195,000	3%	10%
		Ref: Monga Bay/ Sri lanka		

Sri Lanka Land Area Breakdown



http://rainforests.mongabay.com/deforestation/2000/Sri_Lanka.htm

Eco Systems

- Varied Ecological Zones – Low country dry zone, Low country wet zone, Central hill zone, Intermediate zone, Arid zone.
- Diverse Ecosystem Areas – shrub lands, savanna and grass lands, wetlands, riverine forests, mangrove forests, cloud forests, tropical rain forests.



31 Bio Diversity Hot Spots in the World



Wildlife Parks

1.Yala National Park



2.Wilpattu National Park



3.Sinharaja Rainforest Reserve



4.Uda Walawe National Park



5.Wasgamuwa National Park



6.Minneriya National Park



7.Gal Oya National Park



8.Horton Plains National Park



9.Madurua Oya National Park



10.Victoria Randenigala Rantambe Sanctuary



11.Ritigala Strict Natural Reserve

12.Somavatiya National Park

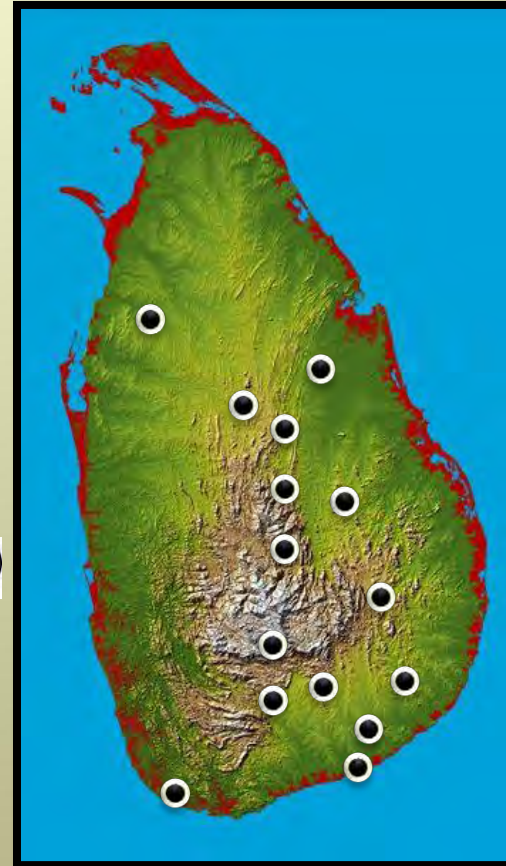


13.Bundala National Park



14.Wirawila Bird Sanctuary

15. Hikkaduwa National Park



Species Diversity

- 3,300 plants
- 80 mammals (**16END**; 9CE; 32T)
- 480 birds (**33END**; 10CE; 36T)
- 66 amphibians (**90 END**; 12CE; 40T)
- 180 reptiles (**101END**; 10CE; 18T)
- 240 butterflies (**20END**; 1CE; 45T)



IUCN RED LIST

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The largest land animal in the world- The Elephant



The largest animal that ever lived on earth- The Blue Whale



(c) Gehan de Silva Wijeyeratne

One of the largest predators in the world- The leopard



One of the larger and very elusive mammals..Sloth Bear



Franklin Silva

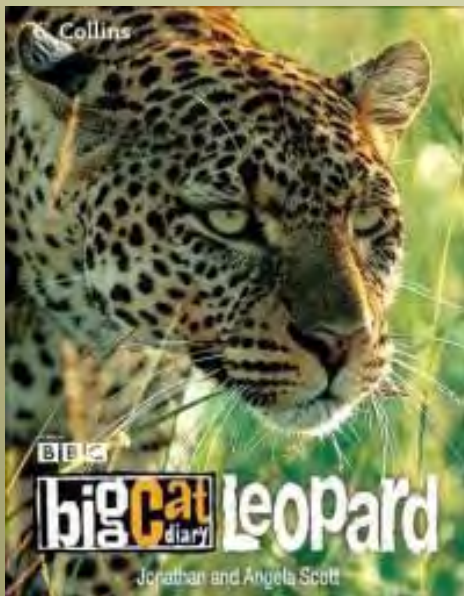
Leopard Island?



Leopard haven....

"If God Created a patch of land for Leopards on Earth, then it must be Yala"

Angie Scott , Award winning photographer of Big Cat Diary,
at a presentation at Cinnamon Lake,
at the end of their visit to Sri Lanka
9th July 2011



Whales & Dolphins

- Blue whales & sperm whales
- Seasonal / Easily seen
- Bottle nose & Spinner dolphins



Whale migration



The world famous Sinharaja Forest Reserve

- One of the last viable area of primary tropical rainforest.
- More than 60% of the trees are endemic and many of them are considered rare.
- There is much endemic wildlife, especially birds
- Home to over 50% of Sri Lanka's endemic species of mammals and butterflies, as well as many kinds of insects, reptiles and rare amphibians.



