



You Believe  
Right to Know?  
Share This With  
Your Friends.

## Wildlife going wild

**A** gecko captured from wild can be sold for 1.2 million Rupees. An Albino Turtle can be sold for 5 millions. An elephant captured from the wild will cost 3 millions. This is possible in our mother Sri Lanka.

Before the Department of Wildlife was politicised it had the best conservators in the country. It still has brilliant and courage officers, but with no leadership. Recent scandals in the Department of Wildlife shows that both Minister and Director General are incapable of protecting the wildlife in Sri Lanka.

Wild animals in Sri Lanka is the national heritage and is the greatest attraction of the Eco tourist to this small island. Protection of this heritage is the only duty of the Department of Wildlife. The nation only expects this public duty from them.

General public are very apart from the wildlife conservation. Unresolved human elephant conflicts, disputes over the park borders are common problems. Park bungalows or remote areas in the national parks are usually accessible for the Colombo elites and politicians. General public only has very limited access to this heritage. There

are no much direct benefits to the local communities by maintaining the national parks next to their village. Undoubtedly some people engage in destructive activities due to this reason.

Most recent blame against the Department is its incapability to control elephant mafia whose cobweb spreads to the rich and elites to the politicians to the Buddhist monks and even judges. Very sadly some Buddhist monks are the number one culprits in this elephant mafia.

Department of Wildlife is not responsible for providing pets to the greedy temple monks, rich and powerful. However, this has been the case in the past decade. Therefore, we don't blame only the current Minister and the Director General but previous leadership as well.

Missing the Elephant registry, giving a grace period for registering illegally captured baby elephants are already some major scandals. It is hard to believe that illegal capturing of elephants happens without any support from the wildlife officers.

According to Sajeewa Chamika of the Environmental Conservation trust, there are total of 359 domestic elephants registered with the DWC. Out of these, 94 elephants are in the Dehiwala zoo and Pinnawala Elephant Orphanage and 60 have died. It is estimated that 205 elephants are in the possession of private owners.

However, estimated 76 baby elephants have been captured mainly from Habarana, Udawalawa and Madu Oya national parks. This is a total violation of the Fauna Flora Protection ordinance.

Making happy the new rich has a heavy cost to any society. It is unfortunate that the wild animals also have to pay that cost. The ruling elites always make policies and violations of the rules to make the rich happy.

Wildlife governance has seriously eroded in the recent past. Wild life Department, National Zoological garden, Pinnawala Elephant Orphanage, Ath Athuru Sevana suffers due to this lack of governance.

It is easy to mark the captive elephants using micro-chips, photographs and also having a DNA database. Newly born calves in captivity should be registered early and it is easy to get the information on the elephant pregnancy even before the babies are born. It is also important for checking the suitability of the el-

ephant owners. Mental health and economical capability of the owners should be tested time to time. But Sri Lanka still manages the old hand written elephant book, which went missing recently inside the Department premises. It is believed that it was the first step for registering the illegally captured elephants.

Correcting these irregularities is not a big task for the Department as the number of elephants in captivity are very small, if they really want to clean this mess. But we have learned that the mobile squad doesn't even get facilities and authorization to do the raiding in time.

The Department has a better role to play having the authority over 14 per cent of the land cover in Sri Lanka and being the sole authority to look after the conservation of wildlife. The tug war between the Minister and the Director General is not healthy for the wildlife in Sri Lanka.

Fauna and flora protection is an ordinance to provide for the protection, conservation and preservation of the fauna and flora of Sri Lanka; for the prevention of the commercial exploitation of such fauna and flora.

Incapability for the prevention of commercial exploitation is in violation of the public trust upon the two persons having the authority over the wildlife in Sri Lanka.

Therefore the Minister and the Director General has two options. They are either join hands for protecting the wildlife for nations interest or to resign and hand over the job to more capable persons.



**Centre for Environmental Justice**

20A, Kuruppu Road, Colombo 08, SRI LANKA

Tel: 0094-112-683282 email: [info@ejustice.lk](mailto:info@ejustice.lk) Website: [www.ejustice.lk](http://www.ejustice.lk)

