



The New Standard

for sustainable business and conservation in Sri Lanka



The official newsletter of the Sri Lanka Business and Biodiversity Platform
(A Member of the Global Partnership on Business and Biodiversity)

Issue 6: May 2014

IN CELEBRATION OF BIODIVERSITY: THE CORPORATE COMMITMENT

From the Editors

Greetings to all our Members and followers of The New Standard! We hope you had a chance of fittingly celebrating the International Day for Biological Diversity through meaningful and impactful initiatives! We at the Platform sure did... and are glad that some of you were able to join us in our celebrations on the 22nd of May!

Marking this day was yet another reminder on why our efforts should be geared towards incorporating conservation best practices in our overall business strategies. Sri Lanka, as a biodiversity hotspot, is being leagued with the continued risk of fast losing her species, diversity and habitats. Mother Nature is constantly reminding us of this sad fact, but is also unfailingly showing us the way to finding responsible solutions! As such, it is up to us to be alert about everything around us and be poised and ready to play our part in committed conservation.

During the first quarter of 2014, we carried out a survey of the biodiversity efforts of our Patron Members. We were pleasantly surprised and much re-assured at what we learned. Thus, in celebration of biodiversity, we dedicate issue 6 of The New Standard to our Patron Members, highlighting some of their ongoing efforts in biodiversity conservation. We are making plans to feature these and many more in our annual networking event being planned for October this year, as continuous inspiration to us in our onward journey! We are also greatly honored and privileged to feature Prof. Sarath W. Kotagama, in many ways the individual who has dedicated his life and worked tirelessly towards this cause.

We hope that our newsletter will serve to hearten and uplift you - **there are still people who care!**

Warm regards,
Sri Lanka Business and Biodiversity Platform

Shiranee E. Yasaratne – Advisor
R. M. Harshini de Silva - Coordinator

Expert Q&A

We, at the Sri Lanka Business and Biodiversity Platform were honored to meet up with Prof. Sarath W. Kotagama at his office at the University of Colombo, to talk about our island's biodiversity and how we must all play our part. Following, are some excerpts from our conversation...



1. In your opinion, what are Sri Lanka's key issues regarding biodiversity?

The key issue is the loss of biodiversity resulting from continuing land use changes due to development in a broad sense. If you take a scale, about 90% of the losses of biological diversity happen outside the existing Protected Area (PA) network. 'Wildlife losses' are minimal but 'biodiversity losses' are high - every living plant and animal, irrespective of it occurring within the PA network or outside constitutes the country's biodiversity. Development is a continuous process and during the

last couple of years, the rate of development has been very high with accelerated activity. This has resulted in losses of biodiversity. Percentage-wise, what happens inside the PA network is minimal – not to say that there isn't any loss happening inside. There is, probably, but we wouldn't know it until we assess it.

Then there is the issue of species loss. If we think of species losses separately from the loss of habitat diversity, we have little information, but if we compare it with the scale I referred to earlier, then the majority of what we are losing, are not those that we could really think of to be specially important - in terms of endemics and such - because if we think of the distribution of endemics and where the current development process and land use changes are happening, much of this is now happening in the dry zone. The wet zone is fairly safe for the moment, again, not to say 100% but may be the ratio is about 60:40, where about 40% of the wet zone is getting cleared up for small activities. So, if at all there is a loss of biodiversity which is of critical importance to the country, then it is in the wet zone.

2. Does Sri Lanka being an island, have a bearing on its status as a biodiversity hotspot?

Definitely! Yes. That is why we have high endemism, not just only of species but even of the subspecies. These 2 things make it very unique and the other reason for uniqueness is the situation within the country with respect to spatial diversity. Sri Lanka ranks high in spatial diversity, compared to most other countries in the Asian region. Per 10,000sqkm, Sri Lanka has the highest biodiversity in Asia, at least in terms of flowering plants, mammals, amphibians and reptiles.

If you take the vegetation types in the country, we have something like 15 aggregates of different combinations. That itself is a major factor. To that we can add different layers of diversity according to altitude, river valley systems, etc. As for indicators – at least in terms of fish – we could show that the 103 river systems in the country are unique to each other. If you add contributory factors to diversity such as altitude, the situation changes; you don't find that in most countries but here, we do. That is the potential that we have recognized, but not yet realized.