Horton Plains

- A protected area in the central highlands covered by montane grassland and cloud forest.
- Altitude of 2,100–2,300 metres (6,900–7,500 ft)
- Rich in biodiversity and many species found here are endemic to the region.
- Sri Lanka's only cloud forest



The Worlds largest & smallest terrestrial animals both found in Sri Lanka

Elephant

(*Elephas maximus maximus*)

Height 2-3 m (9 ft);

Weight 3-4 Tons



Pigmy shrew

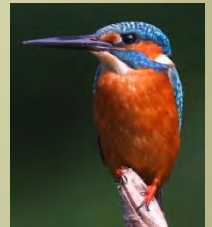
(*Suncus etruscus*)

**Length -5 cms Weight
4gms**



Sri Lanka- a Birders paradise

- 493 species*.
- 272 (36%) migrants *
- 26 Endemic +7 suspect*
- Winter migrants come from distant Siberia & western Europe.
- The Sinharaja forest is home to 95% of the endemic birds of Sri Lanka



*IUCN (2011). "Threatened . . . Sri Lanka's biodiversity. Colombo:" IUCN Sri Lanka.

Reptiles

- 209 species
- 194 are terrestrial.
- 122 endemic (58%)
- 5 species of turtles
- 6 species of snakes venomous.



Russell's Viper



Hump nosed viper



Cobra



Saw scaled viper



Common krait



Sri Lanka krait
Ref Mithila

"Living with Crocodilians"

World Crocodile Conference - Sri Lanka

22nd Working Meeting of the IUCN - SSC, Crocodile Specialist Group

20-23 May 2013

BMICH - Colombo, Sri Lanka

All delegates will receive
25 Entitlements
"The Best"
given at any CSG meeting so far

The CSG Working Meeting is an international event which brings together a large group of eminent scientists, university students, conservationists and individuals from the commercial sector to present and discuss issues on a wide range of topics related to research, conservation, management and sustainable use of crocodilians, including the "Human-Crocodile Conflict".

IUCN, Species Survival Commission
Crocodile Specialist Group

For Registration log onto
www.csgrsri Lanka.com

Turtles

- Olive Ridley
- Green turtle
- Loggerhead
- Leatherback
- Hawksbill

(All species threatened)



Crocodiles

Sri Lanka has only two species of crocodiles

1 Mugger

Crocodylus palustris
(Hela Kimbula)
Not endemic

IUCN
Conservation
status:
Vulnerable



Crocodile
distribution
in Sri Lanka

Mugger
Saltwater
crocodile

Mugger



Saltwater



2 Saltwater crocodile

Crocodylus porosus
(Gata Kimbula)
Not endemic

IUCN Conservation
status: Least Concern



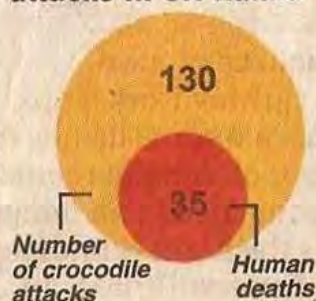
- This massive animal is the world's largest crocodilian.
- Possible offender in the Ragama incident.

Scale to human



ST Infographic by Nalin Balasuriya

2010-Crocodile
attacks in Sri Lanka



Chilaw

Yala

Tangalle



*Source: Anslam de Silva




The 'Gathering'

Witness the most unique spectacle where the largest number of Asian elephants gather on the open plains of the Minneriya National Park during the months of April-Sept .



The 'Gathering'



lonely planet

EXPLORING EXTRAORDINARY
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16-Jun-2011 01:57:29

The greatest wildlife spectacles



5. Brown bears feasting, Alaska, USA

There's nothing like the flavour of flapping-fresh fish, straight from the river. Especially if you're a brown bear with a taste for dog salmon. From early summer, shimmering masses of salmon return from their oceanic feeding grounds and head upriver to spawn; when they hit rapids and small cataracts, they make easy prey for bears — it's a conveyor-belt sushi joint. At the falls on the McNeil River, 1.5km upstream from its mouth in southwestern [Alaska](#), huge browns, bulky from years of salmon feasts, gather to flip fish from the stream.

Dozens of bears can be spotted at any one time. Only 10 viewing permits are issued for each day between June and August, allocated through a lottery; for details, visit www.wildlife.alaska.gov.

6. Elephant gathering, Sri Lanka

When King Mahasen built the Minneriya Tank, a vast reservoir, in the 3rd century AD, he probably wasn't thinking of animal welfare. Now the focal point of a national park, the lake comes into its own as the dry season bites, with elephants trundling in from reserves around the region. Forming enormous herds, they head to the tank for the world's biggest pool party, known simply as the Gathering, where 300 or more thirsty pachyderms graze the lush grass, drink and play in the water. It's a unique opportunity to watch how elephants interact (noisily and boisterously, as it turns out).

Elephant numbers at [Minneriya](#) usually peak around August or September; jeep safaris organised through local hotels get you close to the lakeshore action.

7. Bats of Dear Cave, Sarawak, Malaysia

Sri Lankan Elephants



Dispersion of Elephants In The World



Ancient kings used elephants for....

- War
- Religious festivals
- Ceremonies
- Work





Elephants in Buddhism

The birth of the Buddha....



“The Bodhisattva, in the form of a white elephant, descended.... From the direction of the north. In his trunk, which was like a silver rope, he held a white lotus. He entered.... Made a circle three times around queen Maya's bed, smote her right side, and appeared to enter her womb.

The queen's womb took the appearance of a crystal casket. She retired to the forest to meditate and there under the Sal tree she gave birth to a boy looking like the sun.”

