

Causes for the Rude Behavior of Elephants in and around the Yala National Park: Block-1

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ABSTRACT

Sri Lankan elephants (*elphahasmaximusmaximus*) need free natural habitats for their natural way of life. Innocent elephants have adopted rude behaviour as their self defence mechanism because of unethical human practices. The objective of this paper is to find the causes for the rude behavior of elephants in and around Yala National Park: Block-1 (YB-1). Data were collected from YB-1, office of the Park as well as from west and north western areas such as Kirinda, Situlpawwa, Galkaduwa, Palatupana, Mahesanpura and Weeravila through observation and interviews with officers and local people in July and December 2015.

Yala National Park is facilitating more than 350 elephants including the block-1 which is open to visitors. However, the elephant population varies according to different seasons. In front of the elephants, more than 175 safari jeeps and private vehicles are permitted to make safari within the YB-1. As a result, the traffic congestion is noticeable in the block. Visitors are used to repeat their vehicle movements; as move, stop and restart them inside the park, and that makes the elephants nervous, and interrupts their free roaming and feeding. Visitors tend to shout, show objects such as bottles and sometimes throw those objects towards them, wave hands, hoot vehicle horns, flash their cameras towards elephants and some also try to feed unnecessarily. The villagers intrude upon the park for numerous purposes and hurt elephants in different ways. Due to above such human activities, lack of seasonal carrying capacity in the park, and with the attraction of tasty ready-made food around the park, elephants occupy, feed and trample outside the park during the drought which is prevalent from May to August. People light crackers, fires, shout, make noises with tins and coconut shells and use of lethal devices, and shoot elephants as well as chase them away. Some elephants remain with injuries. With such repeated incidents, some elephants become rude and try to attach humans.

Key words: *Rude behaviour, elephants*

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