3. Sri Lanka is an island with peripheral small islands. Are there any specific threats that these islands face in today's developmental setting?

If you take the distribution of where the islands are, in the South, we don't have islands other than the rock islets in a number of places like Ambalangoda, Little Basses, Great Basses, etc. but as islands which have a soil cover, they're all in the North. What is unique is that all of them have flora and fauna which is subtly different from the rest of the country. The flora I'm told is very similar to that found in India, when compared to what is found in Southern Sri Lanka. I can say the same thing in terms of birds. We have surveyed it and we categorize the Northern fauna as 'Deccan Avifauna' because there is a distinct aggregation of birds which are similar to that of South India, which do not fly South beyond the Anuradhapura, Puttalam region at all. I'm not sure of what the case may be in terms of mammals or other herpetofauna. Nobody has really studied them. So very clearly there seems to be something that is unique, which is like a bridge between the Indian fauna and flora and the Sri Lankan wet zone. Therefore, those islands are very important for biodiversity because they can definitely be depicting a transitional zone.

There are definitely threats to these islands because they are expanding

out. There are plans for development in the islands also. This is a tricky situation because all development must be carefully planned and not ad hoc, considering that we haven't yet recognized this diversity. There are very few scientific publications on island diversity like Kayts, Mandativu, Iranativu; that is the only way we can specifically say that these are very unique and therefore you should not be destroying but using them in a planned manner. That, I think is the major concern at the moment.

4. Is Sri Lanka doing enough to address these issues? Where are the gaps?

To me personally, Sri Lanka has not adequately addressed these issues because the first major thing is that even though we're talking about biodiversity, we have not yet understood what it means. Basically, biodiversity is protecting it, using it, and managing the two so that you can enable sustainability for the future. When it comes to the user side, we have an issue because users very often run on a commercial basis and there is over-exploitation with very little control. We do not even have the proper regulatory mechanisms to enable equity. Looking after the 26% declared protected areas in the country is the responsibility of the prevailing departments – forest and wildlife. But we must regulate in today's context, what we call ethical marketing. We must make use of that background to enable the control of any product that is being used from the wild. There is a lack of integration between the market people and the production people with the biodiversity regulatory people – wildlife or forest. We have seen numerous examples of this. The trade side has also to be a little more concerned about what they're doing because the 3rd largest illegal trade in the world is wildlife - I would say it is not wildlife, it is biodiversity.

We have biodiversity but we have absolutely no knowledge about how to enhance that biodiversity. If it is a

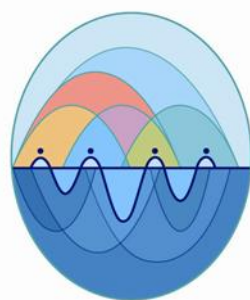
marketable product and we don't want people to go into the forest and take it, and if it has this so-called demand, then we must seek to find the mechanism of how we can enhance that, like for example, ex-situ breeding. We have all the knows; but we don't have the dos. That is the biggest issue. In biodiversity, you can't have only knows. Today, it's a commercial society. So in the commercial society we have to start looking at commercial opportunities or solutions to ensure that this is balanced. So for Sri Lanka I think we have a good diversity which we can exploit, while we conserve what is left in its place, but to do that, we must have enabling legislation which is current, addressing today's needs.

5. How would you gauge the requirement for the private sector to be involved in solving these issues?

Very much on the ethical side - 100%. There's no other way. There are 2 ways of doing it - either by regulation or by commitment. In the private sector, basically environment means good business. It is extremely difficult to find a corporate entity that decided to go into business with biodiversity, with an idea of conserving it. They all went in to exploit it but in the exploitation they recognized that there are concerns by the people who are using it - then they realized that there is a market building up on the concerns of conservation.

The private sector contribution towards biodiversity conservation is extremely low but you can put it the other way around. If their products are causing a concern in the environment with respect to clearing of forests, or getting rid of habitats, could you then look at an alternative to substitute it with? Or like what all these natural resource marketing people have done through ethical marketing, etc., adapt to conditions which are not damaging to the environment. Like what they have done in Singapore with intensive vertical farming. Concentrating development into a confined space to produce the same yields by not destroying habitats but containing it within a given space and within that space also you come up with all possible strategies to reduce the negative impacts. Those are all methodologies that they can come up with to satisfy the consumer by showing that the product is near to nature. That way, the private sector can contribute to biodiversity because you're not expanding out for the demand that is required but then most often, the production costs tend to be higher than from when it is harvested in a manner that is more harmful to biodiversity. So let's cut the demand down, reduce the consumption and then we will probably be able to produce with less costs, not having to continue to meet the high demand. This is the way businesses can help. Otherwise, biodiversity will always be affected by businesses. There are ways in which you can reduce the pressure on nature by producing en mass under contained systems.

