



Rainforest Protectors Trust

Saving unprotected acres of Rainforest in Sri Lanka

www.RainforestProtectorsTrust.org

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Rainforests in Sri Lanka

During the last century, Sri Lanka's rainforests have been reduced to just 5% of their former size. Yet, the remaining rainforests are home to most of the country's endemic species. Of Sri Lanka's 26 endemic birds, 20 are rainforest species. Beautiful birds such as the Sri Lanka Blue Magpie and Red-faced Malkoha are only found in the rainforests of Sri Lanka and nowhere else on Earth.

Rainforests play a significant role as catchment areas. Most major rivers such as Gin, Kalu, Nilwala originate from the rainforests. The tall canopy and deep strong roots of native rainforest trees also help prevent landslides, especially those that have affected the hill country.

In addition to ecological services, rainforests also provide economical and recreational value. Hundreds of streams, beautiful waterfalls and colourful birds make rainforests a photographer's dream or the perfect gateway from the noisy polluted cities. Many companies operating in the sectors of "Eco" hotel and "Adventure" tourism benefit directly from rainforests as well as villagers engaged in sustainable harvest of rainforest resources.



(Endemic Sri Lanka Blue Magpie)



(Endemic Red-faced Malkoha)

Did you know?

- Sinharaja Rainforest was heavily logged and thousands of acres destroyed during early 1970s by Plywood Corporation. Due to persistent protests by Environmentalists, Scientists, Clergy and Public, logging operations were stopped in 1977.
- Sinharaja Rainforest was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1998
- 95% of Sri Lanka's endemic birds are found in Sinharaja
- Apart from Sinharaja, there are many fragmented Rainforests in Sri Lanka, such as Kanneliya, Kalugala and Yagirala which once formed a contiguous large Rainforest ecosystem in the Wet Zone.
- Less known and unprotected Udakiruwa the last Rainforest in Uva has the world's tallest Hora (*Dipterocarpuz Zeylanicus*) trees, towering at 60m high. These giant trees continue to be felled in privately held unprotected lands and forest converted to tea and rubber plantations.

Today, rainforests continue to be fragmented and cut-down due to increasing human activity in surrounding areas. Encroachment and deforestation for tea & rubber plantations inside rainforest habitat due to lack of buffer-zones is currently one of the major issues. The cleared areas give easy access for poachers to setup traps and kill wildlife for the illegal bush meat trade. Extremely rare endangered animals such as the Sri Lanka Black Leopard which only live in the rainforest, were found poached in the boundaries of Sinharaja recently.

Many buffer-zone rainforest lands are still privately owned. Increasingly these lands are being sold and forests cut down for monoculture plantations.



(Rare Black Leopard in buffer zone of Sinharaja Rainforest killed by a poacher's snare – Nov 2013)

Impact of Rainforest Destruction

When rainforests rich in bio-diversity are felled for mono-culture tea, rubber and oil palm plantations, the eco-system immediately collapses. The ground dwelling reptiles and mammals quickly lose their habitat and get trapped by poachers. The birds and butterflies lose important food sources, roosting and nesting sites. Freshwater fish and crabs die off as water streams dry up and get polluted by chemical runoff. Before long, these endangered species are lost forever.

The headwaters of our major rivers originate from the Rainforests. As rainforests are cleared and streams run dry, the rivers and waterfalls carry less freshwater downstream. With less freshwater originating from catchment areas coupled with longer droughts resulting from climate change, Sri Lanka will face severe catastrophic conditions in the near future unless action is taken now.

In hilly areas, rainforests play a major role in prevention of landslides. When barren land is exposed to flash floods, the result is landslides, which unfortunately affect many of the poor families living in the hill country.

Deforestation of Rainforests also has a direct negative impact to the economy. The growing eco-tourism industry ranging from eco-lodges, nature tours including bird-watching, adventure tours such as hiking, mountain-biking and white-water rafting directly benefit from rainforests. Therefore, deforestation affects the tourism industry, economy and surrounding communities.

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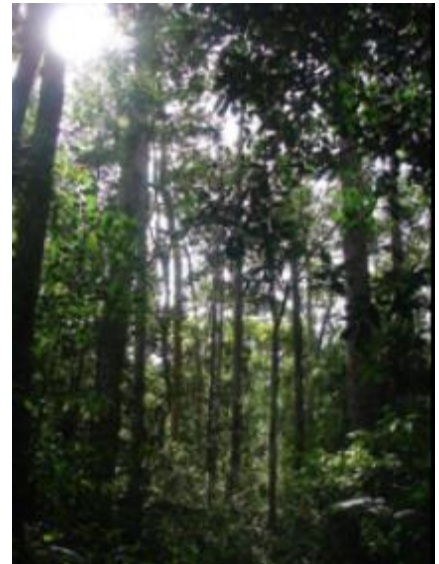
Registered under the Sri Lanka Land Registry in Colombo, Rainforest Protectors Trust works towards purchasing and permanently protecting privately held rainforest lands rich in bio-diversity that are on sale and in danger of being destroyed.

By purchasing and protecting private rainforest land in buffer zones, the core zone of the rainforest is effectively protected against encroachment and deforestation. Cleared areas of the lands are reforested using native rainforest plants with the assistance of Rainforest Protectors of Sri Lanka, a volunteer non-profit organization that has carried out several native tree planting projects recently.

To ensure direct benefit for the surrounding communities and to promote conservation among villagers, a mix of native plants used for food and medicine such as Kos, Del, Kitul and Weniwel are also planted. Sustainable harvest of these resources is allowed. Additionally, native plant nurseries will be setup in village households and plants purchased from them for reforestation projects.

Many privately held Rainforest land are currently on sale with prices ranging from Rs. 5 Lakhs per acre to Rs. 8 Lakhs per acre (~US\$ 4,000 per acre). New owners, often ignorant of the importance of protecting the bio-diversity but only focused on maximizing their profit, take no time to clear-cut these virgin Rainforests that has stood up for millions of years. Our country is losing valuable giant Hora (*Dipterocarpus Zeylanicus*) trees, which are currently felled down in unprotected private forests. Rainforest Protectors Trust aims to purchase and permanently protect these lands according to the above conservation plan together with willing sponsors and donors supporting the funding of the projects.

Deeds for the purchased lands are issued to "Rainforest Protectors Trust" ensuring these forest lands are permanently protected.



Above: Giant Endemic Hora Trees

Below: Recently felled Hora Tree

How to Sponsor / Donate

Sponsorship and Donation contributions are accepted through our bank account below. Please contact us for acknowledgement and receipts. For full funding of a project, the Trustees of Rainforest Protectors Trust would be able to meet at your office.

Account Name: Rainforest Protectors Trust

Bank Name: Nations Trust Bank

Bank Account#: 100250005227

SWIFT code: NTBCLKLX

Branch code: 25 (Havelock Town)

Contact Us

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