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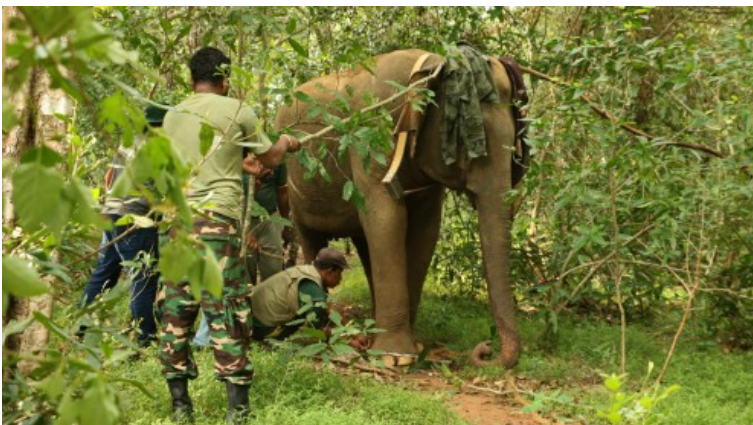
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## Second phase of elephant conservation project to begin



Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts in collaboration with its award-winning eco-tourism arm Cinnamon Nature Trails, is now set to commence the second phase of its ground-breaking elephant conservation project.

Initiated in 2014, the Cinnamon Elephant Project strives to understand the behavioural and dispersion patterns of Sri Lanka's elephant populations, thereby contributing towards the long-term conservation of the Asian elephant, whilst enhancing elephant viewing based tourism across the island.

Having successfully completed the initial phase of the initiative which involved identifying herds of elephants in key areas, the team is now ready to start the next stage of the project – studying the seasonal movements of smaller elephant herds that are part of the larger gatherings which take place in Minneriya and Kaudulla National Parks each year.

Led by Dr. Prithiviraj Fernando, Sri Lanka's leading elephant scientist, and assisted by Dr. Jennifer Pastroni and the Cinnamon Nature Trails Team in Habarana, the first two years of the project were dedicated to carefully identifying over 70 different elephants from select herds in the North Central Province.

Thereafter, each identified elephant was assigned a unique name and photo-catalogued based on distinct morphological features and other distinguishable factors. This initial phase of the project was conducted to lay the groundwork for the team to facilitate in-depth studies of the seasonal movements and dispersion patterns of smaller herds of elephants that form the larger congregations in Minneriya and Kaudulla National Parks during the dry season.

As part of the second phase of the operation, the Cinnamon Elephant Project team, with the support of the John Keells Foundation and the Department of Wildlife Conservation (DWC), will be monitoring select specimens of the selected 70 elephants using state-of-the-art satellite and GPS technology.

With the assistance of an expert group of veterinary surgeons from DWC, Dr. Prithiviraj successfully installed two of the GPS tracking collars on selected females. Following the successful collaring of these elephants, the Cinnamon Elephant Project team under the guidance of Dr. Prithiviraj Fernando can now track, study and record their movements and whereabouts, and hence, those of their respective herds.

Over the course of this phase of the project, the collars will provide extremely useful and valuable data on the location and well-being of the two elephants, which will be utilized by the team to support national elephant conservation efforts, whilst also enabling tourists to obtain an enriching and more personal experience of Sri Lanka's elephant herds. Dr. Prithiviraj further quoted that the 'Gathering' at Minneriya and Kaudulla is one of the 'animal wonders' of the world. However, climate change and proposed changes in water management threaten its continuance. Information from the GPS-radiocollars on the two females 'Tara-Devi' and 'Biso' will enable us to understand the dynamics of elephant use of these areas and help guide development and management to avert the end of the 'gathering'.

Commenting on Cinnamon Nature Trails gearing up to commence the second phase of the Cinnamon Elephant Project, Chitral Jayatilake, (Head of Nature Trails Team) said: "We are pleased and excited to be moving on to the next phase of the Cinnamon Elephant Project. Following the successful collaring of two elephants, we are confident that these high-tech collars will yield much needed data on Sri Lanka's greatest animal spectacle staged in the Minneriya national park and help us understand its dynamics in a scientific perspective."

This project is part of the Cinnamon brand's ongoing commitment to sustainability and is part of a long-term effort to protect and conserve Sri Lanka's rich natural heritage."

The Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts chain comprises 14 distinct hotels and resorts located in key areas across Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

The brand embodies a passion for inspired living and promises holistic and enhanced experiences that are tailor-made to suit the specific interests of travellers. The Cinnamon brand focuses on delivering memorable holidays and getaways that deliver exceptional standards of service whilst showcasing the warmth and vibrancy of contemporary Sri Lankan hospitality.

Cinnamon Nature Trails offers years of experience in the field and is known to tailor excursions to meet the requirements of discerning travelers, ardent wildlife enthusiasts, corporate groups, as well as families, so that they can explore, discover and enjoy the island's rich biodiversity and flora and fauna.



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