So the answer to your question is that businesses must help the conservation of biodiversity by innovating alternatives. Businesses can also pump back funds to try and help the existing wildlife systems sustain themselves. They can operate as desired but from the profits, they can help sustain what is at least minimally possible in a country. We should promote these concepts with the people who are just coming into business. The environment didn't exist then as a market tool or an impediment that prevented you from doing what you wanted but now it does. Therefore, businesses that come into play in future cannot use the same argument. They must be fully aware of it and do what they do with the consciousness that they have to align their businesses to conserve the environment and biodiversity. It can't be a sideline and be done just because the market asks for it. The transition will take time but it should and will happen because you can't continue to exploit nature when nature is incapable of providing. If we continue on this economic model, biodiversity will continue to be threatened. Currently regulations are brought in to sustain the market and they do just that, but they should be geared towards the requirement, which in this case is biodiversity conservation. These things are necessary to be discussed in fora in order to stop the exploitation of the terms 'nature' and 'biodiversity' for businesses that do not really help conserve them.



International Year of
Small Island
Developing States
— 2014 —

CIC Holdings PLC - BEARING IT ALL

Considered one of Sri Lanka's 'big five', the sloth bear (*Melursus ursinus inornatus*), is an elusive and iconic mammal, which is endemic. Its current conservation status is ENDANGERED. The sloth bear population in Sri Lanka is rapidly declining, mainly due to deforestation and urbanization. As people encroach on sloth bear habitats, human-bear conflict continues to rise. Sloth bears are known to show aggression towards humans and face a wide variety of threats including targeted killings, often triggered by people's misconception and fear of them. There is also a gap in knowledge about sloth bears in Sri Lanka, which is significantly hindering the effective conservation of the species.



Above: Sloth bear

In 2013, CIC Holdings PLC, decided to extend its support to sloth bear research and conservation, as part of its sustainability efforts by commissioning a survey in Wilpattu National Park, which is home to a high number of sloth bears in Sri Lanka. The survey is part of a research programme led by Biodiversity Education and Research (BEAR) in collaboration with the Research and Training Division of the Department of Wildlife Conservation. The project focuses on estimating the sloth bear densities in the Wilpattu National Park with the use of camera traps, GPS data and field observations including monitoring of pug marks and scat to help analyze the behavioral habits of the sloth bear. The ongoing survey has revealed that sloth bears in Wilpattu thrive in areas that are undisturbed – particularly areas of thick jungle in close proximity to fruit trees and termite mounds, which are the sloth bear's preferred food sources. Research also suggests that a healthy population inhabits Wilpattu. The results of the survey will aid the development of a comprehensive conservation strategy that ensures the sustenance of sloth bears in Sri Lanka.



This project is a positive collaboration between environmentally conscious organizations from both the public and private sectors.

Left: Camera trap image of a sloth bear

Company Contact:

Ms. Nilukshini De Silva

Accountant – Systems and Internal Control

nilu-sid@cic.lk

Commercial Bank of Ceylon PLC – ON A QUEST TO RESTORE HIKKADUWA'S REEFS

The Department of Wildlife Conservation and the CSR Trust of the Commercial Bank have ventured into a partnership to replant 1000 square feet of live coral in the Hikkaduwa Marine National Park - one of the two Marine National Parks in Sri Lanka. The coral reef, which originally existed in this protected area, has been badly damaged due to both man-made and natural phenomena such as the 'El Nino' - a band of anomalously warm ocean water - in 1998 and the Indian Ocean Tsunami of 2004.

Live coral collected from other reefs in Kapparatthota, Weligama and Roomassala have been replanted successfully covering a total extent of 300 square feet in the Walduwa area of the Marine National Park, using techniques perfected in the Philippines. The aim of the project is to restore the coral reef back to its resplendent state. Coral reefs are probably the oldest, most diverse ecosystems on earth. Hikkaduwa's shallow fringing reef was once a major tourist attraction.

