

Bulegoda Arachchige, Manori Nirmala
Department of Geography, University of Ruhuna

Poster

Eco- tourism in Rekawa wetland area of Sri Lanka

Rekawa wetland is one of the potential wetlands located in Tangalle Division in Hambantota district. The wetland is located 3.5 Km South from the Netolpitiya junction which is 8 Km away from Tangalle town, close to Colombo-Kataragama main road in the Southern Province. This wetland area can be identified as an important eco system with rich bio diversity and potential to attract tourism. Therefore, the objective of this study is to identify the potential and challenges of Rekawa wetland to promote eco-tourism.

As research methodology: Quadrates, Transect studies, Cross-section study, Flow charts, Surveys, Semi- Structured Questionnaires, un-structured Questionnaires, Interviews & Observations were used to find out the potential of eco-tourism in the area.

In this 230 ha wetland: *Rhizophora mucronata*, *Aegiceras corniculatum* and a kind of rare Mangrove plant species *Cereopstagal* can be recognize as dominant species. In addition to Mangrove Communities, some dry zone plants and wild animals, reptiles and mammals can be seen here. This wetland is also rich with coral reef, sea grass and is well known for turtles. Out of seven, five species of turtles comes to Sri Lanka along the coast. Rekawa is special in that, all five species of turtles can be seen. This wetland has potential to be developed as an eco-tourism area.

Taking proper action to minimize destructive deeds such as cutting mangroves, hunting turtles and destroying nesting grounds, removing sand and shells should be enforced. This will help to promote this area for eco-tourism, and make it a popular destination through implementation of proper planning and coastal resource management practices.

Keywords: Potential, Wetland, Eco system, Bio diversity, Development programme