In Temples



Elephants in Hinduism





*The elephant has a quasi-religious status
in Sri Lanka*















Dimitri Miththapala







The Sri Lankan elephant in the wild at present

- Up to 5,500-6,500 elephants in the wild
- About 10% of the total population of Asian elephants in Sri Lanka
- Less than 4% of suitable elephant habitat in Asia
- Less than 7% tuskless of male population
- Male female ratio is about 1:1.4
- Over 60% of the wild elephant population in the protected areas reside outside the national parks
- Sri Lanka is carrying far too many elephants than it can accommodate

THE HUMAN ELEPHANT CONFLICT (HEC)

Human-Elephant Conflict



The largest density of wild Asian Elephants in the world

10% of the world population, in 2% of the available elephant habitat in the world-

The highest density of Asian elephants in the world



Causes for Conflict

- Rapid de-forestation
- Encroachment into national parks
- Development and human settlement

Preventive Measures

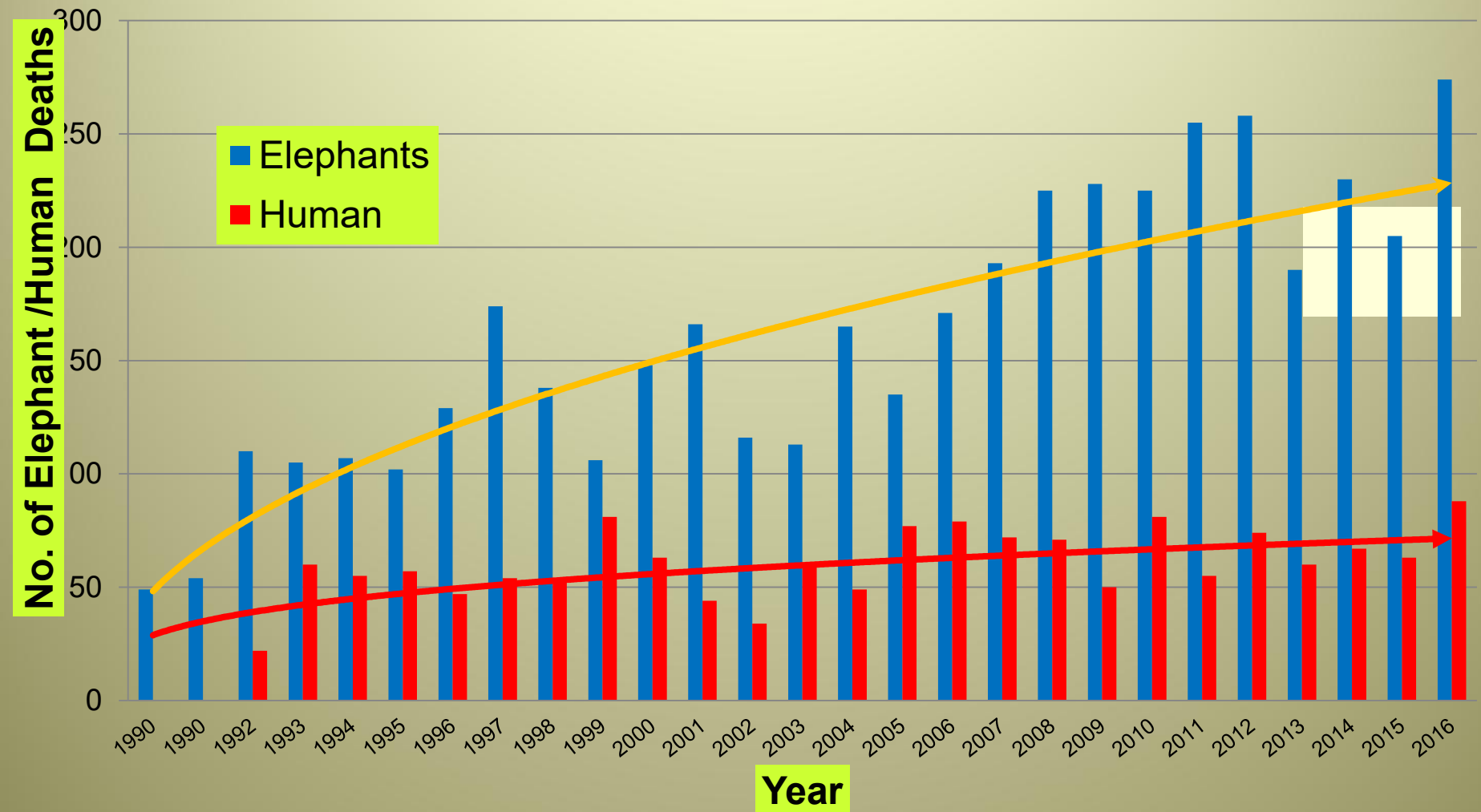
- Trenches
- High Voltage Fencing
- Ditches
- Buffer Zones
- Managed elephant habitats



