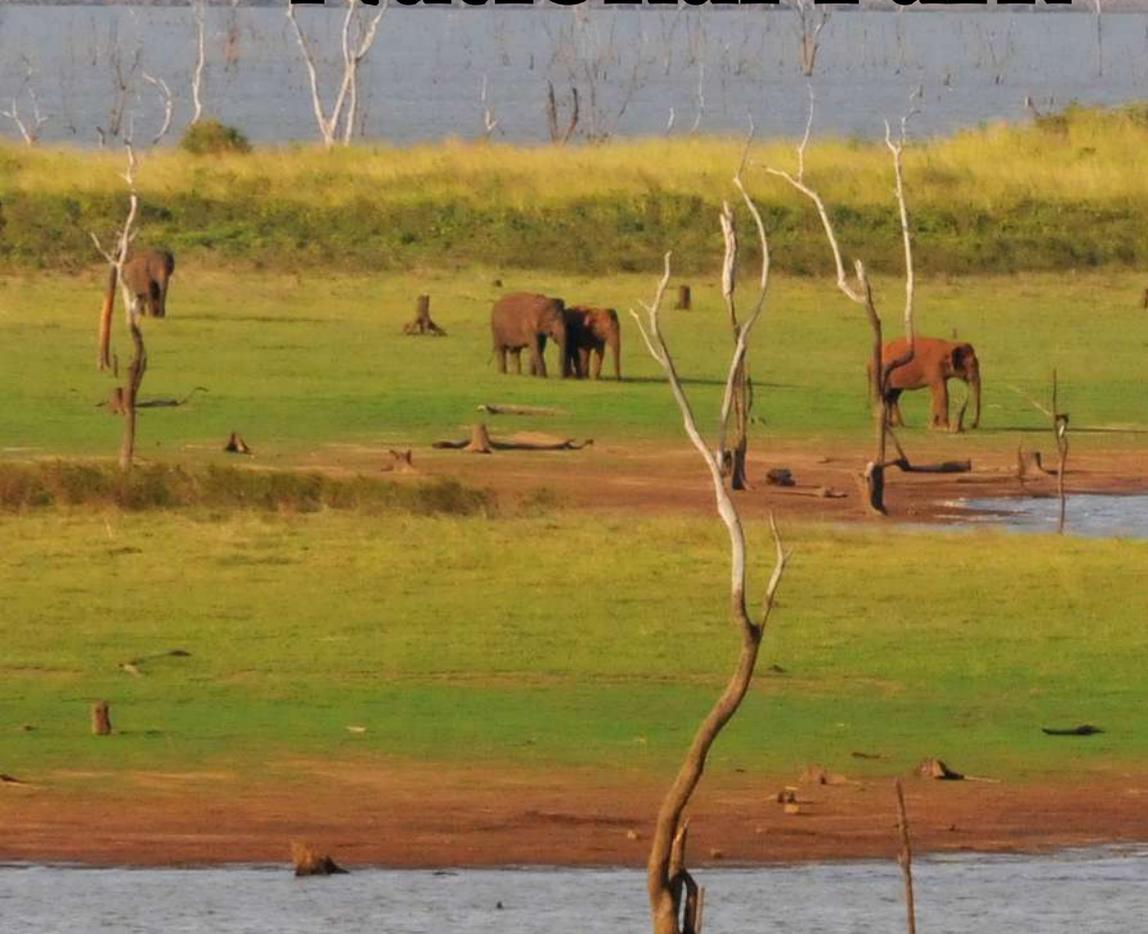


A Pictorial Guide to
**Uda Walawe
National Park**



Edited by
Sarath Kotagama



Abbreviations, Symbols & Definitions

Ad.	Adult
BL	Body length
Br.	Breeding plumage
BrR.	Breeding resident
HB	Head and body length
Juv.	Juvenile
NBr.	Non-breeding plumage
SVL	Snout-vent length
TL	Tail length
●	Endemic
●	Proposed endemic
●	Exotic
♀	Female
♂	Male

