

## **The Ethics of Elephant Tourism with a View to Increasing the Welfare of the Elephants and People of Sri Lanka**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Elephant tourism in general presents many ethical challenges related to animal rights and / or the duty of humans to animals. These ethical dilemmas are further complicated by the endangered status of many elephant species and the economically alluring trade in elephant tourism.

Sri Lanka is uniquely placed to benefit from its elephants and elephant tourism may benefit from the long association between elephants and man in Sri Lankan culture. This cultural affinity, even reverence for elephants, can be helpful in designing measures to create ethical elephant tourism in Sri Lanka. However, the realities of Sri Lanka being a developing country, increased Human Elephant Conflict (HEC), Sri Lanka's underfunded wildlife conservation resources and unregulated land development mean that the ethical considerations of elephant tourism are often neglected.

This paper attempts to determine what an ideal elephant management programme would consist of in Sri Lanka and where the current situation falls short of this ideal. This evaluation must necessarily consider the welfare of both wild and domesticated elephants and the impact of any newly proposed measures on the people and institutions who are involved in managing both types of elephants. Elephant tourism operates at the nexus of ethics, economics and Sri Lankan culture. For this reason any approach to elephant management and conservation must be holistic in order to determine the best and most pragmatic approach to the creation of ethical elephant tourism in Sri Lanka.

**Keywords:** *Ethics, Tourism, Elephants, Sri Lanka, Development*