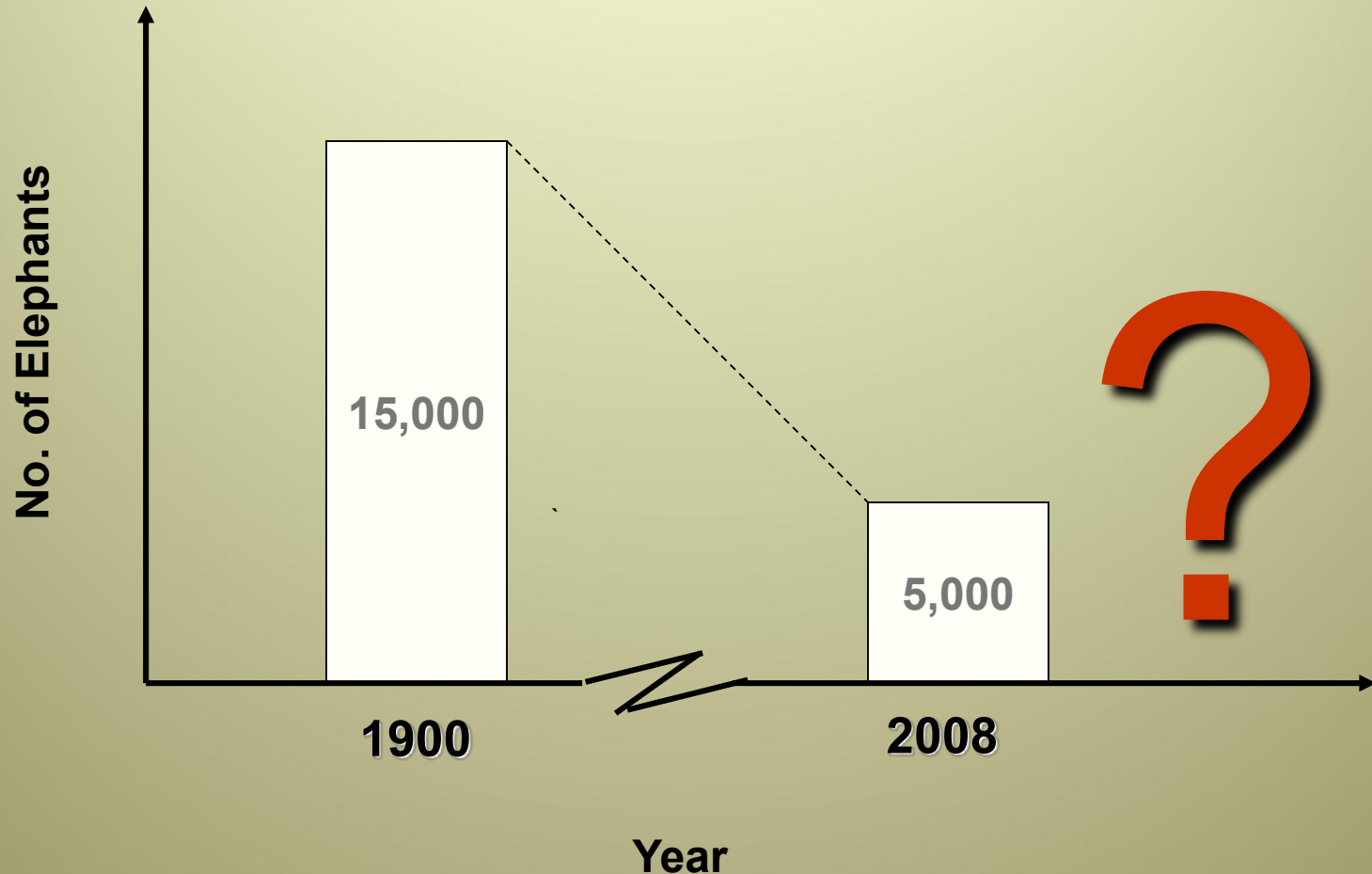
Death




Elephant & Human Mortality Statistics due to Human-Elephant Conflict (HEC) (1990 - 2014)



Sri Lanka's Wild Elephant Population



IUCN Red List-Endangered



The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™


2010.4

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Elephas maximus




NOT EVALUATED	DATA DEFICIENT	LEAST CONCERN	NEAR THREATENED	VULNERABLE	<ENDANGERED>	CRITICALLY ENDANGERED	EXTINCT IN THE WILD	EXTINCT
NE	DD	LC	NT	VU	EN	CR	EW	EX


[Summary](#) [Classification Schemes](#) [Images & External Links](#) [Bibliography](#) [Full Account](#)

Taxonomy [top]

Kingdom	Phylum	Class	Order	Family
ANIMALIA	CHORDATA	MAMMALIA	PROBOSCIDEA	ELEPHANTIDAE

Scientific Name: *Elephas maximus*
Species Authority: Linnaeus, 1758
Common Name/s:
English – Asian Elephant, Indian Elephant
French – Eléphant D'Asie, Eléphant D'Inde
Spanish – Elefante Asiático
Taxonomic Notes: While subspecies taxonomy of *Elephas maximus* has varied among authors, the most

[Taxonomy](#)
[Assessment Information](#)
[Geographic Range](#)
[Population](#)
[Habitat and Ecology](#)
[Threats](#)
[Conservation Actions](#)
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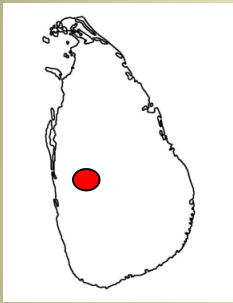
Elephants in captivity