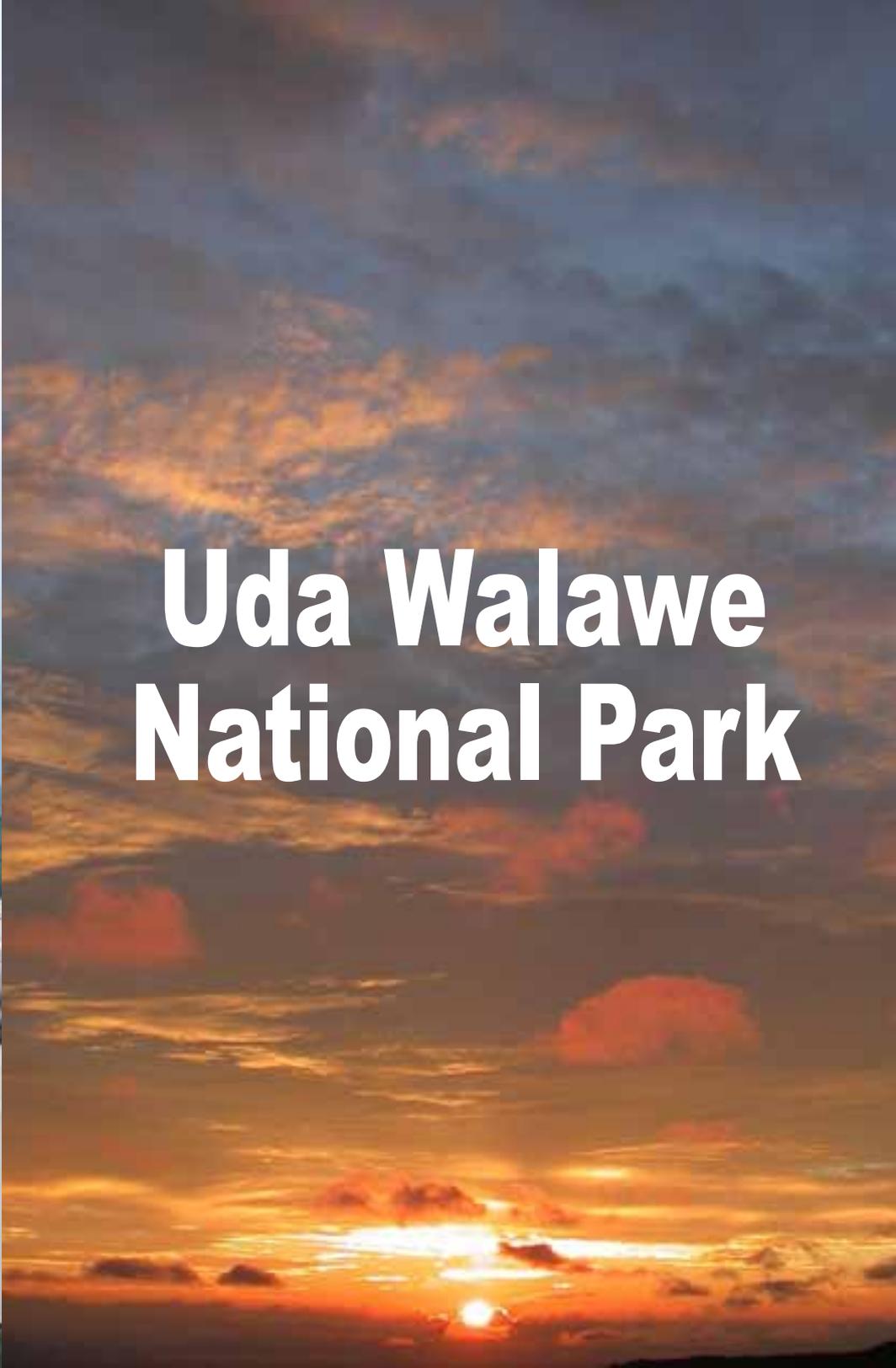




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Uda Walawe National Park

Uda Walawe National Park was declared on 30 June 1972 (Government Gazette Notification No. 14). This was done at the end of the Udawalawe Reservoir Development project. The primary objective of this declaration was to protect the immediate catchment and create a refuge for elephants displaced as a result of the Walawe Basin Development project. A second reservoir, Mau Ara Tank, was constructed inside the park between 1991 and 1998. The Uda Walawe Park is in a strategic location, connecting Lunugumvehera National Park in the south east with Kalthota, Bogahapattiya pond reserve with Koslanda, and Haldummulla in the North.