The replicable project will benefit the natural environment and associated economic activity as well as bring back self-employment opportunities to the area.

Company Contact:

Ms. Priyanthi Perera

Coordinator – CSR Trust

priyanthi_perera@combank.net



Above: Replanting live coral under water



Right: Marking the public-private Partnership in conservation

Ceylon Tea Services PLC: Dilmah Conservation – NEW SPECIES NEWS



Above: *Pseudophilautus hypomelas*

Recognized as one of the 25 biodiversity hotspots in the world, Sri Lanka is home to a rich array of plant and animal life which are becoming increasingly vulnerable due to loss in habitats. Reptile and amphibian populations are especially susceptible to detrimental environmental changes, and endemic species in particular are imperiled by the threat of extinction. These risks are further exacerbated due little knowledge of these species hindering conservation efforts.

Dilmah Conservation's 'Novel Species Paving the Way for Biodiversity Conservation' programme addresses the need for enhanced research to develop sound strategies for species conservation and management. Implemented in partnership with the Herpetological Foundation of Sri

Lanka, the project seeks to identify new species of reptiles and amphibians, geared towards generating scientific evidence of their existence. This will pave the way for elevated conservation practices. A significant portion of novel species await taxonomic description. There is an urgent need to publish these species thus promoting the need for sustainable management of the habitats within which they thrive. Amphibians in particular are a key indicator species towards assessing the health of an ecosystem and the initiative paves the way to fill existing knowledge gaps in the field of herpeto-fauna. As a result of this initiative, 9 new species of frogs have been discovered in the Siripada World Heritage Site in the Central Hills of Sri Lanka, along with the rediscovery of an additional species of frog - *Pseudophilautus hypomelas* - which was thought to be extinct. Moreover, a new species of threatened rock-dwelling gecko - *Cnemaspis rammalensis* - was discovered in the Rammalakanda Forest Reserve in Southern Sri Lanka.

Dilmah Conservation is a strong attest of what conservation and business can do together and an example that calls for replication.

Company Contact:

Mr. Asanka Abayakoon

Manager - Dilmah Conservation

asanka@dilmahconservation.org



Above: *Cnemaspis rammalensis*

Photo credits: Mr. L. J. Mendis Wickramasinghe

Diesel & Motor Engineering PLC - SRI LANKA'S SEA TURTLES GET A FIGHTING CHANCE



Above and below right: Nesting turtle

In groups too numerous to count, sea turtles once navigated across the world's oceans. If something is not done fast on a global scale there could be a time in the near future when they are just an oddity found only in aquariums and natural history museums. In a programme adopted by Diesel & Motor Engineering PLC (DIMO) and Environmental Foundation Limited (EFL) to protect these wonderful creatures of the sea - they seem to have a fighting chance.

There are seven species of sea turtles in the world, out of which five visit the shores of Sri Lanka. The threats faced by these splendid creatures are primarily man-induced, including direct and indirect harvesting of adults and juveniles for meat and shells. Sea turtle eggs are consumed by coastal communities and turtle nesting beaches are constantly being lost due to beach erosion and haphazard development. DIMO together with EFL embarked on a successful turtle conservation programme along a 4km stretch from Komari to Panama in the Arugam bay area. Commenced in December 2012, the programme continues to save turtle eggs and nesting habitats from local poachers and predators whilst amassing comprehensive scientific information of turtle nesting behavior. The attempt will lead to assessing the value of protecting the beach stretch of Panama as a prime nesting beach for turtles. To date, 11,338 turtle eggs have been protected and 8,856 hatchlings having been released. Due to the success of the nest protection program in the 2012/2013 turtle nesting season, DIMO decided to continue the programme in 2013/2014 as a multi-year conservation initiative.

Truly a demonstration of endless hours in the uphill battle of preserving these fragile creatures of the sea!

Company Contact:

Mr. Prabodha Shawn Silva

Business Development Manager

prabodha.silva@dimolanka.com



HSBC - A FLOURISHING RAINFOREST REGENERATION PROJECT IN RATNAPURA



A melodious trickle of water, the odd cry of a migrant bird, strange lizards that stare at you with curious eyes... all these are common phenomena at Mahausakanda. Spanning an area of 40 acres, this degraded rubber plantation situated in the Ratnapura Kiriella district, is seeing a transformation into a lush tropical rainforest with the support of many nature enthusiasts. At present, Mahausakanda is home to a diverse variety of flora and fauna.