• Pinnawela Orphanage (PEO)	71
• (<i>Ref Asst Director, PEO</i>)	
• Dehiwela Zoo	08
• (<i>Ref Asst Director Zoo</i>)	
• Private (approx.)	120
• (<i>Jayantha Jayawadene</i>)	
• Illegal –retrieved by DWC	<u>35</u>
• (<i>Director DWC</i>)	
• Total	<u>234</u>
• ETH	40
• (<i>Dr Vijitha of ETH</i>)	



Pinnawela Elephant Orphanage (PEO)





The Pinnawela Orphanage (PEO)

- The worlds first elephant orphanage (1975)
- Orphanage was established to feed, nurse and house young elephants found abandoned by their mothers.
- Said to have the largest captive herd of elephants in the world now
- Should have been the world's foremost captive elephant research center
- Grown Considerably since the early beginnings
- Too many elephants (85+) , with limited space
- Enhancement of facilities not kept pace with growth in numbers leading to over crowding
- Some frustration and loss of focus



Three Generations of Elephants at PEO



*Grandmother 'Mathalee',
brought to PEO in 1975, when
she was just 5 years old.*



*'Amalee', her daughter was born in
1994. Now Amalee is a mother, with
a 4 year old calf of her own, 'Elvina'.*

‘Raja’ the Blind Tusker of PEO



- Arrived at PEO in 1994 as a grown elephant shot in the eyes
- Died in 2013
- Looked after for 19 years

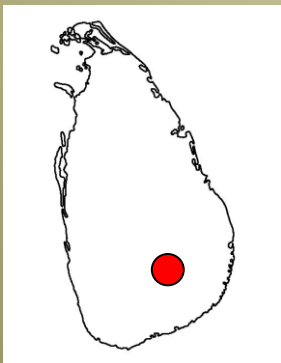
The land mine victim, 'Sama' at PEO



- *Arrived at PEO with foreleg blown off from a mine*
- *Died in 2014*
- *Looked after for 15+ years*

Elephant Transit Home (ETH)

- Reasonable success story
- Current population under going rehab 40 (calves < 8 years)
- Number rehabilitated & released to the wild about 100



Minimal interaction



Re-habilitated elephants released from ETH

(over 100 juveniles released since March 1988)



‘Sandamali’ of Uda Walawe

Released from ETH in July 2000/2nd batch, integrated into a herd, and has now given birth to 2 calves



Ashoka Rajeeva

'Namal' of ETH



- *Arrived at ETH in 2011 with badly infected hind leg*
- *Looked after for 5 years*
- *New Prosthetic being fitted*



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PROMOTING WILD LIFE OF SRI LANKA

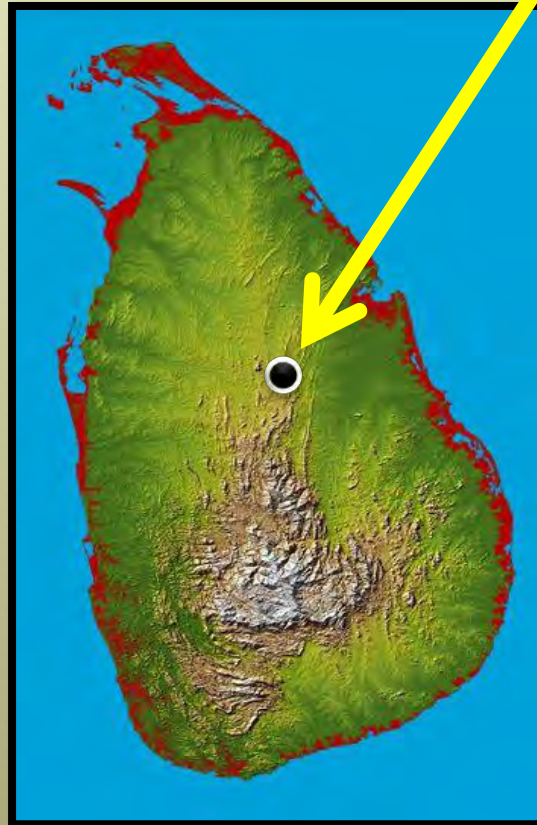
Srilal Siththapala

Safaris to National Parks



The 'Gathering'

Witness the most unique spectacle where the largest number of Asian elephants gather on the open plains of the Minneriya National Park during the months of April-Sept .



‘The Gathering’...



Charismatic Animals

- Scientists at conservation organizations often focus their research interesting tourist-pleasing big mammals that the public — and donors — love, such as elephants pandas, tigers and gorillas.
- One rationale is that because many of these 'charismatic megafauna' thrive only in large, rich, biodiverse areas, their distribution can act as a proxy for the diversity of whole ecosystems
- Conservationists have argued that actions intended to preserve one iconic animal can have an 'umbrella effect' and save less-glamorous species that thrive in its shadow.

www.nature.com/news/charismatic-mammals

Africa's Big 5- Sri Lanka's Big 4?



Wild elephants looking for a mobile re-load?