The total extent of the National Park is 32,315ha, including the Walalwe reservoir, which accounts for 3,405ha at full capacity.

Its western half, on the left bank of the Uda Walawe Reservoir, lies in the Ratnapura District and its eastern sector on the right bank is in the Moneragala District. The southern boundary is defined by the Uda Walawe–Thanamalvila road. To the south of this road is the Sevanagala sugar plantation.

Physical Features

Uda Walawe National Park encompasses the two major drainage basins of the Walawe River and Mau Ara. The enclosed land is an undulating plain at about 100m in elevation, rising to 373m at the foothills of Ulgala in the west. The most prominent feature is the Kalthota Escarpment to the north of the park.



Geology

A large part of Uda Walawe lies within the Vijayan Series, comprising hard crystalline rocks of the pre-Cambrian era. The western and northern boundaries are closer to the transition zone with the Highland or Khondalite Series. Thus, much of the Park is occupied by a variety of gneisses and granites, with extensive exposure of basement rocks in its north-west and eastern sections (Pathirana, 1980).

Soils

Soils in the Park have been developed from residual and alluvial parent materials. They include reddish brown earths, low humic clays, solodized solonetz, and alluvial soils of variable texture and drainage.



Climate



The park location in the Dry Zone is characterized by uniformly high temperatures and seasonal rainfall. Mean annual rainfall is about 1500mm. Rainfall peaks coincide with the Southwest Monsoon in April-May and Northeast Monsoon in October-November. Mean annual temperature is about 32°C; relative humidity ranges from 61% to 94% in the daytime.

Flora

The Park lies within Floristic Region II of Ashton and Gunatillake (1987). The major vegetation types are Dry-Mixed Evergreen Forest, Riverine Forest along the Walawe River, Savanna, Scrub, Grassland, and some forest plantations of *Eucalyptus* and teak. Most of the teak and *Eucalyptus* plantations have been destroyed by elephants.



They began to feed on the bark and subsequently on the flush from around 1998. More than 80% of the area was under forest cover in 1956 but this had declined

to 4% by the time the Park was established in 1972. Human habitation, chena cultivation, and removal of vegetation during reservoir construction were the causes of denudation. Very little original vegetation remains. The result is a mosaic of terrestrial and aquatic habitats, including extensive grasslands.

A total of 218 species of vascular plants were inventoried during the Biodiversity Baseline Survey (2006- 07), of which nine species are endemic and six are nationally threatened.

Dry-Mixed Evergreen Forest

The extant closed-canopy forest has a height not exceeding 30m. The tallest emergent canopy tree is Palu (*Manilkara hexandra*) which is scattered throughout the Park. Two tree communities have been recognized in this forest. They are widely distributed but fragmented *Manilkara-Drypetes-Chloroxylon* (Palu-Weera-Burutha) community and *Alseodaphne-Berrya-Diospyros* (Wewarana-Halmilla-Kaluwara) found close to the river and drainage areas.

Other common canopy species are *Cassine glauca*, *Chloroxylon swietenia*, *Diospyros ebenum*, *Drypetes sepiaria*, *Ficus benghalensis*, *Holoptelea integrifolia*, *Pterospermum suberifolium*, *Schleichera oleosa*, *Sterculia foetida*, *Syzygium cumini* and *Vitex altissima*.

Sub-canopy species include *Cassia fistula*, *Drypetes sepiaria*, *Diospyros ovalifolia*, *Cordia dichotoma*, *Garcinia spicata*, *Lepisanthes tetraphylla*, *Pleurostyliia opposite* and *Psydrax dicoccos*.