Left: Natural stream at Mahausakanda



HSBC entered into a strategic partnership with the Ellawala Charitable Trust in 2008 to regenerate this tropical rainforest. The project emphasizes the importance of improving livelihoods, promoting eco-tourism, eco-agricultural practices and conducting awareness programmes, whilst regenerating and maintaining a tropical rainforest to house more than 10,000 indigenous woody species. The project has also seen the upliftment of the quality of life in the village by promoting environmentally friendly handicrafts produced by the women's groups and promoted the concept of holistic health and sustainable livelihoods amongst HSBC staff and school children. More importantly, the project has successfully promoted applied research related to rainforests and ecosystem services in the country.

A classic example of sharing experiences and best practices to encourage similar activities in other areas within the wet zone of Sri Lanka!

Left: Member of women's group at work

Company Contact:
Ms. Dilini Fernando
Corporate Sustainability Manager
dilinifernando@hsbc.com.lk

Jetwing Hotels Ltd. – THERE IS HOPE FOR THE SLOW SHY LORIS

Jetwing Vil Uyana, located in a former abandoned agricultural land transformed into a man-made wetland is a bustling hive of flora and fauna. Nature-friendly and luxurious by design, the property has revolutionized the tourism industry of Sri Lanka. Amongst the sprawling 24 acres, a special area marks the Loris Conservation Site, the first of its kind in the country. Home to the rare and endangered Loris - a reclusive primate - there have been sightings in abundance within the forested areas of the site. The Grey Slender Loris was first heard by the resident naturalist, Chaminda Jayasekera, in late 2011 whilst on a walk in the grounds of Jetwing Vil Uyana. To him, the animal's cry in such close proximity was nothing short of startling; previously having to travel quite a distance on Loris watching excursions with hotel guests. Upon further exploration and over the next few months, Chaminda discovered more and more primates habituating within a certain section of the property. Eventually, he stumbled upon an extremely rare sight indeed: a Loris mother, carrying twins – possibly the first ever sighting in the wild.

In order to preserve their home, Jetwing decided to demarcate this particular area as a Loris Conservation Site, essentially foregoing any future construction or industrial activity within or around the site. The loris is free to flourish, and the company hopes to encourage visitors to experience a loris watch in order to raise awareness and educate them on the behaviour, appearance, and activities of this rare species. Since 2011, a total of eleven lorises have been spotted within the premises. The Loris Conservation Site and Conservation Center is wholly managed and looked after by Jetwing Vil Uyana. The site is open to wildlife enthusiasts and researchers in order to further their knowledge.

This VIP guest has been welcomed at Jetwing Vil Uyana, creating a first in privately-established protected areas in the country.

Company Contact:
Mr. Chaminda Jayasekera
Naturalist – Jetwing Vil Uyana
chaminda@jetwinghotels.com



Above: Loris conservation site and information centre



Above: Grey slender loris

Photo credits: Mr. Chaminda Jayasekera

MAS Linea Aqua (Pvt.) Ltd. in Collaboration with Hatton National Bank PLC – AWAY WITH UNWELCOME VISITORS!

Bundala National Park – Sri Lanka's first Ramsar site - in the deep South of Sri Lanka is a haven for biodiversity. Its bird life is especially rich, with both migrant and resident birds finding refuge amongst its many landscapes. In recent times, however, two invasive plant species have begun to choke Bundala's environs, seriously threatening its ecological balance. These unwelcome visitors are the shrub *Prosopis juliflora*, and the cactus *Opuntia dellenii*.

Linea Aqua (Pvt.) Ltd. and Hatton National Bank PLC - both leading Sri Lankan companies - decided to lend their support to saving Bundala. Together with the IUCN, several other donors and a local community organization - the 'Bundala Urumaya Surakeeme Sangamaya' - the companies prepared a salvage plan. The Department of Wildlife Conservation responsible for managing the park, approved the plan and constantly guided and oversaw the systematic eradication of the invaders. Using both manpower and machinery for uprooting, the plants were chopped, crushed by a stone roller, sun dried and burnt. Ashes were used to enhance soil fertility. To date, over 200 hectares have been cleared of invaders. It was soon realized that simply clearing the exotics was not the only answer. To avoid erosion and loss of moisture, the cleared areas would have to be maintained to allow quick regeneration of native flora. A range of native plants are now regenerating in the cleared areas and are being followed by an influx of deer, porcupines, tortoises, elephants, wild boar, rabbits and many bird species.