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'Gemunu' of Yala



‘Rambo’ of Uda Walawe



The New king of Uda Walawe 'Sumedha'

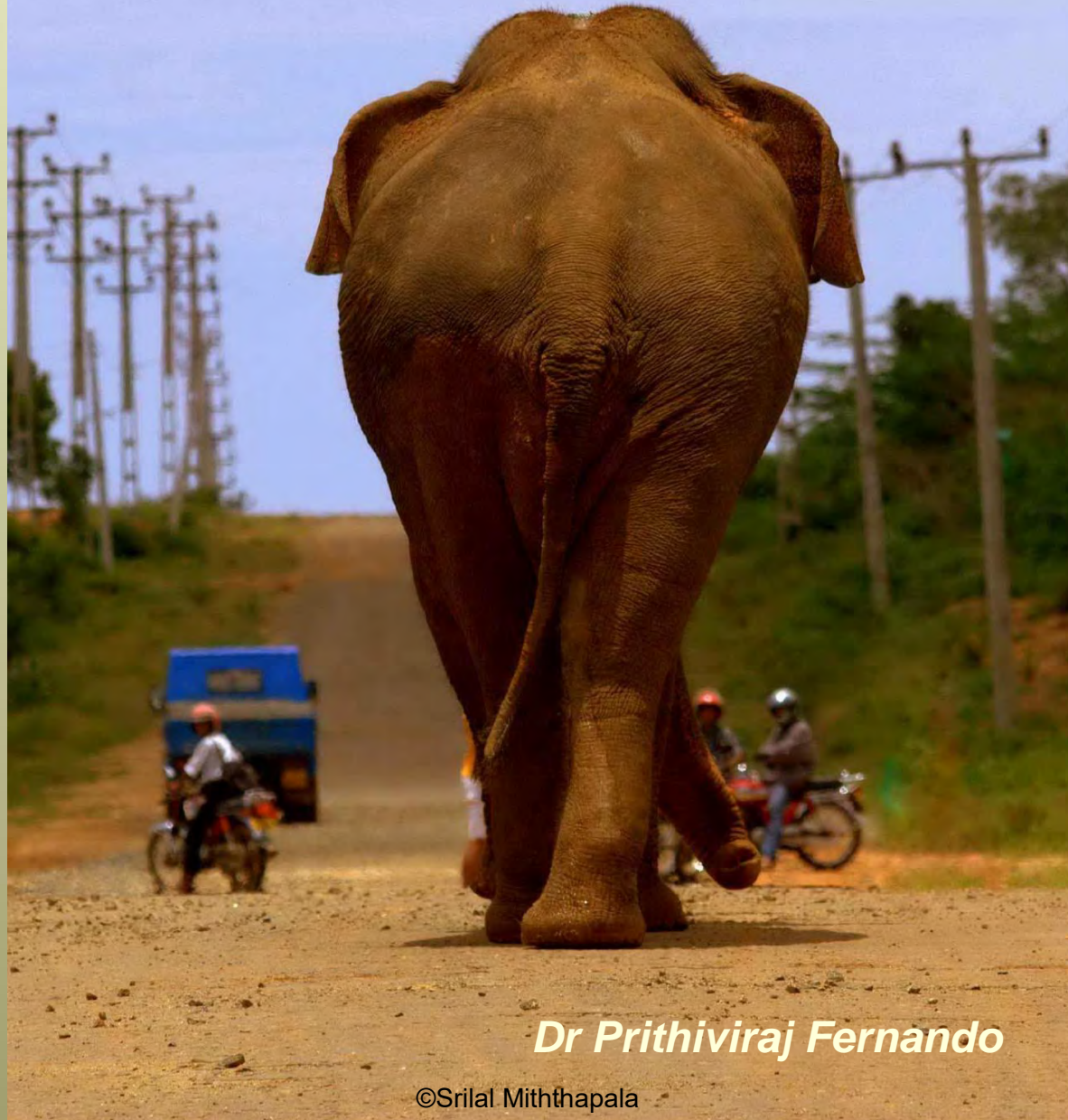


At Cricket?



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A walk Down the road?



Dr Prithiviraj Fernando

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Toll collectors



Grand stand views



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Wild elephants looking for a mobile re-load?



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Traffic hold up



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Visitors to Star Class Hotels...



