

Rainforest Protectors Trust

Saving unprotected acres of Rainforest in Sri Lanka

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 colorful birds make rainforests a photographer's dream or the perfect getaway 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.

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.



(Endemic Sri Lanka Blue Magpie)



(Endemic Red-faced Malkoha)

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 and 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 biodiversity 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.

Habitat destruction and encroachment within and along the border of Sinharaja rainforest in Sri Lanka has intensified both Human-Elephant and Human-Leopard conflict. Establishing new protected buffer zones and biodiversity corridors through strategic conservation of habitat for imperiled wildlife is the single most effective method of preventing species extinction. In addition to safeguarding nature and wildlife, these protected areas also support the livelihoods and health of villagers in the surrounding communities.

About Rainforest Protectors Trust

Registered under the Sri Lanka Land Registry in Colombo, Rainforest Protectors Trust works towards purchasing and permanently protecting privately held rainforest lands rich in biodiversity 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 and endemic 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.

Many privately held Rainforest land are currently on sale with prices averaging around Rs. 6 Lakhs per acre (~US$ 2,000 per acre). New owners, often ignorant of the importance of protecting the biodiversity but only focused on maximizing their profit, take no time to clear-cut or burn down these virgin Rainforests that has stood up for millions of years. Sri Lanka is losing valuable giant Hora *(Dipterocarpus Zeylanicus)* trees found nowhere else on earth, 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.

As of January 2027, we have protected 5 lands with primary rainforest totaling more than 30 acres bordering Sinharaja World Heritage Rainforest to create a protected buffer zone. Deeds for the purchased lands are issued to “Rainforest Protectors Trust” ensuring these forest lands are permanently protected.

Land acquisition is the most simple and straightforward approach to protected area creation. Rainforest Protectors Trust acquires privately held forest land that are on sale and in danger of being clearcut and protects its flora and fauna, creating buffer zones and biodiversity corridors. Compared to other methods, land acquisition is a swift process. With a land purchase, we can quickly negotiate and obtain the land, immediately blocking any impending threats. With a legal land title, Rainforest Protectors Trust has ultimate control over the property, making land acquisition the most secure type of protected area.



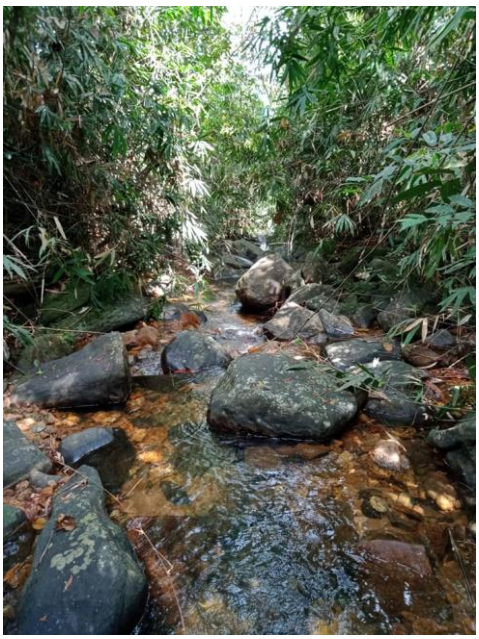




Above: Giant Endemic Hora Trees

Below: Recently felled Hora Tree

Our Accomplishments





Above: 2 acres within 50m of Sinharaja boundary & 4 acres riverine forest protected bordering Kudawa River, Northern Sinharaja
Below: 3 lands in extent 7 acres, 6 acres and 10 acres protected directly bordering Sinharaja World Heritage Rainforest





Rainforest Conservation & Education Center

The Rainforest Conservation and Education Center helps our organization coordinate conservation projects and campaigns efficiently, educate tourists visiting Sinharaja about the threats the rainforest faces and about our conservation efforts, educate school children and villagers nearby, run a native-plant nursery for critically endangered flora and offer a base for carrying out research, among many more possibilities.

In October 2025, Rainforest Protectors Trust acquired a partially constructed house on 0.6 acres of land. The property requires essential renovations and furnishing to serve as a welcoming space for volunteers and visitors. Plans are underway to complete the unfinished upstairs area, transforming it into a dedicated conference room for educational workshops and community engagement. To further strengthen our mission, we aim to secure adjacent land to expand nature trails, restore degraded areas through reforestation, and establish a botanical garden of endemic flora. These initiatives are urgently needed to enhance conservation education, provide hands-on learning opportunities, and inspire greater participation in rainforest protection.

Google Maps Link
(Rainforest Conservation & Education Center)

https://maps.app.goo.gl/TFLr1RwEvN4W8RwL7









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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