Above: Systematic removal of invasive species



Above: Regeneration of native plants in cleared areas

A spectacular result of cooperation between a conservation organization, environmentally conscious private companies, a state agency and interested communities

Company Contacts:

Mr. Sarinda Unamboowe
CEO/Managing Director - MAS Linea Aqua (Pvt.) Ltd.
sarindau@lineaqua.com

and

Ms. Gayathri Ganeshan
Manager Human Resources – Hatton National Bank PLC
gayathri.ganeshan@hnb.lk

Nations Trust Bank PLC – AN ISLAND SANCTUARY FOR CRITICALLY ENDANGERED HOG DEER

The Hog Deer (*Axis porcinus*) - known locally as 'Wil Muwa' or 'Gona Muwa' once thought to be extinct - has been recorded from a handful of habitats in Elpitiya, Ambalangoda and Balapitiya. Sadly these Hog deer refuges are not in protected areas, increasing the likelihood of poaching, attacks by feral dogs and road kills.

Nations Trust Bank PLC Sri Lanka, one of the pioneer private banks to support biodiversity conservation in Sri Lanka, together with the Wildlife Conservation Society of Galle and the Department of Wildlife Conservation initiated a conservation program to protect this critically endangered species in the south western wet zone areas of Sri Lanka. The programme has rescued and released 17 adult animals to their natural habitat. Many victims were juveniles and pregnant females. Since the programme came across a marked increase of hapless individuals, a captive breeding program was established. The thinking was that this conservation program should be conducted in close proximity to the Hog Deer's natural habitat which will increase its survival rates. In 2013 the programme started as a joint venture with the Geoffrey Bawa Trust in Honduwa Sanctuary (an island) in the Aluthgama area. Although Hog Deer are not found naturally in Honduwa, it is an ideal site for rehabilitation of the population. The parallel feeding plant restoration program is showing promising results and now provides natural feed for the deer.



Above: Adult Hog Deer in breeding enclosure



Left: Bottle feeding a rescued juvenile Hog Deer

This is the first captive breeding project launched through a public-private partnership in Sri Lanka for an endangered animal.

Company Contact:

Ms. Keshia Vangramberg
Senior Strategic Marketing Assistant
keshia.vangramberg@nationstrust.com

People's Leasing & Finance PLC – GOING GREEN



Above: Farmer group under training

Excessive use of pesticides in agriculture is common. The side-effects of excess chemical usage are rightly identified to have direct impacts, not only on people's health but also on soil fertility, associated water bodies and biodiversity. Therefore, sustainable agricultural practices have gained positive acceptance amongst stakeholders.

People's Leasing & Finance PLC (PLC) initiated an organic farming project to educate, guide and direct the farming community and youth, leading up to long-term productivity of land, food security, preservation of biodiversity and healthier lifestyles. With the guidance of organic farming consultants, PLC educated two farmer groups in Avissawella and Baduraliya, primarily drawn from the customers of People's Microfinance Ltd., together with school children from the Baduraliya Junior Model School. Initially, comprehensive training on organic home gardening at the Dilmah Conservation Sustainable Agricultural Centre at Katubedda was provided to farmers and school children. Subsequent to orientation and training, site visits were carried out to provide necessary technical assistance and to deliver different varieties of seeds and planting material to the stakeholders. The project ably supported students and guided them to establish model organic farms in their school garden and to setup an Organic Agricultural Farming Society to monitor and sustain the project. The farmer community was advocated to mitigate environmental and health concerns via good organic farming practices using home gardening as a stepping stone.

This joint venture between the farmer community, school children and a private organization can replicate healthier lifestyles among all Sri Lankans.

Company Contact:

Mr. Andy Ratnayake

Senior Manager - Risk Management & Control

ratnayake@plc.lk

Right: Students at the model organic farm at school



SriLankan Airlines Ltd. – A WHALE OF A TALE

Sri Lanka is arguably the best place in the world to observe blue whales, the largest creature on the planet. Yet this iconic and endangered species is threatened by a combination of irresponsible and unregulated whale watching - the result of a young industry which is growing at too fast a pace. Mirissa, in the southern tip of the island, is currently the most popular whale watching destination in Sri Lanka, and the industry is increasing at an estimated 20% per annum.