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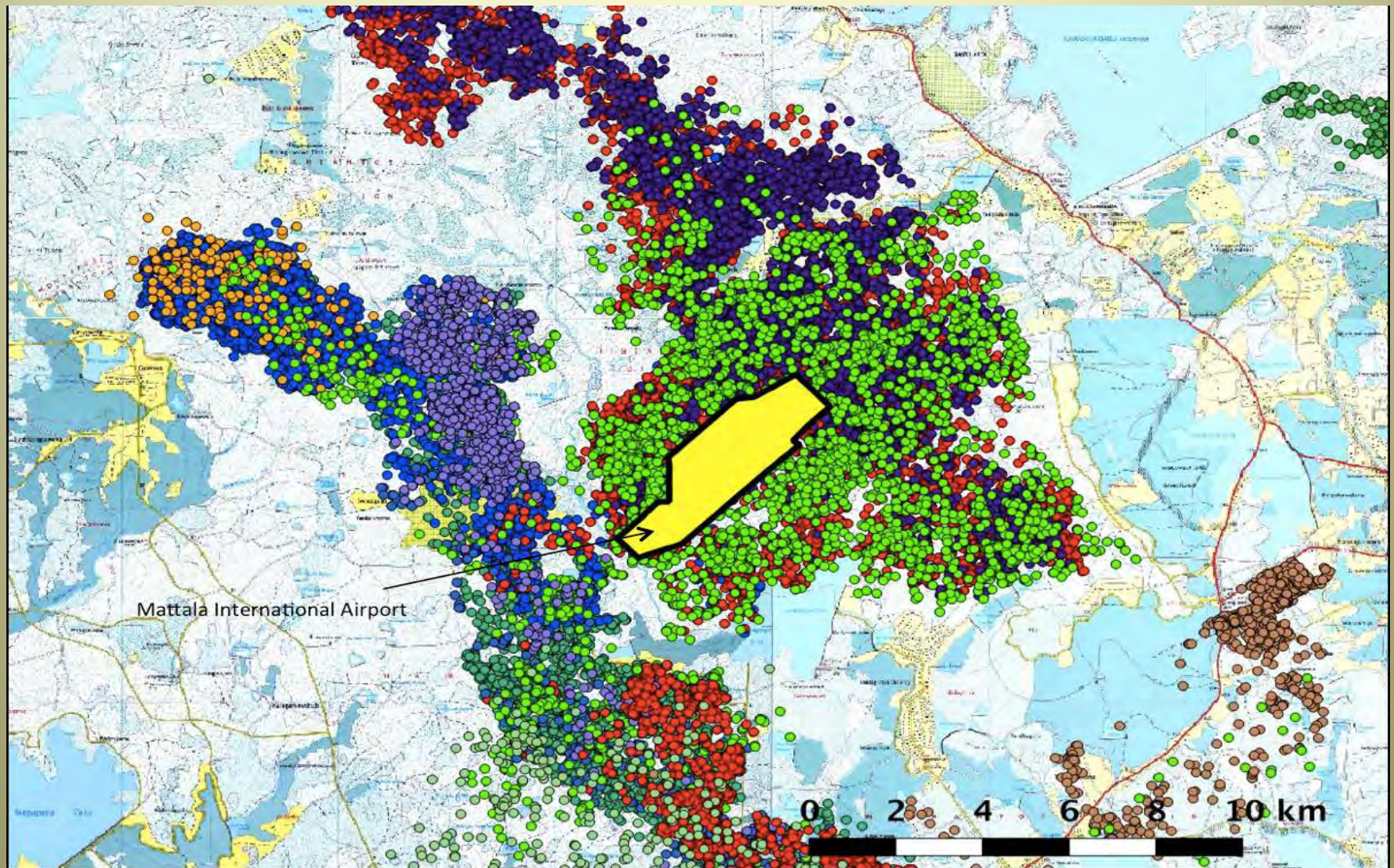


'Still' from video

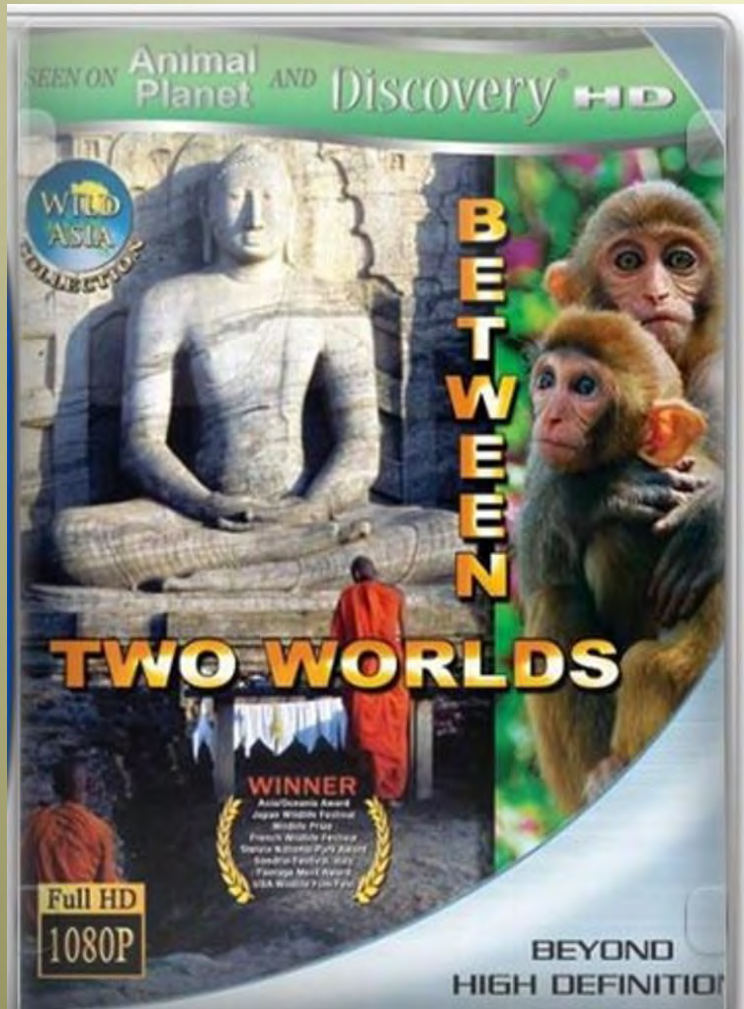
Good on going Research



Tracking Elephant movements



Between Two Worlds- Natural History New Zealand



Released in May 2015



© Smita Mithinapala



Nat Geo Wild – 3 Episodes May/June 2015



Wild life sub-branding

- *“ Sri Lanka the ultimate island safari”*
- *“Sri Lanka the best for big game outside Africa”*
- *“Sri Lanka’s Big four- The elephant, whale, leopard and sloth bear*
- *The Sri Lankan elephant as an icon for tourism*

***“Tourism must protect
and nurture Wild Life
and Environment...
not live off it” –***

Paddy Withane, Chairman,
Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority

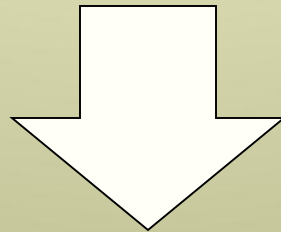


The Future ?