Understorey species include *Capparis zeylanica*, *Croton officinalis*, *Clausena indica*, *Dimorphocalyx glabellus*, *Erythroxylum zeylanicum*, *Glycosmis mauritiana*, *Mallotus rhamnifolius*, *Micromelum minutum*, *Miliusa indica*, *Murraya paniculata*, *Salacia reticulate*, *Tarenna asiatica* and *Polyalthia korinti*.

Much of the forest in the park is actually secondary degraded or disturbed areas of Dry-Mixed Evergreen Forest.



Riverine Forest



Riverine Forest (47.0ha, 0.15% of total area) is found along the banks of the Walawe River. The characteristic tree species is *Hopea cordifolia* (Uva Mandora), an endemic and threatened tree species with a threatened endemic height of 35 m. It is the only known Dipterocarp in the Dry Zone. Associated species include: Thimbiri (*Diospyros malabarica*), *Garcinia spicata*, Kolon (*Haldina cordifolia*), Makulla (*Hydnocarpus venenata*), Mee (*Madhuka longifolia*) and Kumbuk (*Terminalia arjuna*). The riverbanks are lined with Kumbuk trees.

Scrub

The area covered by scrub is around 15,800ha or over 50.4% of the total. It is 2-3m in height and occurs in areas of degraded climax and thorn forest. Two main types of scrub are present: i.e., one dominated by mixed indigenous species and a second dominated by the invasive exotic *Lantana camara*.



Commonest species in this habitat are *Acacia leucophloea*, *Asparagus racemosus*, *Azadirachta indica*, *Bauhinia racemosa*, *Benkara malabarica*, *Carissa spinarum*, *Carmona retusa*, *Catunaregam spinosa*, *Croton laccifer*, *Dichrostachys cinerea*, *Eupatorium odoratum*, *Flueggea leucopyrus*, *Lantana camara*, *Phyllanthus polyphyllus*, *Scutia myrtina*, *Streblus asper*, *Toddalia asiatica*, and *Ziziphus oenoplia*.

Grassland



Grasslands cover around 9,939.3ha, which is about 31.7% of total park area. Grassland has become established in areas of abandoned shifting/chena cultivation that were originally Dry-Mixed Evergreen Forest. *Panicum maximum* (Guinea grass) is dominant with some scattered shrubs and isolated trees.

Recent GIS analytical maps confirm the existence of the major habitat types described above. The remainder consists of *Eucalyptus* plantations (13.5ha, 0.04%), rock outcrops (310.4ha, 1.0%), savanna (3.7ha, <0.1%), abandoned chena (265.5ha, 0.9%), bund (4.90ha, <0.1%), and water (3690.2ha, 11.8%) out of a total area of 31,364.3 ha. Note that this total area is different to the gazetted area of 32,315ha .

Fauna

Udawalawe, with its diverse habitat types, is populated by a diverse vertebrate and invertebrate fauna. The latter is not well documented except for the butterflies.



Fish

The Uda Walawe National Park contains a rich assemblage of fish, representing 25 (30%) of the 82 indigenous species (nine families, 21 genera). However, the number of endemics in the park is low (5 species), representing only 11% of the national total of 44 species. The number of exotic species is relatively high (7 species), accounting for 22% of the total number of species recorded in the Park. The exotic species are mostly confined to the Uda Walawe Reservoir and other tanks but *Oreochromis niloticus* is widespread in the Walawe River and both *O. mossambicus* and *Catla catla* are also present in streams. No nationally threatened species have been recorded.



The Field Ornithology Group of Sri Lanka

Founded in 1976 in the Department of Zoology,
University of Colombo has as its Objectives;

- * To bring together persons who are interested in the study and conservation of the birds of Sri Lanka.
- * To generate interest among laymen and students of natural history in the study and conservation of birds.
- * To institute, direct and carry out a programme of field study, island wide on various aspects of bird biology.
- * To establish links with other groups in other parts of the world with similar interest.



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