SriLankan Airlines recently launched Project BLUEprint in partnership with Whale and Dolphin Conservation (WDC), UK to jointly develop a community-based responsible whale and dolphin watching industry off the coast of Sri Lanka. For Project BLUEprint, the airline raises funds through onboard sales of Mirissa, a plush toy blue whale, designed on a concept provided by WDC. In attractive biodegradable packaging, the toy is illustrated with the story of Mirissa, making it a perfect collectible. WDC provides training, educational resources and scientific support to this developing industry so that the whales can continue to inhabit our waters safely and sustainably. The community-based industry can bring benefits to local people over the long term. Today, much of blue whale watching takes place close to, or within some of the busiest shipping lanes in the world and in recent years, whales and other species have been fatally struck by shipping traffic posing an additional threat. Further research and urgent mitigation methods are required in order to ensure the safety of both the whales and whale watchers. Thus project BLUEprint aims to raise awareness, provide training and scientific support to the burgeoning industry so that whales can continue to inhabit our waters and a responsible industry can benefit local people. Once established, responsible whale watching will be rolled into two less-developed sites - Trincomalee in the North-east and Kalpitiya in the North-west.



Above: Promotional poster on project

Truly an example of promoting responsible tourism!



Above: Team Project BLUEprint

Company Contact:

Mr. Dhanushka De Silva

Flight Operations Executive – Aviation Fuel

dhanushka.desilva@srilankan.com

Tokyo Cement Company (Lanka) PLC - TOKYO CEMENT REEF BALLS GIVE NEW LIFE TO SRI LANKA'S REEFS

As part of the company's environmentally friendly manufacturing process, Tokyo Cement has developed many different ways of reusing and recycling cement waste. Tokyo Cement has been partnering the Wildlife Research and Conservation Trust (WRCT) on a one-of-a-kind marine conservation project, with support from volunteers, the UNDP, the Wildlife Department, the Coast Conservation Department, marine biologists from the University of Peradeniya and local fishing communities, to safeguard Sri Lanka's coral reefs.

The company's R&D unit, in collaboration with the WRCT, designed, built and implemented a unique reef rehabilitation technique - Tokyo Cement Reef Balls. In this project, waste concrete previously discarded, is being recycled to yield multiple environmental and social benefits. Tokyo Cement designs and manufactures the reef balls at their many TOKYO SUPERMIX ready-mix concrete batching plants, delivers them to the site, and helps WRCT position them in the designated conservation zones; initially in the Passikudah bay. Corals are grown in nurseries located in shallower waters, and the live coral sprouts known as nubbins are carefully planted on the reef balls before being transferred to deeper waters. The objective is to restore the depleted coral cover off the coast of Passikudah, enabling marine ecosystems to flourish. The return of the corals could serve as natural shields against tides and tsunamis, as well as in the mitigation of coastal erosion. Flush coral reefs are strong tourist attractions enhancing local economies.

Tokyo Cement is presently supporting research on the growth rates and species diversity of corals, whilst conducting intensive fish surveys in the rehabilitation zones. This will help develop guidelines for the evaluation and implementation of similar rehabilitation projects across the island. This three decade old company has incorporated reef rehabilitation into its business operations and hopes to build and propagate a healthy marine ecosystem along Sri Lanka's coasts.



Above: Transporting reef balls to the designated conservation zones in the sea



Above: Transporting reef balls to the coast

The work is a demonstration of diverse partners working together on one of the largest recorded coastal rehabilitation projects in the country undertaken with the leadership of the private sector.

Company Contact:
Mr. Praveen Gnanam
Manager - Special Projects
praveen@tokyocement.lk

...and we end with a small reminder to celebrate the biggest day for positive environmental action!

World Environment Day (WED) is the United Nations' principal vehicle for encouraging worldwide awareness and action for the environment. In support of the UN designation of 2014 as the International Year of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), WED this year will adopt SIDS in the broader context of climate change as its theme. The objectives are to encourage a greater understanding of the importance of SIDS and of the urgency to help protect the islands in the face of growing risks and vulnerabilities, particularly as a result of climate change. WED will be an excellent opportunity to raise a call for solidarity with the islands (*source: <http://www.unep.org/wed/about/>*).



World Environment Day
5 June