HUMAN – ELEPHANT CONFLICT

HEC.....

***Human Elephant
Conflict***



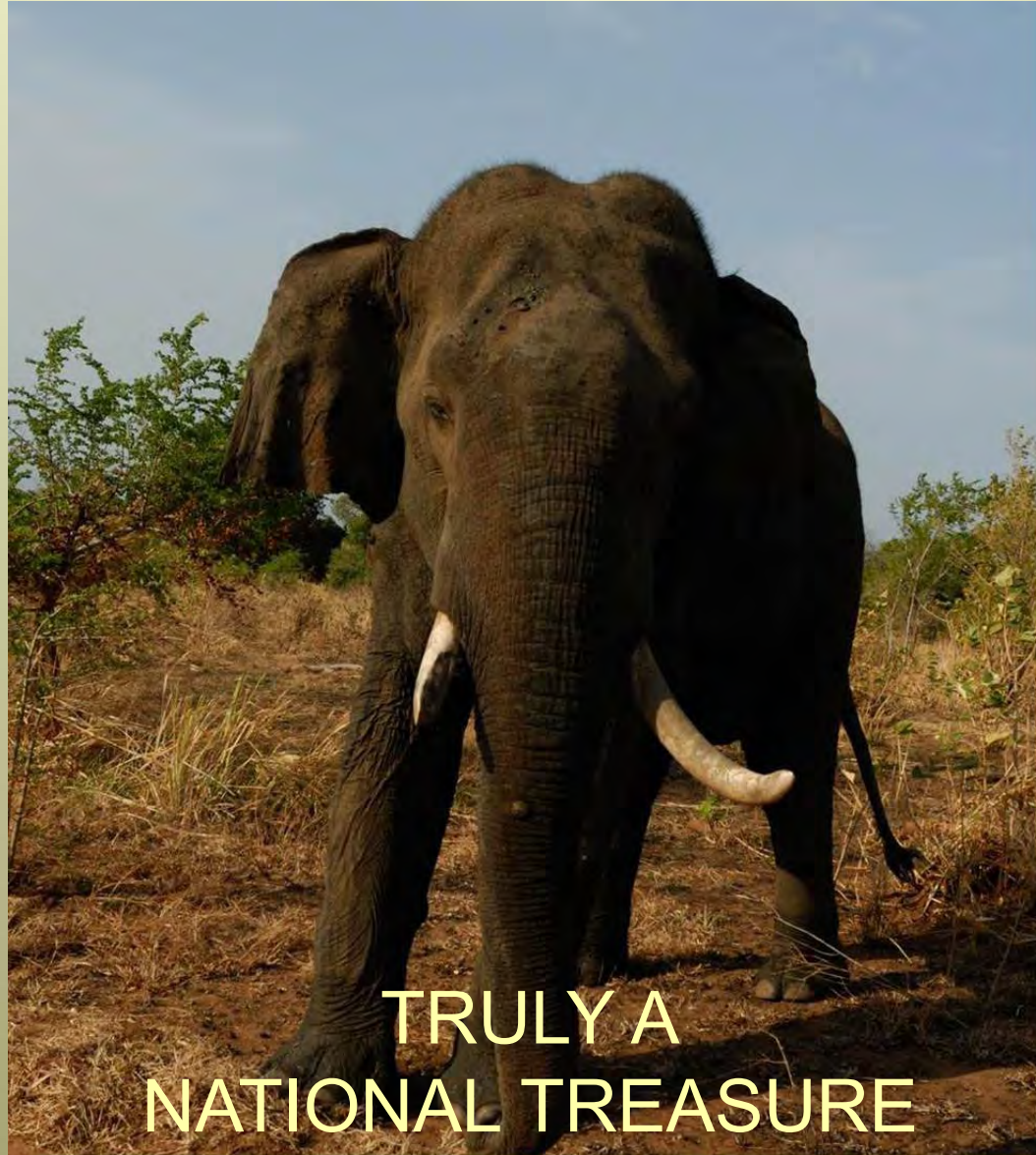
***Human Elephant
Co-existence***

Solutions...?

- There are no quick fix solutions....
- Elephants are very intelligent animals..
- Their ranging patterns and social interaction is complex.....
- Piece-meal interventions will not work...

**A holistic, all encompassing
and analytical, long term
approach is needed**

The Sri Lankan Elephant





**THE END OF
THE ROAD?**

Tread lightly,
take only photographs,
kill only time...

... and leave only footprints

srilal.mith@gmail.com

www.srilankaelephant.com

www.facebook.com/SriLankaElephant -