



# Magazine

## Elephant Conservation Project New plans for this year

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The second phase of 'Cinnamon Elephant Projectstrives', a ground-breaking elephant conservation project, initiated by Cinnamon Nature Trails is now set to commence soon.



Identified heard in Kaudulla National Park, which consist of 20+ members. GPS collar was fitted to the matriarch of this here for monitoring of the long term movement of the entire heard.

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Initiated in 2014, the 'Cinnamon Elephant Projectstrives', with Cinnamon Hotels and Resorts in collaboration with its award-winning eco-tourism arm Cinnamon Nature Trails to understand the behavioural and dispersion patterns of Sri Lanka's elephant populations.

The project 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. Prithviraj 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 selected 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. Prithviraj successfully installed two of the GPS tracking collars on selected females.



Chitral Jayatilake

Following the successful coloring of these elephants, the Cinnamon Elephant Project team under the guidance of Dr. Prithviraj 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 utilised 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. Prithviraj 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 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 Elephant Project.



Dr. Prithiviraj Fernando



Team that has successfully conducted the collaring project

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